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## ADVOCATING FOR TRUE SECURITY

*Young Adults Speak Out*

**Current U.S. military spending is stripping funds from programs that could help build the human security that all people long for.**

### The Myth of Absolute Security

BY J. DARYL BYLER

Church and Peace, an ecumenical European group, says that human security is a legitimate human need, but “the quest for absolute security and invulnerability fosters a climate of fear and inevitably undermines . . . the security it seeks to defend.”

Sept. 11 made many Americans feel vulnerable for the first time. The nation has responded with what seems to be a quest for absolute security. Sadly, this militarized response has not made Americans—or the rest of the world—feel safer.

It cannot, because it is rooted in the false assumption that security comes through military might, and greater security comes through even more military might. Millennia ago, the psalmist declared, “A king is not saved by his great army . . . the war horse is a vain hope for victory” (Psalm 33:16–17). Weapons today have become more sophisticated, but the theological truth remains the same.

U.S. military spending during the past six years has mushroomed at a breath-taking rate—from \$310 billion in 2001 to between \$500 billion and \$600 billion in 2007, when adding the costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. To put this in perspective, the Pentagon now gobbles up as many resources in one day as it would cost MCC to operate programs in 55 countries at current rates for a period of 25 years!

Church and Peace goes on to say that, “True security is, paradoxically, the fruit of the risk that we take when we choose to live and struggle for values such as justice, interdependence and community without the use of violence.” Indeed, current U.S. military spending is stripping funds from programs that really could help build the human security that all people long for.

In this issue, writers reflect on how escalating U.S. militarism impacts: the U.S. budget (Krista Zimmerman, p. 3); JROTC programs in U.S. schools (Theo Sittler, p. 6); and militarization of the U.S. border with Mexico (Rashawn Moore, p. 7). Young adults Sarah Thompson and Amanda Arbour describe how their generation has been affected by pressure to join the military (p. 4) and urban violence (p. 5). This issue also includes a tribute to Marian Claassen Franz, long-term director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, who died the week before Thanksgiving 2006 (p. 2).

Our commitment as a staff is to work for U.S. policies and programs that promote justice, foster interdependence and strengthen community. There is no other path to true security. ■

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## She Walked With God

### A Tribute to Marian Claassen Franz

**M**arian Claassen Franz, long-term director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, died Nov. 17, 2006, after a two-year struggle with cancer. Marian's passing came only eight months after the death of her husband, Delton Franz, first director of the MCC Washington Office.

Marian had a contagious enthusiasm for life, her family and her work. She was a favorite speaker at MCC Washington Office seminars, lighting up the room with her presence and optimism. For Marian, the glass was always half full.

In my early years in the Washington Office, Marian frequently asked me to accompany her to congressional offices to talk about the Peace Tax Fund. It was nearly impossible to say "no" to Marian. She taught me much about how to be both pastoral and prophetic in relating to policymakers.

In December 2005, she spoke to moderators and executive directors of all the major Anabaptist groups who had gathered in Washington, D.C. Her presentation was a powerful and succinct account of the rights of conscience from a biblical perspective. It was a fitting summary of her life's work. Within days, she found out that her cancer had returned.

Marian's cancer recurred right as she learned that Delton was dying. At this low moment, she invited Cindy and me to visit in her home. I will never forget

that evening. There would have been good reason for Marian to be bitter. Instead, she talked about the many reasons she had to be thankful.

When Marian died, her children asked me to finish the obituary that Marian had begun to draft. I immediately contacted several congressional offices to get their quotes. The responses were quick and glowing.

"Marian was a tireless voice for religious freedom and the rights of people of conscience," said Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.). "Her energy and persistence in advocating for the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund was a reflection of her deep commitment to our democracy and to the cause of peace."

Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) called Marian "a longtime and effective advocate for peace and human rights." Marian "believed in the dignity of every human being," McGovern reflected, "and that's how she treated everyone she met. She will be deeply missed."

At her memorial service on Feb. 17, 2007, Barbara Green, Director of the Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy, compared Marian's life to Enoch's. "That is how I think about Marian," said Barbara. "She walked with God and was not, for God took her."

Indeed, Marian's departure seems abrupt and untimely. Barbara described Marian's courageous battle with cancer. "That cancer may be out there somewhere gloating, thinking that it won the battle, but we know better . . . All the cancer could do, finally, was give (Marian) a kick down the road into the valley of the shadow of death, the road that took her home to God."

Barbara concluded, "For us, a light went out on Nov. 17, but for her the dawn has come." ■

BY J. DARYL BYLER

**For Marian, the glass was always half full.**

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WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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# The Cost of Militarism in the United States

BY KRISTA ZIMMERMAN

The federal budget can be a daunting thing to care about. It contains trillions of dollars and takes months of political horse trading to enact. Many years it's never finished and few people have ever read the entire document.

