

OPERATION RECOVERY



**IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR
& JUSTSEEDS ARTISTS' COOPERATIVE**



YOU ARE NOT ALONE



WE

AS MILITARY SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS, HAVE THE power to end the wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Iraq Veterans Against the War's strategy is to mobilize the military community to withdraw its consent to these wars, and in doing so bring all our sisters and brothers home. We have the right and responsibility to resist illegal wars and fight for the rights of our brothers and sisters in arms. Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) supports all those resisting the wars, including Conscientious Objectors and others facing military prosecution for their refusal to fight. We have the right and responsibility to fight back against a military that oppresses, abuses, and uses us as if we were government-issued property. As service members and veterans, we must not allow our government to continue prosecuting illegal and un-just wars through mass violations of our rights and the rights of those we occupy abroad.

Nine and ten years of war and occupation have left tens of thousands of Iraqi and Afghan civilians, as well as U.S. veterans, devastated by the traumas of war. These traumas—the overwhelming, natural consequence of warfare—are affecting so many soldiers that our military is in deep crisis. All branches of service are facing an epidemic of suicide and depression. On October 7th 2010, the ninth anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan, IVAW launched Operation Recovery, a campaign to stop the deployment of traumatized troops and win the right of service members and veterans to heal from the war.

Justseeds Artists' Cooperative worked with IVAW to create a series of posters and graphics to both illustrate the issues central to Operation Recovery and to make the campaign public. These images were wheatpasted on walls throughout Chicago in October 2010, have been exhibited in galleries and community centers, and have been distributed on military bases.

THE ISSUE

300,000 U.S. TROOPS HAVE NOW SERVED MULTIPLE TOURS OF DUTY IN IRAQ AND Afghanistan. Thousands, including many in IVAW, are being sent back to war despite their trauma from previous deployments, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). The reality is, military commanders are pushing service members far past human limits in order to continue the occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Service members are not being screened systematically for mental trauma. In combat, there's a shortage of behavioral health personnel, and soldiers are given psychotropic medications instead of comprehensive therapy. Commanders often will override the opinions of medical personnel if those opinions interfere with a soldier's duties. In the case of MST where sexual assault is committed by a fellow service member, commanders often ignore claims in order to protect the perpetrator.

Within the military—whose culture is built upon denial of weakness—mental health problems are severely stigmatized. Commanders systematically deny PTSD, MST, and TBI, promoting shame and ignorance. Troops and veterans generally are uneducated about the symptoms of war trauma, are discouraged from seeking help, and find both the military and the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) under-resourced to address the overwhelming need.

The silence and denial of war trauma is taking its toll on veterans, service members, and their families, who are a vast dis-empowered community under the military's bureaucratic oppression. In an institution built on conformity, following orders, competitiveness, and rigid hierarchy, many GIs do not know their rights. IVAW's Operation Recovery campaign is organizing the military community to stand up in defense of their Right to Heal.

SERVICE MEMBERS HAVE THE RIGHT TO HEAL

WE SAY SERVICE MEMBERS WITH PTSD, TBI, AND MST HAVE THE RIGHT TO high quality health care. They have the right to pursue treatments in the best interests of their health and well being. Service members have the right to receive medical care and advice from medical professionals. No military authority shall override the advice of medical professionals regarding the health of service members.

Too often, service members are forced to redeploy back into dangerous combat, or train in situations that re-traumatize them. We say individuals suffering from trauma have the right to remove themselves from the source of their trauma. Service members who are not physically or mentally healthy shall not be forced to deploy or continue service, and should receive monetary compensation to help them heal from their wounds of war.

- ✦ We will support service members standing up for their right to heal, and we will stand against those responsible for violating this right.
- ✦ We will expose those responsible for the deployment of traumatized troops and publicly hold them accountable with collective action.
- ✦ We will end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by winning our right to heal. We know that without the repeated use of traumatized troops on the battlefield, the occupations could not continue.



