

# ACTION REPORT

PEACE DEMANDS ACTION

## OBAMA & NETROOTS ADVOCACY IN 2009

The Quarterly Newsletter of  
Peace Action and the  
Peace Action Education Fund  
Winter 2008 Vol.47 No. 2

BY: **BARBRA BEARDEN**

The Obama camp recognized the power of grassroots activists early in his campaign. This strategy pushed him to the top in the primary against Hillary Clinton and it rocketed him to the Presidency in the final months of a long campaign. He mobilized millions of activists through the netroots – connecting a nation online.

His strategy took a lesson from his days as a community organizer; meet people where they are and then encourage them to step forward and act. President-elect Obama had success engaging activists online because Peace Action, and groups like us, laid the ground work.

In 2003 we launched our first online campaign. Since then we have honed our process to provide you with effective online actions that make an impact on U.S. policy and legislators.

A little under a year ago we created a campaign against the Bush

administration's plan to build new nuclear weapons. The public outcry halted production plans. Now the project is shelved until the Obama administration takes office.

This summer another of our online campaigns stopped an aggressive sanction bill against Iran. The bill called on

the Navy to blockade Iranian ports, an action largely considered to be an act of war. We sent out the call online and the overwhelming response forced Congress to take a second look. The bill never passed.

The question today is whether or not our new netroots savvy president will be more inclined to react positively to our online campaigns. It will

be up to us to force the issue after his inauguration – the first point of intervention must be his plans for withdrawing from Iraq.

**NO SOLDIER LEFT BEHIND** is an online campaign to bring our troops home safely and provide the necessary stability to create sustainable peace in Iraq. It calls on President Obama to withdraw U.S. troops and replace them with an international peace-keeping force. It demands regional cooperation with Iraq's neighbors and Iraqi-led reconstruction of the country. You can join this campaign by going to [Peace Action's website, PEACE-ACTION.ORG.](http://Peace-Action.org)

Barack Obama promised to be a president who listened to those who disagree with him. If he is willing to work with Bush administration cast-offs like Robert Gates



he must also make every effort to work with the progressive activists who put him in office.

The most recent changes to his transition website do look promising. Already, he has begun online discussions about the economic crisis and our healthcare system.

There is no such section for his foreign policy; but, through our own advocacy we can change that. The important conversations about our occupation of Iraq, how to handle Afghanistan, and nuclear weapons must be brought out into the public forum. There is renewed hope this promise may be kept.



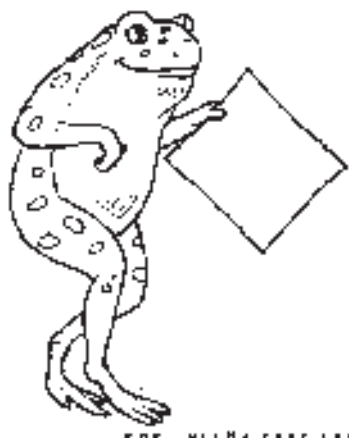
# STRATEGIC LEAPFROG

## TOWARD THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

BY: **KEVIN MARTIN**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PEACE ACTION & PEACE ACTION EDUCATION FUND

President Barack Obama will have a ton of issues on his plate: there will be some that we agree with and support him on, and others not so much. One area in the first category, which we have worked on for 51 years, is global nuclear disarmament, which he repeatedly and strongly advocated for in his election campaign.

This presents an opportunity for abolition advocates to leapfrog over many thorny



nuclear weapons issues put on the table by the Bush Administration. For eight years we've played defense against new nuclear weapons. If Obama is true to his word there are a number of ways the nuclear disarmament movement can lobby for near-term goals while pressing the issue of abolition.

Negotiations on nuclear weapons abolition could also be an umbrella under which other negotiations could be conducted, for example: task forces or sub-negotiations on a fissile material cut-off, and doing away with missile defense.

There is much agreement, within Peace Action and our allies, on near-term arms control priorities including a coordinated "inside-outside" strategy. This is especially true with regard to the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Since the Senate failed to ratify it in 1999 the CTBT sat dormant; but, we'll have many opportunities in 2009 and 2010 to push it forward again.

We should not neglect work on near-term steps that the Obama Administration needs to take in the next 18-20 months: taking



nuclear weapons off high-alert status; working for CTBT ratification; working on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty to eliminate nuclear bomb-making materials; extending the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START, which will expire at the end of 2009); or, creating a treaty for deeper nuclear weapons reductions with Russia. But we need to go further than these important steps.

