Nebraskans’ Bill for the Iraq War: $21,450 per Household (and growing)

by Hank van den Berg
UNL Associate Professor of Economics

The Bush/Cheney Administration has intentionally kept the costs of the Iraq War hidden from public view. There has been no tax increase to cover the $500 billion that the government will spend on the war through the end of this year. The administration has indicated it will request another $200 billion for the war through the end of 2008, but most Americans will pay no attention since they will not be asked to pay any additional taxes. Some simple math shows that this full amount comes down to an average of more than $6,000 for each of the 113 million American households. While this number is large, more thorough analysis suggests that the Iraq War’s full costs will be at least four times that large.

The Budgeted Costs

Obviously, if the Iraq occupation continues into 2009 and beyond with 130,000 troops and 50,000 contractors, expenditures will continue at about $10 billion per month—or about $100 per household. We cannot predict how much longer the occupation of Iraq will continue, but it is safe to say that the $700 billion in military expenditures through the end of 2008 are as low as we can realistically hope for.

But, even under the assumption that the occupation ends by the end of next year, there are many costs beyond the budgeted direct military expenditures. For example, conservative estimates suggest that about $25 billion of airplanes, helicopters, tanks, rifles, drones and other equipment is being used up each year the war continues. Hence, to the costs of occupation through 2008 we must add $125 billion for ‘depreciation.’ The military will have to budget for this sooner or later, and American households will eventually be asked to pay.

The biggest costs of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq are not shown in the military budget, however. The costs of the military and civilian casualties, the cost of the destruction, the costs of the economic disruption and the widespread social costs in the U.S. (not to mention Iraq) dwarf the budgeted military expenses. Precise estimates of these costs are difficult to make, but economists can provide some ballpark figures.

The Value of Life, Medical Costs, & the Cost of Disability

To put a value on a human life, economists observe human choices. After all, people make decisions every day that reflect how they value health and risk. Many of these choices involve market decisions, such as working a risky job, purchasing a hazardous product or choosing among alternative medical procedures. Suppose, for example, that a worker in a dangerous job demands $10,000 more per year than in a less dangerous job. Suppose the more dangerous job increases the probability of dying from 0.005 percent to 0.01 percent, or an increase in the probability of death of 0.005 percent. Under the assumption that workers make their choices rationally, we can conclude that the difference in pay implies that a worker values his or her life at 1/.005 x $10,000, or $5,000,000. Obviously, there may be many other reasons why wages differ across jobs, and people may not...
Nebraska Report

The *Nebraska Report* is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

**Newspaper Committee:** Tim Rinne, Editor; Mark Vasina, Christy Hargesheimer, Peter Salter, Marsha Fangmeyer, Paul Olson

**Typesetting and Layout:** Michelle Ashley

**Printing:** Fremont Tribune

**Circulation:** 7,000

Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month’s issue. Submit to: *Nebraska Report*, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 ‘O’ Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraskans for Peace is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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Football Saturday Peace Rally Urges Troop Exit from Iraq

*by Lisa Janssen*

**Nebraska Coalition for Peace**

“What are you doing? It’s game day.”

This comment was heard during the Sept 15 anti-war march on ‘O’ Street in Lincoln.

What were we doing? We were standing up for peace. While thousands were gathering to cheer on the Huskers in their big showdown with Southern Cal, a smaller, but no less passionate crowd of 200 gathered in cheering to “Bring the Troops Home.” The war hadn’t ceased, the dying hadn’t stopped, and the lies about what’s happening in Iraq hadn’t suddenly turned into truths just because the Huskers took on the Trojans.

We marched right into the noise and crowds of game day to stand up for peace.

The Nebraska Coalition for Peace planned and hosted the event titled “U.S. Out of Iraq.” RC Dub, a local band welcomed the crowd with their much-loved reggae music. Speakers Ron Meyer and Debbie Smith, both veterans, spoke from their hearts about their personal experiences.

Meyer, a Vietnam War veteran, spoke of the ongoing emotional and physical problems confronting war veterans. Smith, a Desert Storm veteran whose son is currently serving in the Army, has started a local chapter of “Veterans Against the War.” Each of the speakers was bold about sharing their convictions and speaking out against the war.

Following their speeches, we marched through the early day football crowds. A few onlookers voiced their opposition for our cause; many more voiced their support or honked as they drove by; and many just watched. They read our signs, listened to our chants of “No More War” to the cadence of “Bring the Troops Home.” The energy continued as we made a positive impact on many that we had not previously. The energy continued as we marched back down ‘O’ Street to the green space on Centennial Mall. While RC Dub treated us to more music, activists talked with one another about finding new ways to get involved and connected.

