

# What is the VFP Engagement Campaign?

Engagement with active, reserve and guard soldiers in the US military involves many different approaches, in different regions of the country and with varying degrees of mobility and permanence.

As is pointed out elsewhere in this brochure, the timing for outreach is right. Our soldiers are being asked to take too much of the sacrifice for misguided wars of occupation on their and their families' shoulders.

Iraq Veterans Against The War, Military Families Speak Out and groups like The Military Project in New York are also involved in outreach. The VFP Engagement Campaign does not compete with any of these outreach efforts. VFP will continue the close working relationship with IVAW and other groups in this effort.

Veterans For Peace is a powerful organization, and its genius has always been in its name. It has over two decades of experience promoting peace and social justice as an alternative to the growing militarization of America, a trend in which the preemptive war of choice in Iraq is only a symptom. No group is more dedicated than VFP to ending the occupation of Iraq. But VFP's mission goes beyond that.

It is in the spirit of this mission that, as veterans, we want to engage with our soldiers. If they are so inclined, we want to work with them in opposing the occupation of Iraq and the growing militarization of America.

# What we need

- \* We need volunteers to step up in VFP chapters around the country -- especially those near military bases -- to be local organizers and to research engagement locations.
- \* Funding and resources. For such an important campaign to succeed it needs creative people and financial support to compile and print engagement materials.
- \* Construction and other specialized experience. In certain areas, the VFP Engagement Campaign may establish a permanent operation such as a retreat or a cafe where soldiers could come to engage on the issues in a secure and relaxing location, maybe with entertainment, outdoors activities, DVDs and a political library. With courage, imagination and resources much is possible.
- \* Leadership support. The Engagement Campaign needs support from VFP members and from VFP leaders.
- \* We need good strong liaison work with allied organizations to gain support and a good working relationship.

CONTACT US AT:



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# The Engagement Campaign



## Why a VFP Engagement Campaign?

*“The morale, discipline and battle worthiness of the U.S. Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of The United States. By every conceivable indicator, our army that remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden and dispirited where not near mutinous.” Colonel Robert D. Heinl, June 1971*

Many historians argue the widespread resistance of members of the US armed services brought the Vietnam War to an end.

The morale, discipline and battle worthiness of the U.S Armed Forces today are again under great challenge. Because recruitment can't meet the current needs (despite large increases in the recruitment budget), the military has been using Stop Loss extensions of active duty; relying on use of the Guard and Reserve; lowering educational, intelligence, aptitude and moral standards for enlistment; and sending troops on three and four plus combat tours.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has reached epidemic proportions. There is a sharp increase in alcohol abuse, violence and marital problems among current combat veterans. Suicides by active duty soldiers are at an all time high. Fewer mid-grade sergeants, lieutenants, captains and majors are re-enlisting despite being offered huge re-enlistment bonuses. Desertions, especially in the Army, are a problem. Several mutinies have been reported by

the press in Iraq; and personal accounts heard from soldiers suggest there have been more.

Soldiers and military families are organizing against the war. They include Iraq Veterans Against the War, West Point Graduates Against the War, Military Families Speak Out and Gold Star Families For Peace. Active duty members have initiated The Appeal For Redress, which is a lawful way for soldiers to appeal to Congress to end the war. Over 2,200 have signed the Appeal so far. Polls indicate over 70 percent of the troops and their families think the Iraq War is wrong.

The VFP Engagement Campaign has formed a steering committee of members active in communicating with active duty soldiers, listening to their concerns and standing in solidarity with them. Engagement Campaign members provide active duty, reserve and guard soldiers with information about their rights under the Uniform Code of Military Justice to oppose the war, as well as how to enforce these rights. They inform them where to get counseling if they wish to resist fighting in the war. They provide IVAW and VFP membership information. Some soldiers have received assistance in finding experienced attorneys to represent them.

## *Why the VFP Engagement Campaign needs your help*

Many Veterans For Peace members believe the US occupation of Iraq will end only when American troops refuse to fight, as was the case during Vietnam. Purposeful engagement with the troops is a good way to let those in the military who are against this war know they're not alone, to inform them of their rights and to embolden them to challenge the illegal and immoral occupation they are being used to uphold. We need your help! Contact us via the website or phone number on the reverse side of this brochure.