We should call on President Obama to use upcoming opportunities to call for the initiation of negotiations to abolish nuclear weapons. Either a START extension or a follow-up treaty with Russia would bolster our shared interest in nuclear abolition. The



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### IN THIS ISSUE

**OBAMA & NETROOTS ADVOCACY IN 2009** 1

**STRATEGIC LEAPFROG TOWARD THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS** 2

LEAPFROG CONT. 3

**WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR DIPLOMACY?** 3

**THE PEACE ECONOMY STOPPING MILITARY WASTE** 4

**INSANE** 4

**BOMBING FOR PEACE ANOTHER FAILED STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN** 5

**NO BREAK FOR STUDENT ACTIVISTS** 6

**Americans Say: Where's Our Referendum?** 6

**AFFILIATES IN ACTION** 7

**PEACE VOTER WRAP-UP** 7

**ONE MINUTE ACTIVIST** 8

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in 2010 (which has a preparatory meeting early in 2009) provides yet another opportunity to engage nuclear countries worldwide. These negotiations needn't start from scratch. The very comprehensive Model Nuclear Weapons Convention has been around since 1997, and we can point to that as a start.

Negotiations could start with President Obama calling for nuclear disarmament discussions at the Conference on Disarmament (CD, an arm of the United Nations). He should do

this; but, the issue needs more leverage than discussions at the CD will provide. President Obama should initiate discussions at the CD and then appoint a special ambassador tasked with negotiating a nuclear weapons abolition treaty at high diplomatic levels.

A benefit of the leapfrog approach is the integration of near term steps with the ultimate goal of abolishing nuclear weapons. This approach to abolition would be flexible enough that it not be dependent on (and thus

## LEAPFROG, FROM PAGE 2

subject to derailment by the failure of) any incremental step. It gives Obama politically advantageous ways to advance nuclear abolition on the global stage and show he

is serious about disarmament.

This approach honors the dual role we in the

peace movement need to play as organizers. We need to get the CTBT ratified and support Obama in implementing de-alerting. But, as movement leaders, visionaries, and envelope pushers we must always take a firm stance for a

## Action Report

nuclear weapons free world.

I see the alternative, an incremental approach, as tacitly or implicitly checking off benchmarks -potentially creating an impossible minefield for us and the Obama Administration to navigate. Without meaning to we could lose the forest for the trees. We need to win the short term battles: de-alerting; creating a Fissile Material Cut-Off treaty; ratifying the CTBT; extending START; and, killing Star Wars, the reliable replacement warhead, and Complex Transformation. But, we cannot lose site of the fact that abolition is the only acceptable goal.

## WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR DIPLOMACY?

By: BARBRA BEARDEN

Obama publicly stated, throughout his presidential campaign, he would have high level diplomatic talks with Iran. His assertions are supported by former heads of state, the Council on Foreign Relations, scholars, and activists. Now, real diplomatic talks may be on the horizon; but, we need to work to keep pressure on.

What would that diplomacy look like – and what would we expect it to achieve? Within our state

interests and the Iranian state interests there are points of diplomatic intersection no administration has explored.

The most recent news suggests President Ahmadinejad's popularity is quickly falling, like our own president, due to a severe economic downturn in Iran. With gas consumption down the price of oil is falling rapidly, along with the Iranian coffers. This is bad news for Ahmadinejad and good news for President-elect Obama who may not have to deal with the

controversial President for long.

If Iran wants to remain competitive in the energy market, which represents 60% of its budget, it will need to adjust to more cost effective and sustainable technologies. The cost of oil fluctuates. Today oil producing countries should recognize they cannot base their entire budget on one resource, no matter how valuable and scarce. Open-ended talks with Iran will allow the U.S. to explore how our nations can meet our energy needs and stimulate the global

economy.

This mutually shared interest creates points of leverage on other important peace and security issues – like Iran's nuclear energy program. It also allows global players, like the U.S. and European Union, greater access to high level decision-makers in the Iranian government. Capitalizing on deep, mutually beneficial relationships between our governments is more productive and less devastating than any sanction or threat of war has ever been.

# THE PEACE ECONOMY

## STOPPING MILITARY WASTE WILL HELP IN CRISIS

BY: SETH LONG

The issue of the U.S. military, specifically weapons spending, remains the elephant in the room in talks concerning the U.S. economy. In just seven years U.S. military spending has more than doubled, from \$333 billion in 2001 to \$706 billion in 2008, reaching a record high.

U.S. military spending constitutes 48 percent of the world's total, and is more than the next 45 countries combined. Domestically, not including the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, military spending requests for 2009 constitute 54 percent of the discretionary budget that is voted on by Congress.