A vibrant peace community is essential to the health of our democratic society and our collective well-being. Earlier this year, I attended a protest in Washington, D.C. I networked with numerous activists and asked “what makes the most impact for peace?” Time and time again they responded, “We have to constantly be contacting our representatives, so they cannot turn a blind eye.” One activist told of a politician who had said the activist presence has helped change the dialogue on the floor of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Here in Lincoln, several Coalition members and I have been visiting our representatives’ offices on a regular basis. It is our hope that this will change their conversations and encourage them to be stronger in standing up for an end to this illegal war. I urge everyone to contact your representatives by telephone, by letter, by email or in person. Let them know you want this war to end now.

I thank all those who organized and you who participated in the September 15 march and rally. The event has energized me to keep acting for peace and has reminded me that I am not alone. I hope that if you were there, you too are energized and inspired to do more as an activist. I stand tall with so many of you Nebraskans who care, who know that we do make a difference, and that we indeed can help end this war and bring our troops home.
Nebraskans’ Bill for the Iraq War, conclusion

make rational decisions. However, by looking at a very large number of such differences in wages across jobs with clear differences in levels of danger and risk, it becomes possible to estimate a range within which we value our lives and those of people close to us. According to a well-known review of these studies by Kip Viscusi and Joseph Aldy (2003), the median estimate of an American life is about $7 million. This number is often used as a guide for court decisions and insurance payments. A conservative assumption would be that casualties among U.S. troops and contractors will slow but still reach 5,000 at the end of 2008. Hence, multiplying 5,000 deaths by $7 million gives us a total value of American lives lost of $35 billion.

At current rates, there will also be 35,000 serious casualties through 2008. Most of the casualties are young men and women, who will need years of care, assistance and financial support from families and government programs. Past experience with Gulf War and Vietnam War veterans provides some guidance, but future medical and other costs for Iraq casualties will be much higher because of the higher survival rate and diminished capabilities for seriously injured veterans at about $100 billion.

The Macroeconomic Costs

Often left out of the calculations of the costs of war are the indirect costs to our economy. First of all, future interest payments on government debt incurred to finance the war and future medical and veterans’ expenses are estimated by Bilmes and Stiglitz (2006) to exceed $400 billion. There is also the obvious waste of resources from destructive military activity, resources that could have been used to produce, innovate and invest. Also, the added borrowing by the U.S. government will raise interest rates, further reducing private borrowing for investment and research as well as government investment in education, infrastructure and research. I again follow Bilmes and Stiglitz and estimate the current value of lost future economic growth at about $700 billion over the next 50 years.

The Total Bill for the U.S.

With these indirect costs added to the direct budgeted military expenses, the Iraq War’s cost to the U.S. adds up to well over $2 trillion. The estimated $2.34 trillion comes to over $21,000 per U.S. household. Obviously, if the occupation of Iraq continues beyond 2008, the bill will rise further. The U.S. faces many other costs from its foolish decision to invade Iraq. How do we put a value on our country’s lost reputation? How much U.S. business has been lost by the increased anti-American sentiment? How long will it take to restore our military to what is once was? And how much will it cost to deal with future conflicts that may erupt from the chaos in Iraq and our aggressive foreign policy over the past five years?

It will be a long time before we know the full tally for the Iraq War, particularly as the numbers shown here assume that we will soon end our occupation, and that may not be a very realistic assumption. Further, these calculations only examine the U.S. side of the expense ledger for the war. In a future issue, I will calculate the war’s cost to the Iraqis, which—between expenditures for reconstruction and reparations—could drive the American taxpayer’s burden for this disastrous political blunder even higher.

Adding the indirect costs to the direct budgeted military expenses, the Iraq War’s cost to the U.S. totals well over $2 trillion. The estimated $2.34 trillion works out to over $21,000 per U.S. household.

Cost of the Iraq War to the U.S. Taxpayer

(Through end of 2008 with 130,000 U.S. troops deployed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Costs</strong></td>
<td>(In Billions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct costs already budgeted through 2007.</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected new requests by White House for 2008</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More rapid depreciation of military equipment.</td>
<td>$125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost of U.S. Casualties</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of lives of U.S. soldiers and contractors killed through 2008.</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of diminished lives of U.S. soldiers and contractors with major injuries.</td>
<td>$105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare costs</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Administration expenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underestimates of costs of brain injuries</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability payments by military and government</td>
<td>$122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macroeconomic Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest on added Federal Debt</td>
<td>$400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic growth lost to above expenditures that reduce investment activity</td>
<td>$750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Costs in the U.S.: $2.32 trillion

Costs per U.S. Household: $21,450

And what if we are still there in 2009? 2010? 2011?... 2015?... 2020?