But passing the federal budget is one of the most vital tasks Congress performs. The budget allocates funds to important people, powerful interest groups and the very poor. It reflects the common concerns of the nation's citizenry in cold hard cash.

According to Len Nichols, an economist at the New America Foundation, the federal budget is essentially a "memo to God," setting forth a list of the nation's priorities.

The U.S. FY2006 memo (repeated for FY2007) identified military spending as the top U.S. priority. In fact, the United States valued military programs so much that it spent more than half the discretionary budget on them. This money helped purchase:

- the world's largest aircraft carriers
- the only stealth aircraft fleet in the world
- precision missiles capable of striking anywhere on the planet, and
- a deadly nuclear arsenal.

At the same time, general health services (excluding veterans' benefits) received a paltry 6 percent of total discretionary spending.

So it should come as no surprise that while the United States ranks first among industrialized nations in nuclear weapons capa-

bilities, it is dead last at providing access to health care for children. More than 9 million children in the United States lack health insurance.

Fifty years ago, President Eisenhower warned about the human costs of militarism:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children . . . .

And the epistle of James teaches that ignoring human need is like practicing a dead faith.

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that?" So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:15-17)

So this year, ask Congress to make responding to human need its top priority and to reflect that priority in the budget. It's time to prioritize health care coverage for children, educational opportunities, rebuilding efforts in the Gulf Coast, affordable housing and vital community building programs such as the Social Services Block Grants.

Ask Congress to write a new memo: one that eschews militarism for mutual aid and that prioritizes people over warheads. ■

**The budget reflects the common concerns of the nation's citizenry in cold hard cash.**

## Ponius' Puddle



## **The Desire to be Brave, Smart and Make Peace Responding to the Draft**

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BY SARAH THOMPSON

Sarah Thompson is the North American Representative to Amigos, the Youth and Young Adult Committee of Mennonite World Conference. She graduated from Spelman College in 2006 and lives in Rosario, Argentina and Elkhart, Indiana.

**Brave COs will speak out against coercive tactics that trap underprivileged youth and advocate for better educational alternatives.**

I became a conscientious objector (CO) on my grandparents' laps, looking wide-eyed at the black and white pictures in their photo album as they told me stories about the choice Grandpa made to do alternative service instead of fighting in World War II. As a child, I decided to be a CO because I wanted to be brave like my grandpa, smart like my grandma, and make peace in the world.

It seemed like a good decision, because every time I told an adult I was a CO, I received surprised reactions. Some chronicled their experiences of CO projects during WWII or the Vietnam War. Others said there would never be a draft again, that conscientious objection is "a thing of the past."

As an antiwar activist in college, I realized the draft is not "a thing of the past." For many people who are economically impoverished, it is very real. What it means to be an Anabaptist CO has, in this sense, endured.

Military recruiters deceive underprivileged youth into believing their only educational option involves the military.

In 2006, the Atlanta University Center Peace Coalition conducted interviews with ten African-American women who participated in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at Spelman College. Over three-fourths of the interview participants noted that they would not have joined ROTC if it were not for the promise of education and the guarantee of a job. Without another way to attend quality institutions of higher learning (at an average cost of \$21,000 a year) these women accepted the reality that the military might interrupt their educations and deploy them into combat zones.

During my time at Spelman, two ROTC students were deployed and many more ROTC members spent their vacations in the reserves.

COs are called to peace and to a spiritual commitment to nonviolence. They also have to be smart in the way they live their daily lives (living simply to help create more options for themselves and for others). But, more than ever, COs need to be brave. Brave COs will speak out against coercive tactics that trap underprivileged youth and advocate for better educational alternatives.

Congress should allocate sufficient resources for students, so that economically disadvantaged youth do not need to rely on the military to receive quality higher education. Remind Congress that war is taking a toll on young adult communities, and there is a great need for resources allocated toward nonviolent initiatives. Submit a letter to the editor of your local paper, with copies to your representative and senators, suggesting ways to make a positive difference for young people and a more peaceful tomorrow. ■

# Connecting Gun Violence and Militarism

**YOUNG ADULTS  
SPEAK OUT**

I live in Philadelphia and have seen the City of Brotherly Love bloodied by gun violence. In 2006, 406 people were murdered—344 of them by guns. That’s more than one person every single day.

In a sermon at Oxford Circle Mennonite Church, our pastor, Leonard Dow, linked the rampant gun violence to the increasing militarism of our government. He asked, “How can we tell our young people that violence is not the answer when daily they see the government using violence as a solution?”