The result of military largesse is two-fold. First, prioritizing war funding over programs such as health care, education, and renewable energy creates shortfalls in areas that provide long-term investments in the well-being of the American people. This leaves us at a competitive disadvantage in education; less healthy compared to other developed nations; and, overly dependent on fossil fuel energy.

Second, we run the risk of reaping what we sow as other nations attempt to emulate our example and increase their military strength. Often we contribute to this by

pouring arms into developing nations, when they would be better served with humanitarian and development aid. From 2000 to 2007 the United States was the leading supplier of arms to developing nations, exporting over \$57 billion in arms to the developing world.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Considering only nuclear weapons, \$14 billion could be saved by scaling back our nuclear arsenal from 10,000 to 1,000 weapons.

Increasingly, even former high-ranking defense officials have called for cuts to U.S. military spending, especially wasteful cold war weapons. According to Lawrence Korb, former assistant Defense Secretary from 1981-1985, the United States can revitalize our domestic economy by shifting \$60 billion in wasteful cold war weapons spending to human needs.

It is clear that choices need to be made in our budgeting process. As citizens we must keep our elected officials accountable to the needs of the citizenry. Join our **ACTION ALERT LIST ONLINE** to stay up-to-date.

# INSANE

On October 1, 2008, the U.S. Army announced that the 3rd Infantry Division's 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT) will be under the day-to-day control of U.S. Army North as an on-call federal response force for natural or man-made emergencies and disasters, including terrorist attacks.

In other words, under the guise of Homeland Security the Bush Administration has created a way around the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 – an act which prevents U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, or Air Force from enforcing rule of law - on non-federal property. The National Guard was created after, under the administration of individual states, to defend those states during times of crisis.

The act exists to check Federal power where the sovereignty and rights of individual states are concerned. Since Bush deployed our National Guard to Iraq he's looking to cover his tracks.

After his disastrous response to Hurricane Katrina and his immoral war in Iraq, Bush was still able to convince Congress he would responsibly deploy Federal troops on U.S. soil. Allowing Bush to trample on state sovereignty and ignore a fundamental protection against federal tyranny is **INSANE.**

## STAY UP-TO-DATE ONLINE

**PEACE-ACTION.ORG**  
**STUDENTPEACEACTION.ORG**

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DESIGNED & EDITED BY: BARBRA J. BEARDEN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: KEVIN MARTIN

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1100 Wayne Ave. Suite 1020  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
ph (301)565-4050, fx (301)565-0850

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# BOMBING FOR PEACE

## ANOTHER FAILED STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN

BY: YEABU CONTEH

In response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. soil in 2001, the Bush administration launched a relentless series of attacks on Afghani towns suspected of being terrorist strongholds. This knee-jerk response lacked

concrete objectives, tactics, and goals. The absence of a comprehensive plan for administration and withdrawal has some analysts predicting this war will last longer than Vietnam.

The United States suffered greatly at the hand of Al Qaeda; but, our attack on, and occupation of, Afghanistan is a disproportional response. We attacked an innocent country for the actions of a global terrorist network. It has cost thousands of lives and alienated ordinary Afghans the U.S. needs as allies to successfully quell violence and oust Islamic fundamentalists. According to a United Nations report released in September, Afghan civilians killed in insurgent attacks and air

strikes by NATO and U.S. forces rose 40 percent in the past year; this, despite protests against the violence.



Increased attacks on civilians ultimately erode support for any foreign military presence and serves as a recruiting tool for Al Qaeda.

There are millions of Afghans who are living as refugees in Iran and Pakistan, many with no intent on returning home. They cannot because efforts by U.S.-NATO forces to bring peace, reconstruction, and increased development to Afghanistan have failed for almost a decade. Too many Afghani families are living in underground shelters with little to no access to clean potable water, health clinics, or jobs. Many of those people are drawn into overcrowded urban areas like Kabul in hopes of accessing these basic services. They are met, more often than not,

with more setbacks and disappointment.

How can the U.S. lead the effort in helping to reverse these trends? What can we do, as American citizens, to help influence a more inclusive and comprehensive foreign policy towards Afghanistan? Even in the face of the quagmire in Iraq and a global recession, our country cannot forget our responsibility to the people of Afghanistan and our troops. Since it began, more than 600 U.S. service men and women have been killed in addition to hundreds of foreign troops and thousands of Afghans.

The U.S. must abandon the idea of 'recycling troops' by pulling them out of Iraq and sending them to Afghanistan. Increased troop presence did not make Iraq safer and it will not make Afghanistan safer. Our mission cannot be to force peace at the end of a gun barrel. We must, instead, focus on rebuilding the country and

empowering the Afghan people to lead it.