Sources:

6 Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz (2006), op. cit.
7 Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz (2006), op. cit.
8 Linda Bilmes and Joseph Stiglitz (2006), op. cit.
9 Census Bureau data indicates there are about 113 million households in the U.S. in 2007.

OCTOBER 2007 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.3
It was Cheney, in the days after 9/11, who insisted that the United States would have to work the “dark side” in the war on terror.
Psychologist Mary Pipher on ‘Inhuman Rights’

Dr. Mary Pipher recently returned her ‘Presidential Citation’ from the American Psychological Association, saying that its position on psychologists’ participation in CIA interrogation practices violated medical human rights and ethical standards. (Find her letter at www.zmag.org/content/show-article.cfm?ItemID =13625.) Pipher is perhaps Nebraska’s best living prose essayist and the author of seven books, including Reviving Ophelia, In The Shelter of Each Other, Writing to Change the World and The Middle of Everywhere. She is presently at work on a new book relevant to NFP members: Seeking Peace—Reflections of the Worst Buddhist in the World. She has spent her life as a practicing therapist with a special interest in people whose human rights have been abrogated. Pipher’s principled action serves as an exemplar to all professionals interested in Peace & Justice. Without the complicity of academic professionals in the creation of war, injustice and the denial of human rights, these horrors would be less fearsome. In the following op-ed entitled “Inhuman Rights,” she explains why she did what she did.

— Paul Olson

I am a psychologist and writer in Lincoln, Nebraska. All of my adult life, I have worked for human rights organizations. In 1965, when I was 17 years old, I marched for de-segregation in Kansas City. As a therapist, I have spent my career repairing the psychic damage of traumatized people, whether they be rape or assault victims, family members of murder victims, or refugees and asylum seekers. I have worked with torture victims since the 1980s and I know that many of them are innocent of any crime whatsoever and all of them suffer irrepairable damage to their lives.

This month I made the difficult decision to return my 2006 Presidential Citation, awarded to me by then President of the American Psychological Association, Dr. Gerald Koocher. I was deeply appreciative of this honor and proud to be a member of the APA. Over the years I have enjoyed an excellent relationship with this organization. I received my first Presidential Citation in 1998 from Dr. Martin Seligman and have been the keynote speaker at the APA’s national convention. With this action, I feel as if I am betraying a good friend.

For the past few years, I have been troubled by various media and Department of Defense reports that psychologists have designed protocols and trained and supervised interrogators in the use of sophisticated methods for breaking the human spirit and destroying mental functioning. When this last Sunday, at the APA’s annual convention, members passed Substitute Motion Three instead of a ban on psychologists’ involvement in military interrogations, I felt I needed to act.

Substitute Motion Three looks fine on the surface, but the devil is in the details, and the devil always dresses in the tuxedo of lofty rhetoric. While it has been argued that this resolution bars psychologists’ participation in the CIA’s enhanced interrogation program, the motion did not place a moratorium on psychologists’ involvement in all national security facilities that operate outside the law. This lack of firmness puts our profession at odds with the Geneva Conventions, Red Cross guidelines, Department of Defense standards, The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and the ethical codes of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association.

In ratifying this document, the APA has made a terrible mistake.

With sorrow, I have concluded that the United States government is committing war crimes with the help of individual psychologists and our professional organization. Without psychologists’ presence to lend legitimacy to these interrogations, our government would find its position utterly indefensible. The behavior of psychologists on interrogation teams violates our own Code of Ethics, in which we pledge to respect the humanity of all people.

As psychologists, we vow to do no harm.

I learned this lesson from my mother, Dr. Avis, who was a small town doctor in rural Nebraska in the 1950s. She often quoted Hippocrates’ remark. “Make a habit of two things, to help, or at least, to do no harm.” She took her Hippocratic vows seriously. Two of them I remember specifically. “Never do anyone harm for someone else’s interest.” And, “Keep the welfare of your patient as your highest priority.” My mother gave free medical care to any one who showed up at our house or her office. Sometimes she was paid in smoked hams and sweet corn. She also taught me this, “Morality isn’t pretty words; morality is action.” I hope I am honoring my mother’s values with my decision.

When any of us are degraded, all of human life is degraded. This is not just about the prisoners; it is about who we are as people. Once we decide certain people are beyond the pale and give them less respect than we would want for ourselves if our situations were reversed, we make we ourselves vulnerable to also being treated as less than human.