Gun violence and militarism are linked by their disastrous results and also by the factors that fuel them. It’s about power and respect.

On the street, you have to protect your “cred”—you can’t look weak. Violence is the means to defend respect. Militarism is similarly motivated. More and more countries seek nuclear capability because they want respect from the international community. They think becoming nuclear states means the world, and the United States, will listen to them.

The United States has failed to address this underlying desire for respect in its approach to both domestic and international policies.

It puts more police on the streets, but urban violence can’t be solved by locking people up. It tries to crack down on guns, but you can’t take a gun out of someone’s hand without offering them something better.

Black men are overwhelmingly the victims of gun violence—they accounted for 272 of the 344 gun deaths in Philly last year. When the broken education system fails them, when a woefully inadequate minimum wage traps them in poverty, it is no surprise that gangs and guns look appealing. But the government’s solution, instead of better education and better jobs, is more cops and more jails.

The same ill-focused policies can be seen at the international level. Instead of addressing the need for respect at the root of international conflicts, the U.S. government relies on tanks and threats. Its attempts to suppress “rogue states” with brute military force often intensify conflicts instead of solving them.

The oft-used slogan “No justice, no peace!” applies to gun violence in all its forms. Violence is a tempting alternative to the victims of injustice. If we work to break down the barriers to opportunity in our cities, we can reduce gun violence. If we adopt a more humble and just foreign policy, we can reduce militarism.

As Christians we have a moral imperative to address these issues in ways that promote justice and bring an end to violence.

I will not stand by while my generation is killed, or while my government slaughters people worldwide. I choose to follow Jesus in the pursuit of peace and the fight for justice. ■

**BY AMANDA ARBOUR**

Amanda Arbour is from Philadelphia, Pa. and is currently studying at Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.) with a double major in politics and sociology, and a minor in French. She is active on campus in a variety of political and social-justice related organizations.

**Gun violence and militarism are linked by their disastrous results and also by the factors that fuel them. It’s about power and respect.**

## **TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ADVOCACY ISSUES**

Remember to regularly check our website—[www.mcc.org/us/washington](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington)—to see the latest action alerts and advocacy opportunities.

You may also sign up to receive action alerts by e-mail at [www.mcc.org/us/washington/alert\\_form.html](http://www.mcc.org/us/washington/alert_form.html).

# Child Soldiers of America

BY THEO SITHTER

*“One key institution that is currently under intense attack from the military is public education.” —Rick Jahnkow (Counter-military recruitment activist)*

Modern Americans live in a militarized culture, desensitized to the glorification of war and violence in their society. The military stealthily influences the social order and is greeted with passive acceptance by its audience.

Over the years, the military crept into U.S. public schools in a big way.

Many public high schools across the United States join the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) every year. The Pentagon originally started the program in 1916 in order to train teenagers for service in World War I. Then, in the early 1990s, it revitalized the program to discipline ‘at-risk’ youth in the inner cities and employed retired officers to teach the courses. Although the JROTC program was sold as a way to shape troubled youth and teach discipline, it is, in reality, a perverse form of education that teaches young people the way of war and violence.

**Militarized education is not an alternative.** While many public schools in the country are crumbling, the Pentagon promotes JROTC as an alternative for financially strapped schools. Public schools cut music and art programs and use JROTC to fill the gap. But the kind of education offered is heavily military-focused and the courses often contain inaccuracies. The school districts exercise no control over the curriculum and, as a result, the educational quality is often substandard. Many of the instructors teach without educational training or college degrees. The courses them-

selves teach students to follow passively, submit to military authority and brainwash them into leading a militarized lifestyle.

**JROTC fosters violent behavior.** Proponents claim that JROTC teaches discipline and helps young people avoid gang membership and violent behavior. But the programs also foster violent behavior. There are well documented cases of JROTC units forming their own gangs and perpetrating violence against peers and communities. Rather than teaching students alternatives to violence, the programs teach students to use weapons and solve problems with violence.

**Militarized schools mean more recruits.** According to the Pentagon’s own numbers, about 40 percent of those who graduate from JROTC join the military. As the military educates the nation’s students and militarizes the schools, it results in more bodies for the Pentagon to use in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In a *New York Times* op-ed, retired Rear Admiral Eugene J. Carroll stated, “It is appalling that the Pentagon is selling a military training program as a remedy for intractable social and economic problems in inner cities. Surely, its real motive is to inculcate a positive attitude toward military service at a very early age, thus creating a storehouse of potential recruits.”