THE FACTS

- ★ 1 in 3 women are raped while serving in the military.¹
- ★ The military suicide rate increased 150% from 2001 to 2009.²
- ★ 20% to 50% of all service members deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan suffer from PTSD.³
- ★ By 2008, nearly 33% of troops had served two tours to Iraq or Afghanistan and 10% had served three tours. Today over 11,000 troops have served six tours. Each tour greatly increases a service member's chance of getting PTSD. 30% of troops on their third deployment suffer from serious mental-health problems.⁴
- ★ A third of soldiers serving in Afghanistan and Iraq say they can't see a mental health professional when they need to.⁵
- ★ Nearly 20% of service members are taking some kind of psychiatric drug. Among service members currently in combat, 12% in Iraq and 17% in Afghanistan are taking prescription antidepressants or sleeping medications. Yet the military has no way of tracking prescription drug use in combat.⁶
- ★ The number of U.S. troops injured by roadside bombs in Afghanistan increased by 178% from 2009 to 2010. Such explosions are a primary cause of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).⁷
- ★ With our poor economy and with no draft, today's military incentivizes service members to stay beyond their initial six-year contract. Thus, many in the military view soldiering as a job with a salary and health benefits for their family, and are motivated to stay in longer despite physical and mental injuries inflicted during service.

1. Sadler, Anne. "Factor Associated with Women's Risk of Rape in the Military Environment." *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 43:262-273 (2003).

2. Zoroya, Greg. "Army efforts don't stem Fort Hood suicides." *USA Today* (January 5, 2011).

3. Seal, K. H., et al. "Getting beyond 'Don't ask, don't tell.'" *American Journal of Public Health*, n98 p714-720 (April 2008).

4. Veterans For America National Guard Program. *The Alaska Army National Guard: A "Tremendous Shortfall."* (October 15, 2008).

5. Tanielian, Terri and J. Cox, et al. "Invisible Wounds of War: Addressing Psychological and Cognitive Injuries." *RAND*, 251(2008).

6. Thompson, Mark. "America's Medicated Army." *Time* (June 5, 2008).

7. Whitlock, Craig. "Number of U.S. casualties from roadside bombs in Afghanistan skyrocketed from 2009 to 2010." *Washington Post* (January 25, 2011).

fighting for the right to heal
EUGENE CHERRY



"Here's a young man, a combat veteran who has clearly sacrificed a great deal for his country. It appalls me that they are treating him like a criminal when he needs mental help," - Hannah Frisch, a clinical psychologist who diagnosed Cherry with post-traumatic stress disorder and major depression

“ I SAID, ‘I CAN’T DO IT. I CAN’T GO.’ I LOOKED AT MY MOM AND I told her, ‘I can’t go.’ And she said, ‘Seriously?’ I just felt—my heart was pounding, and I felt like I was just frozen. I think I kind of stuttered when I said, ‘I can’t do it.’ It was hard to get the words out.”

—Specialist Suzanne Swift, in 2006, on her decision to go AWOL before her redeployment to Iraq, where she had been sexually assaulted by three men in her command. She was apprehended and imprisoned briefly in January 2007. She remained on active duty until 2009 and has been active in anti-war and anti-rape protests.

One third of women in the military are sexually assaulted. The U.S. Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) defines Military Sexual Trauma as “sexual harassment that is threatening or physical assault of a sexual nature. The location, the genders of the people involved, and their relationship do not matter.” According to the VA, more than 48,000 female veterans screened positive for military sexual trauma in 2008. 38% of military men report being sexually harassed during their service.



**STOP THE DEPLOYMENT OF
TRAUMATIZED TROOPS!**

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SGT. TRAVIS BISHOP WAS SENTENCED TO A 12 MONTH TERM AT the Fort Lewis stockade for refusing to deploy to Afghanistan. Sgt. Bishop served 14 months in Baghdad with the 3rd Signal Brigade. He was seeking a Conscientious Objector discharge at the time he refused to deploy, calling the ongoing occupations 'illegal' and insisting that it would have been unethical of him to deploy in support of a war that he is opposed to on moral and legal grounds.