I know that the return of my Presidential Citation is of small import, but it is what I can do to disassociate myself from what I consider to be a heinous policy. My belief is that psychology should be solely a helping profession. When we become anything else, we destroy ourselves.

I return my citation as a matter of conscience and in the hopes that the APA will reconsider its current position. We have long been an organization that respects human rights and promotes tolerance, kindness and peace. It is my deepest hope that the APA will reclaim its reputation as a beacon of integrity and compassion.

Cheney’s Fingerprints, continued

It was also Cheney who was the prime mover behind Bush’s signing statement spree. “The office of Vice President Dick Cheney routinely reviews pieces of legislation before they reach the President’s desk, searching for provisions that Cheney believes would infringe on Presidential power, according to former White House and Justice Department officials,” wrote Charlie Savage of the Boston Globe last May in a story that won a Pulitzer Prize. “The officials said Cheney’s legal adviser and chief of staff, David Addington, is the Bush Administration’s leading architect of the ‘signing statements’ the President has appended to more than 750 laws.” Two examples: Bush issued a signing statement on the anti-torture law to say that he would enforce it only to the extent that it didn’t interfere with his authority as commander in chief. And he issued a signing statement on an obscure postal bill last fall to give the Executive Branch an expansive right to open first-class mail.

Dick Cheney is a man who has gone way over the line, time and time again. He is fond of saying he has a constituency of one—Bush—when in fact we are all his constituents. And as his constituents, we must avail ourselves of the only constitutional remedy at our disposal: impeachment. Article 2, Section 4, specifically allows for the impeachment of the Vice President. He clearly has committed “high crimes and misdemeanors,” which our founders conceptualized to mean usurpations of power that subvert our system of checks and balances.

Cheney is a recidivist usurer. We cannot keep letting him get away with his crimes. Nor should we let Bush. But OK, start with Cheney first.

Fortunately, Representative Dennis Kucinich has gotten the ball rolling. This spring, he introduced House Resolution 333, which calls for the impeachment of Cheney. Kucinich’s bill is co-sponsored by Representatives William Lacy Clay, Yvette Clarke, Keith Ellison, Barbara Lee, Jim McDermott, Jan Schakowsky, Maxine Waters, Lynn Woolsey, and Albert Wynn.
An Injury to One is an Injury to All…

NFP Member Alex Svoboda Injured in Rhode Island Labor Protest

by Matthew Gregory
NFP State Office Manager

In Czech, as well as other Slavic languages, the word svoboda means “freedom.” What better metaphor exists to depict the state of free speech and civil liberties in America than the photographs of Alex Svoboda being brutalized by North Providence, Rhode Island police during a demonstration for worker’s rights?

On Saturday August 11, 2007, members of the Industrial Workers of the World organized a march on Jackie’s Galaxy, a restaurant chain supplied by HWH, a supplier notorious for its slave labor conditions of up to 110 hours per week at less than $5 an hour without overtime or other work benefits.

Alex Svoboda, 22 years old at the time, originally from Lincoln and a graduate of Lincoln High School, is a current resident of Providence, where she studies Spanish at the Community College of Rhode Island. She was in the demonstration that day playing a drum, looking forward to a game of kickball following the protest.

On August 26, a few hundred people came out to the Capitol in a show of support for Alex, with stirring speeches from Alex’s family members, including her brother Nick and mother Jan Enstrom. The Lincoln event coincided with a rally in North Providence that drew approximately 250 counter-protesters defending the officers’ brute force.

On September 16, a family friend, Adam Williams, and Nebraskans for Peace organized a benefit concert at the Box Awesome in Lincoln in support of Alex, which included performances from local artists The Awkwards, Lockheed Electra, and Kansas City’s We Are… The Argument, among other groups. The artists and venue were very generous; evening a nice chunk of change was raised for her medical bills and legal fees.

Alex’s treatment by the police has raised controversy in Lincoln and Providence, mostly revolving around a permit to demonstrate and the level of force used against her.

The marchers were demonstrating without a permit, although they say they were following officers’ orders to move out of the street when three officers restrained and tackled Alex. The police report stated that the demonstration had 100 people while protesters put the number between 30 and 40, as photos from the march appear to confirm. The photos also tell a gruesome story, showing a mortified Alex pinned to the ground as she was already well away from the street upon the point of brutal force.

The police report also mentions that Alex attacked the police officers with her drum sticks. One has to question the how a petite 22-year-old woman was a threat to three officers who brandished mace, clubs and guns, not to mention men of greater physical stature and trained in defensive techniques. In an interview with her father, Scott Svoboda, he rattled off a list of relatives that are law enforcement officers, making his case that Alex has been taught to respect authority figures and been around them her entire life. On top of all this, the mayor continues to change the official story from first proclaiming that Alex tripped over her drum to now saying that she was yanked out of the crowd by the police.