Psalm 34:14 tells us to “seek peace and pursue it.” We must teach, seek and pursue the way of peace and non-violence and oppose the use of military indoctrination as an educational tool.

Call on Congress to stop creating child soldiers in the United States. ■

Over the years, the military crept into U.S. public schools in a big way.

## DAYS OF PRAYER & ACTION FOR PEACE IN COLOMBIA

Colombian, U.S. and Canadian churches are joining together May 20–21 to offer prayers for peace and to speak out about suffering and turmoil caused by Colombia’s 40-year armed conflict. For more information, including worship resources, bulletin inserts, and advocacy materials, please visit [www.mcc.org/colombia](http://www.mcc.org/colombia).

# Militarized Borders

## Imagining a More Compassionate World

Imagine a place where the only constant is suffering and people struggle to survive and find water in a barren, inhospitable desert. Armed soldiers patrol the vast, unforgiving landscape around the clock and there are random checkpoints on all the major highways. In this place, daily raids on homes and businesses often lead to mass detentions.

Imagine a place where families are ripped apart and where parents are placed in tent cities surrounded by barbed wire, their children left behind, wondering where to find them.

You might think this place is in Africa or in the Middle East—but it isn't. This place is in the United States, along its southern border.

National Guard units patrol the U.S./Mexico border and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees construction of a separation wall that slices through once-thriving border communities, like Nogales, Arizona and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Not so long ago each community shared the prosperity of transnational commerce. Now, both suffer the economic and social consequences of division.

Border Patrol agents, supplemented by an array of surveillance equipment, such as stadium lighting and mobile command posts, set up random checkpoints along U.S. highways around the border. Along Interstate 19, between Tucson and Nogales, Arizona, all vehicles are stopped and all occupants are required to provide identification.

In the rest of the United States, immigration raids take place with increased frequency. Factories, homes and business are targeted. Detainees, many of whom are parents, are held in detention centers, under harsh conditions, far from their families. Children come home from school to discover their parents missing. Daycare providers, churches and community centers are left to respond.

It is time for the faith community to speak out against this militarization of the United States, its southern border and its immigration system. It is time for the U.S. Congress to hear the voices of reason, compassion and peace.

Increasing the number of border patrol agents, placing troops along the southern border, mass raids and deportations are not actions consistent with compassionate immigration reform, nor are they consistent with Christian humanitarian principles.

Let's ask Congress to pass compassionate comprehensive immigration reform that will demilitarize the southern border, create pathways to citizenship and keep families intact. This is the world we should imagine. ■

BY RASHAWN MOORE

**It is time for the faith community to speak out against this militarization of the United States, its southern border and its immigration system.**

### CAPITAL QUOTES

*"A year ago my approval rating was in the 30s, my nominee for the Supreme Court had just withdrawn, and my vice-president had shot someone. Ah, those were the good ol' days."*

—President George W. Bush, at the National Press Club dinner

*"We want to exercise our rights under the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty], not more, not less."*

—Dr. Saeed Jalili, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for European Affairs, responding to a question about nuclear weapons

*"We hope for the day when, instead of arms and weapons, we will have only pens to write with. This depends on my efforts and your efforts."*

—Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, speaking to a delegation of U.S. religious leaders about the future of international relations



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## SOUND THE TRUMPET!

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
HAITI DEBT RELIEF	On March 13 Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) re-introduced the Haiti debt cancellation resolution (H. Res. 241) calling on the international financial institutions (International Monetary Fund, World Bank and International Development Bank) to cancel Haiti's debt. Eight other members of Congress co-sponsored the bill at its introduction. Last year this resolution gained 68 co-sponsors before Congress finished up business. Debt relief for Haiti is vital to its peace and economic security.	Contact your member of Congress and ask that he/she co-sponsor the Haiti debt cancellation resolution. For more information visit <a href="http://www.jubileeusa.org">www.jubileeusa.org</a> or <a href="http://www.ijdh.org">www.ijdh.org</a> .
IRAQ	The U.S.-led war in Iraq is in its fifth year and the situation continues to deteriorate. Daily violence makes it difficult for many Iraqis to go to work, buy food and send their children to school. Growing insurgent and sectarian violence hampers efforts to rebuild Iraq's infrastructure. Electricity and oil production are still below pre-war levels. Nearly 4 million Iraqis are refugees or internally displaced.	Urge the president and Congress to: 1) stop increasing U.S. troop levels and begin an orderly process of withdrawal; 2) stay engaged in regional talks (including Syria and Iran) aimed at restoring security in Iraq; 3) provide generous financial support for infrastructure and reconstruction; and 4) take responsibility for addressing the crisis of refugees and internally displaced persons.

### USEFUL ADDRESSES



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