TRAVIS BISHOP



FOR AS LONG AS THERE HAVE BEEN MILITARIES AND WAR, SOLDIERS around the world have resisted, deserted, and refused combat duty for both moral and political reasons—and civilians have supported them. The term “GI,” meaning “Government Issue,” came into use in World War One to refer to Army soldiers and their equipment. It emphasizes the service member’s status as a piece of property belonging to the government, which GI resisters are all too aware of! The war machine depends on the labor force of service members to perpetuate wars and GI Resisters are removing that labor force one by one and crippling the war machine. By fighting for service members right to heal, Operation Recovery is focused on creating more space for service members to stand up against the war machine.

I'd rather do my time in jail than be a party to the racism I saw in Iraq. As an African-American, I grew up with racism. But in Iraq, I saw the same kind of abuse and mistreatment, only this was U.S. enlisted soldiers and American contractors, like security forces, abusing Iraqis."



Rodney Watson

29-year-old Army Specialist from Kansas City, MO. served 12 months in Iraq

He has refused to return and is currently seeking refuge near Vancouver, Canada.





IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR (IVAW) was formed in 2004 to give voice to the large number of veterans and active duty service members who are against the war, but under various pressures to remain silent. In 2009, with a growing number of members who had served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, IVAW formed the Afghanistan Veterans Against the War Committee to give a voice to those who had served there and are critical of that conflict. IVAW consists of service members and veterans who have served or are presently serving in Iraq, Afghanistan, or the larger “Global War on Terror.” We are building a national movement that continues a long tradition of veteran and GI resistance within the U.S. military. Throughout our nation’s history, GIs have spoken out and stood up for the rights and humanity of all those affected by war.

IVAW calls for

- Immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Reparations for the human and structural damages Iraq and Afghanistan has suffered, and an end to the corporate pillaging of both countries so that their people can control their own lives and future; and
- Full benefits, health care (including mental health and women’s health), and other supports for returning service members.

Learn more by visiting www.ivaw.org.

JUSTSEEDS ARTISTS’ COOPERATIVE is a decentralized network of 25 artists committed to making print and design work that reflects a social, environmental, and political stance. Members live and work in 14 cities across the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. Justseeds operates both as a unified collaboration of like-minded printmakers and as a decentralized collection of creative individuals with unique viewpoints and working methods. We believe in the transformative power of cultural expression in concert with collective action. To this end, we contribute graphics to grassroots struggles for justice, work collaboratively both in- and outside the coop, produce themed print portfolios, give lectures and workshops, build large sculptural installations, and wheatpaste prints on the streets—all while offering each other daily support as allies and friends. Learn more by visiting www.justseeds.org.

credits:

inside cover: Mary Tremonte; street photographs: Justseeds.org; Eugene Cherry poster: Colin Matthes; Suzanne Swift poster: Alec Dunn; Travis Bishop poster: Alec Dunn; Support GI Resistance poster: Kevin Caplicki; Rodney Watson poster: Pete Yahnke; War Is Trauma poster: Jesse Purcell; back cover: Nicolas Lampert. Pamphlet design: Josh MacPhee; series design: Garrick Gott.

This pamphlet is the fourteenth of the Artists & Activists series, published by Printed Matter, Inc., New York City, 2011. Printed Matter's Artists & Activists series is made possible by generous funding from the Gesso Foundation.

Just Seeds and IVAW, 2011
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ISBN 978-0-89439-056-2

www.printedmatter.org

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ARTISTS & ACTIVISTS



PTSD

POST-TRAUMATIC
STRESS DISORDER

HOW IS THIS A DISORDER?
WHAT PART OF BEING
EMOTIONALLY AND SPIRITUALLY
AFFECTED BY GROSS
VIOLENCE IS DISORDER?

HOW ABOUT GOING TO
WAR AND COMING HOME
WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE
DISORDER?

I THINK THAT WOULD
BE FAR MORE APPROPRIATE

....MATT HOWARD
IRAQ VETERANS
AGAINST THE WAR
OPERATION RECOVERY