The North Providence Police Department has defended the actions of the officers and all three remain on active duty.

Because of her injuries, surgeries, and subsequent rehabilitation, Alex will be unable to work for a significant period of time. Money will be needed to provide Alex with legal support in her defense as well as to help with the astronomical medical bills that she will accumulate.

The good news in all of this is that the restaurant owner said he doesn’t do business with the distributor any longer, and Alex’s recovery is free of complications as of press time. But more help with legal fees and medical bills is needed. Donations can be made to: Alexandra Svoboda Fund, c/o Citizens Bank, 120 Waterman Street, Providence, RI 02906.
Global Warming, “Thermal Inertia” and Tomorrow’s News

In the Arctic, September is the peak ice-melt season. This year, even by August, polar ice had retreated to near record-low levels, exposing dark ocean water to soak up even more of the sun’s heat, in an albedo (reflectivity) cycle that is reinforcing itself. As is often the case, the provocations are both natural and human. Greenhouse gases emitted by human transport and industry are part of the story. The rest involves persistent high pressure over the Arctic that this year allows more sunshine than usual, along with winds from the south, drawing up warm, ice-eroding air.

“During the first week in July, the Arctic sea ice started to disappear at rates we had never seen before,” said Sheldon Drobot, who leads the Arctic Regional Ice Forecasting System group at the Colorado Center for Astrodynamics Research (CCAR). The record-low September minimum extent is 1.96 million square miles, Drobot said. For 2007, the most likely minimum extent is 1.96 million square miles. Persistent high pressure over the Arctic during the summer of 2007 allowed more sunshine than usual, along with winds from the south, drawing up warm, ice-eroding air.

Across Alaska, northern Canada and Siberia, scientists are finding telltale signs that permafrost is melting more quickly than ever. As permafrost melts, additional carbon dioxide and methane convert from solid form, stored in the earth, to gas in the atmosphere, retaining more heat. Once again, human contributions of greenhouse gases are provoking a natural process, like the trigger of a gun.

The real news of global warming, however, is not how warm it is today, because today’s carbon emissions do not give us tomorrow’s temperature. Through a complex set of feedbacks (“thermal inertia” to scientists), we will feel today’s emissions in our faces roughly half a century from now. In the oceans, the fundamental ways. With water pollution or common air pollution, smog, the problems occur immediately when the pollutants are emitted. If we decide there is a problem and stop emitting them, the problem goes away. However, global warming is caused by greenhouse gases that have a lifetime of hundreds of years. So that? Even with another degree or two in the pipeline, who cares about a few degrees? Well, we had better all care about it, because we have already brought the planet close to some tipping points. If we pass those tipping points there will be dramatic consequences. We will leave an impoverished planet for our children; we will have been lousy stewards of Creation; we will have destroyed Creation for future generations.

In 50 more years, when our children are grandparents, the planetary emergency for which we are now tasting the first course will be a dominant theme in everyone’s life, unless we act now. Hansen and other scientists tell us that within a decade or two, thermal inertia will take off on its own, portending a hot, miserable future for coming generations.

What do we need? To begin, a moratorium on construction of coal-fired power plants until adequate technology is available to remove carbon dioxide from their emissions. As long as we pour carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, we are pulling the trigger of thermal inertia. Such technology is now in its infancy.

We also need to conserve power in all ways possible, through tighter buildings and more efficient transportation—on the ground, as well as air travel. At present, only one percent of the energy in a car’s gas tank actually reaches the drive train.

We need vigorous development of alternatives—solar, wind and tidal power. In California, a new technology that concentrates solar energy with mirrors will provide power for 400,000 homes from the Mojave Desert.

Solar panels are being built into the roofs of many new homes across California. This is a start. Global warming is dangerous because it is a sneaky, slow-motion emergency, demanding that we acknowledge a reality centuries in the future with a system of individual, legal, and diplomatic reaction that reacts in the past tense.

Again, I quote Jim Hansen, who knows the science: “The bottom line is this: business-as-usual, if it continues for even another decade will be disastrous for the planet. We can have a stable climate, clean air, and an unpolluted ocean. And clean energies yield good jobs. It is up to the public to make sure that we get onto a path that stabilizes climate and allows all the creatures of Creation to continue to thrive on this planet.”

Bruce E. Johansen, Frederick W. Kayser Professor of Communication at the University of Nebraska in Omaha, is the author of the three-volume Global Warming in the Twenty-First Century (2006).