U.S.-NATO forces must take steps to open the door for diplomatic talks between the local government, regional partners, Al Qaeda, and Afghani civil society. The first step is to stop the violent and indiscriminate attacks on Afghani villages. Then, begin negotiations for talks without preconditions. The U.S. cannot lead this effort – but, we can support it. As peace-minded Americans it is our responsibility to demand a new approach



to promoting peace in Afghanistan. War has never been effective at achieving sustainable peace; but, well thought out diplomacy could prevent the current situation in Afghanistan from continuing another eight years.

# NO BREAK FOR STUDENT ACTIVISTS

By: JONATHAN WILLIAMS

This summer was an exciting time for young activists across the country. Beginning in July, the 2008 Student Peace Action (SPAN) Convergence brought together many new faces from across the country for trainings in nonviolence, direct action, community organizing, GI outreach, and more. Students also heard from a range of speakers on nuclear weapons, war profiteering, and counter-recruitment; including veterans recently returned from Iraq.

The Democratic National Convention in August generated a large youth turnout. Obama's rhetoric of change and progress resonated strongly with youth and inspired many.



Thousands of others, led by Iraq Veterans Against the War, marched on the convention and demanded the veterans be allowed to speak with Barack Obama. The protesters refused to clear the streets until their demands were met. In short

time a spokesperson for the Obama campaign agreed to their demands. It was an exciting victory.

At the Republican National Convention, tens of thousands of youth converged in Saint Paul to protest the Republican agenda. The tension was palpable and contrasted greatly with the hopeful mood of the Denver convention. Despite attempts to silence us, youth and veterans once again teamed up and marched on the convention. This time, the McCain

campaign refused to meet with the veterans – a telling move that clearly demonstrated the pro-war agenda of the Republicans.

This summer inspired SPAN students everywhere to commit to working with veterans and active-duty soldiers. Truth in recruiting and GI outreach efforts have thus become a top priority for SPAN activists in 2009, and we can be certain that more victories are to come.

## AMERICANS SAY: WHERE'S OUR REFERENDUM?

What does the recent passage of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) by the Iraqi Parliament and Cabinet mean for the peace movement?

Will Obama get us home? As one of the oldest peace organizations in the country, Peace Action has seen dynamic and inspiring presidents come and go. We have seen agreements signed and then violated. We understand that there is no end until every last U.S. soldier is returned home.

The SOFA allows the Iraqi people to vote on it in July of 2009. Unfortunately, the people

of the U.S. have been given no such check on government power. How ironic, that the democracy we claimed to have brought to Iraq is not being practiced at home.



We need a referendum to give the millions of pro-peace citizens a chance to make their voices heard on the Iraq issue. We should have an opportu-

nity to vote on the scale of our presence in Iraq now, and during the period of reconstruction.

What about maintaining Bush's 'war on terror' in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan? It is doubtful the American people will be allowed to vote on the continuation of this failed policy either. As activists we can look ahead in Obama's presidency and see many points of intervention: to stop funding for the occupation; to prevent a troop surge in Afghanistan; and, to stop cross-border military incursions into Pakistan. We can also suggest proactive

By: BARBRA BEARDEN

steps like diplomatic talks with Iran about Iraqi reconstruction and increased humanitarian aid to the Afghan people.

Our first step in this direction is **No SOLDIER LEFT BEHIND**. This is a comprehensive plan that acknowledges our liability in Iraq and demands our government responsibly withdraw troops at the earliest possible date. The American people deserve a chance to get involved in the debate – so let's follow the Iraqi example and put it to a vote.

## AFFILIATES IN ACTION

WHETHER OR NOT YOU AGREE WITH PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA'S RECENT CABINET APPOINTMENTS YOU HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT HE IS A GAME CHANGER WHEN IT COMES TO U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. OUR MOVEMENT, AND OUR ORGANIZATION, HAS TO RE-EVALUATE HOW TO ADVANCE OUR STRATEGY.

PEACE ACTION, AND OUR ENTIRE AFFILIATE NETWORK, IS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS TO ENGAGE THE NEW PRESIDENT. PEACE ACTION WILL LAY OUT A STRATEGY TO MAKE REAL INROADS TO END OUR FOREIGN OCCUPATIONS AND MAKE NUCLEAR ABOLITION A PRIORITY.

WE'RE RUNNING TWO CONSECUTIVE CAMPAIGNS DIRECTED AT THE PRESIDENT-ELECT AND WE'RE HOPEFUL THESE MEETINGS WILL IDENTIFY MORE POINTS OF INTERVENTION.