What’s HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

Human contributions of greenhouse gases are provoking a natural process, like the trigger of a gun.

- Professor Bruce Johansen
How to Pick a Fight, How to Start a War and How to Do It with Unconscious Impunity and Ruthlessness

Reflections on a Reading of Mari Sandoz’s Crazy Horse for “One Book, One Nebraska”

by Byron Peterson

We might imagine such a task—starting a war—to be an easy one. But not so, if the target is a people deft in sharing what is theirs and adept in welcoming the newcomer as a relative, rather than a stranger. It took men of command, schooled in the “art of war,” exploitation and oppression (West Point men in some cases), to not only ‘get it on’ with the Lakotas, but to keep getting it on, for years and years—nearly 40 by the time it was finally over.

How did they do it, one might ask? It took U.S soldiers adroit in near blind devotion to command—and you should add, a keen awareness of the consequences of disobeying one’s superior officers. It took vulnerable young men easily enraged by their superiors to join in unspeakable acts of violence—violence that would wreak havoc not only among those targeted, but that would haunt those doing the targeting for the balance of their lives.

Through the State Library Commission’s “One Book, One Nebraska” statewide reading promotion, many of us are being gifted this year with the opportunity to read and formally discuss Mari Sandoz’s 1942 classic, Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas. This book is an unflinching eye opener to the barbarism perpetrated against the Lakota, and the recompense (or rather lack of it) that ensued. As University of New Mexico Professor Paul Hutton grimly comments in the recent documentary, “Crazy Horse, the Last Warrior,” the U.S. Army had “a long stream of western officers with far more firepower than brain power.” And it was the Lakota, in particular, who were to suffer the effects of this volatile mix.

Some of the more graphic U.S. military practices detailed in Sandoz’s book include attacking peaceful Indian villages with cannon, cavalry and infantry.

The first gruesome incident she relates, involving a Lieutenant Grattan and the 30 men under this command, took place on August 19, 1854. Fresh out of West Point and stationed at Fort Laramie, Grattan marched his men into Chief Conquering Bear’s camp of 600 lodges located nearby. His purpose: to take High Forehead, a visitor in the camp, into military custody for punishment. High Forehead’s offense: killing an old lame Mormon cow that had strayed into the camp. Tribal protocol prohibited Conquering Bear from turning over a visitor in his camp, so he offered horses in compensation. Grattan rejected the compromise, insisting on High Forehead’s surrender. When Conquering Bear refused, the lieutenant responded with cannonade and rifle fire—blowing things up and killing people, including Conquering Bear himself. An annihilating rain of arrows from the warrior defenders ensued, resulting in the deaths of Grattan and all of his men.

Reaction from Washington to Grattan’s death was slow in coming, but inexorable. Blaming the Lakotas for the violence, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis (who was later to become president of the Confederacy) demanded retribution. Brigadier General William Harney, known for his swift and harsh approach in dealing with those he considered enemies, was commissioned the job of punishing Conquering Bear’s village. By the following summer, 11 companies of troops (6 infantry, 4 cavalry and one artillery, for a total of 600 soldiers), under the moniker of “The Sioux Expedition,” were headed west into the Nebraska Territory.

Harney came upon Little Thunder’s peaceful camp on Blue Water Creek just north of Lewellen, Nebraska, on September 3, 1855 and promptly set about preparing his attack. William Chandless, an overland freighter traveling with the expedition, recorded the general’s remarks to the troops. “[U]sing the harsh language for which he was renowned, [Harney] thundered, ‘There are those damned red sons of bitches, who massacred the soldiers near Laramie last year in the time of peace. They killed your own kindred, your own flesh and blood. Now, by God, men, there we have them, and if you don’t give it to them you deserve to be— [sic] ‘shot.’ Don’t spare one of those damn red sons of bitches.’”

Although most of the Lakota men were away hunting buffalo and the village was mostly undefended, Harney sought to further his advantage for carnage. While fronting the camp at the south with infantry and artillery, he snuck his cavalry—with no doubt their sabers—into position to seal the camp off from the north. In order to allow time for this subterfuge, he arranged a ‘white flag’ parley with Little Thunder and Spotted Tail. Once satisfied that all was ready, Harney broke the parole off and ordered the slaughter to begin.

Some prefer to think of what followed as a battle. Many consider it a massacre. Harney’s own report listed five soldiers lost, 86 people killed, the village burned, and 70 women and children captured and in turn marched to Fort Laramie for service to his soldiers throughout the winter. For this incident, Harney would be given a new name among the Lakota. Rather than “Whitebearded soldier chief,” he would be known simply as “Woman killer.” Others would call him “The Butcher.”

Attacks on other Indian tribes followed. “Soldiers looking for the Santees,” Sandoz notes, “found the friendly Yanktonians at White Stone Hill and fell upon them. And at Bear River, beyond the west mountains, they struck the midwinter camp of Bannocks and Snakes, killing over 200, many of them women and children, leaving only a few to hide out in the snow.”

To this list one might also add the massacre at Sand Creek in 1864, by Chivington’s force of 700 militiamen. While Harney and his command had to be reassigned back east with the onset of the Civil War, his model was replicated in the massacre of more than 150 largely disarmed members of Black Kettle’s band of Southern Cheyenne.

The U.S. Army had “a long stream of western officers with far more firepower than brain power.” And it was the Lakota, in particular, who were to suffer the effects of this volatile mix.
Imagine the curiosity of a child, seeing what looks like a soda can or a shiny metal or orange ball, and reaching to pick it up. But it’s a bomblet, or cluster munition, and that child will lose a limb—or even its life—from the explosion.

In the last ten years, U.S. cluster munitions have been used in or near civilian-populated areas in Afghanistan, Iraq, former Yugoslavia, Colombia and southern Lebanon with devastating consequences to civilians.

For example, U.S. forces have reportedly dropped more than 10,500 cluster munitions in Iraq in 2003, including in villages of al-Hilla and the al-Baladiyat quarter of Baghdad with several direct civilian casualties. As of December 2004, approximately 90,000 unexploded cluster sub-munitions litter Iraqi areas such as cities, farmland and roads from the U.S. use of cluster bombs, continuing to threaten civilians.

In the last ten years, several major recipients of U.S. arms exports have used cluster munitions in civilian-populated areas. Most recently, for example, Israel fired hundreds of thousands of cluster munitions in Lebanon during the conflict with Hezbollah last summer, including in the villages of Ainata and Rashaya al-Foukar, using U.S. cluster bombs. According to the Lebanese Red Cross, 285 people were killed by cluster munitions during the conflict; after the conflict, unexploded cluster munitions have so far caused 30 deaths and nearly 180 injuries, including several children. Some 40% of the bombs did not explode on contact and remained active on the ground. There is also credible evidence that the Colombian military dropped a cluster bomb from a U.S. supplied helicopter on the village of Santo Domingo in 1998, killing 11 adults and 6 children.

When used in or near civilian areas, cluster munitions run a serious risk of violating the international humanitarian law prohibition on indiscriminate attacks. Cluster munitions also often leave large numbers of unexploded sub-munitions on the ground, presenting a grave danger to civilian lives similar to landmines. The imprecise and unreliable nature of U.S. cluster munitions makes them especially hazardous to civilians. Whether artillery-fired or air-dropped, cluster bombs disperse hundreds of small bomblets over a wide area, failing to distinguish between military and civilian targets. Cluster munitions were initially designed for attacking large-scale military troop formations, but more recently, they are being used in or near highly populated areas, with civilians as a de facto target, and running a serious risk of violating international humanitarian law.

The threat of cluster munitions to civilians does not end when a conflict subsides. Some U.S. made cluster munitions are reported to have a high dud rate, including up to 23 percent in test conditions for the U.S. made M26 rocket. Bomblets that fail to explode at impact often pose a severe threat to civilian lives and livelihoods for up to 50 years, similar to landmines. Cluster bomblets are usually no bigger than a small toy, and children have been killed and injured picking them up.

According to Donald Steinberg, vice president for multilateral affairs at the International Crisis Group and former U.S. ambassador to Angola, “Even demolition experts often lose their fight against these weapons... among the first casualties in NATO’s Kosovo peacekeeping operations were experts trying to dismantle unexploded bomblets.”

Although U.S. cluster munitions procured after FY 2005 are required to have a dud rate of less than one percent, no restrictions to date have been placed on exports from the older, existing—and unreliable—munitions stockpiles. Nor does current U.S. policy strictly prohibit their use in civilian-populated areas. A Senate bill, sponsored by Senators Dianne Feinstein and Patrick Leahy, seeks to change that.

The Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act of 2007 (S. 594) would prevent the U.S. use or export of cluster bombs with high dud rates (less than one percent) and for civilian-populated areas. On humanitarian grounds alone, we should be urging our own senator leaders, Chuck Hagel and Ben Nelson, to co-sponsor this legislation.

We live in a world where 90 percent of the victims of conflict are civilians. Mustard gas and other biological and chemicals weapons have long been banned under the understanding that humanitarian concerns override military utility, and it is time cluster munitions join that list. And it is time that the United States joins the rest of the world in their denunciation.