IT'S TIME TO STOP PLAYING DEFENSE WITH OUR GOVERNMENT. A NEW ADMINISTRATION OPENS NEW DOORS AND REQUIRES NEW PLANS. WE'RE STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE, ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AND IN THE HALLS OF POWER.

## PEACE VOTER

BY: PAUL KAWIKA MARTIN

Peace Voter 2008 showed great successes, in another historic election, educating, advocating, and lobbying for our issues. Peace Action is one of the few peace groups that employ a plethora of election tactics to further the issues you care about. We put our mark directly into the campaigns of peace candidates by providing staff and resources. We created voter guides and endorsed candidates. Peace Action coordinated voter protection and get out the vote campaigns to mobilize and protect peace voters.

This year we hired two excellent organizers, George Martin and George

Friday to work in key states of Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin. They helped distribute thousands of voter guides, organized volunteers, and provided trainings. They worked within coalitions to register a record number of voters, made sure they made it to the polls, and that their votes counted.

Besides our organizers, we used emails, post-cards, phone banks, and robo-calls. Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) and actress Amy Madigan lent their voices to educate the electorate on how to

## LEAVE A LEGACY OF PEACE

WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO HAVE

- |                      |                      |                         |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| CHRISTOPHER SCHEFLER | CONSTANCE W. LANGTRY | FRANCIS AND EDITH SEARS |
| AILEEN CRAMER        | LEO SEREN            | ROBERT SCHWARTZ         |
| GEORGE KAPP          | ESTHER A. STAVIS     | CATHERINE HESS          |

FREDRICK RONALD MANBRIDGE

"FOR LIKE NOTHING ELSE IN THE WORLD, HOPE AROUSES A PASSION FOR THE POSSIBLE, A DETERMINATION THAT OUR CHILDREN NOT BE ASKED TO SHOULDER BURDENS WE LET FALL."

Peace Action President Emeritus, Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

### BEQUEST YOUR LEGACY OF PEACE

CONTACT PETER DECCY: 301.565.4050 EXT. 326  
OR PDECCY@PEACE-ACTION.ORG

register, where to vote, and how to protect their vote.

Several candidates, or their campaign managers, like Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ), called me coveting a Peace Action endorsement. We endorsed dozens of candidates most of whom got elected.

Our PAC donated tens of thousands of dollars to key peace candidates and we used e-bundling to raise tens of thousands more for candidates from our supporters. Peace Action PAC took out newspaper and radio advertisements in key races. We placed organizers in campaigns that helped elect Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and reelect Rep. Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH).

We already started planning for the 2010 election cycle. Peace Voter 2010 will help inform voters and elect candidates to Congress that espouse your values: peace through international cooperation and human rights and the abolition of nuclear weapons.



IT IS UP TO US, THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. AND AROUND THE WORLD, TO SEE THAT NO NEW WARS START IN WESTERN ASIA. THAT THE U.S. OCCUPATION OF IRAQ IS ENDED; AND, THAT OUR NATION IS SET ON A PATH WHICH PROMOTES PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, AND SECURITY BASED ON PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE.

**MORE THAN EVER I SUPPORT PEACE ACTION'S WORK FOR PEACE BECAUSE I HAVE HOPE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW.**

There has never been a more important time for us to raise our voices for peace. We finally have a chance to make real progress. Enclosed is my investment in Peace Action's effective grassroots organizing, public mobilizing and congressional education.

**Here is my donation for:**

\$40 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

Visa, Mastercard, Discover \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

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THIS CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE ACTION IS NOT TAX-DEDUCTIBLE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!



**ONE MINUTE ACTIVIST**

For the first time in eight years our country is primed for change. Our new President is young and energetic; and, he has called on us to be proactive for the change we want to see. Peace Action has been working under that assumption since its inception. We're running two campaigns directed at the new President we'd like you to take action on today by going to [PEACE-ACTION.ORG](http://PEACE-ACTION.ORG).

**No SOLDIER LEFT BEHIND:** Sign this letter calling for a complete withdrawal of U.S. contractors and troops, Iraqi-led reconstruction efforts, international peace-keepers, and regional cooperation with Iran and Syria.

**PLEDGE TO WORK FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPONS FREE WORLD:** This campaign simply states, "We call upon the next President of the United States to make a world free of nuclear weapons an urgent priority and to assure US leadership to realize this goal."

**TAKE THESE ONE MINUTE ACTIONS TODAY.**

*Obama and Netroots  
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