For more information, go to www.amnestyusa.org and click on the arms trade under the issues button. And join us at the AIUSA Regional Meeting, Nov 2–4, 2007.
Cheney’s Fingerprints, continued

It is too narrow for my liking. It contains only three articles. The first two say that Cheney “purposely manipulated the intelligence process to deceive citizens and Congress” in the lead-up to the Iraq War, both about weapons of mass destruction and about the alleged link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida. The third one says Cheney “has openly threatened aggression against the Republic of Iran absent any real threat to the United States.” Kucinich notes that such a threat is a violation of the U.N. Charter.

Cheney should be brought up on more crimes against the Republic that Bush and Cheney have been committing. Still, some progressive allies say that impeachment will never pass. It’s a waste of time, so why try?

Well, we don’t know that. Now that the Democrats have investigative powers, every time they turn over a new rock, more reptilian facts emerge.

And we may be headed toward a constitutional confrontation, as Bush and Cheney resist subpoenas from the House and Senate Judiciary Committees.

They are invoking “executive privilege.” That has a certain ring to it, doesn’t it?

Patrick Leahy, head of the Senate Judiciary, called it “Nixonian stonewalling” and said, “Increasingly, the President and the Vice President feel they are above the law.” John Conyers, head of the House Judiciary Committee, added: “This is reckless. It’s a form of governmental lawlessness that is really astounding.”

Conyers should know. He sat on the Judiciary Committee when it voted to impeach Richard Nixon in 1974.

And let’s remember, one of the three articles that this committee brought forward concerned just such stonewalling.

Article 3 says: Richard M. Nixon “failed without lawful cause or excuse to produce papers and things as directed by duly authorized subpoenas issued by the Committee on the Judiciary of the House of Representatives… and willfully disobeyed such subpoenas… In refusing to produce these papers and things, Richard M. Nixon… acted in a manner contrary to his trust as President and subversive of constitutional government.”

Incidentally, Conyers introduced in the last Congress a bill to explore grounds for impeachment, and that was before many of the Bush crimes surfaced. He explained to Lewis Lapham of Harper’s early last year that he was doing so because he didn’t want people to wonder, years from now, where everybody was and why nobody did anything when “the Bush Administration declared the Constitution inoperative and revoked the license of parliamentary government.”

“With the support of the leaders of the Progressive Caucus and the leader of the Out of Iraq Caucus, we will see more and more Members of Congress signing on in this effort to save our Constitution and protect the very values that bind us as a nation.”

— Rep. Dennis Kucinich

Ironically, Conyers’s party did not control the House at that time, so he knew his bill would go nowhere. Now, with the Democrats in power, Conyers can move impeachment forward in the Judiciary Committee that he heads. But he’s gone uncharacteristically silent. Why? Because House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has muzzled him.

She and other Democratic leaders say that impeachment may distract them from more important legislative duties. But what could be more important than upholding the Constitution? And anyway, the argument doesn’t hold up, since impeaching Cheney or Bush might be the best way to bring the war to an end and to restore some of our civil liberties. That’s what happened after Nixon resigned, as Kucinich adviser Steve Cobble has argued. We got out of Vietnam, we had the Congressional hearings that exposed illegal spying and infiltration, and Gerald Ford’s Attorney General, Edward Levi, issued guidelines prohibiting most domestic spying.

Partisan Democrats make one last argument against impeachment. They say it will hurt their chances in 2008 of solidifying gains in Congress and in winning back the White House. History, here, suggests otherwise. In the Presidential election following the Nixon impeachment hearings, Jimmy Carter won. And in the Presidential election following Clinton’s impeachment, the Republicans won.

The pragmatic argument also collapses under its own light weight. For impeachment is not about partisan payback or political gamesmanship. It’s about something much larger. It’s about whether we will have a democratic form of government or not. Democrats and responsible Republicans alike need to rise to this challenge.

And what message does doing nothing send? It tells Bush and Cheney that they can get off scot-free. And it leaves a loaded gun in the front drawer of the Oval Office desk for the next President to shoot more holes into the Constitution.

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camped at Sand Creek in 1864. Sandoz also identifies specific and particularly barbaric acts used by commanders to “teach the Indians a lesson.” She cites reports of Lakotas visiting with immigrants along the Platte River who became particularly inflamed when they learned that a “soldier chief on the Missouri had killed some of their relatives and set their heads upon poles.”

At Fort Laramie, the commanders had at least three Indians “strung up” with chains around their necks and their bodies left to hang and decompose for all to see as they visited or passed by the fort. A Cheyenne was strung up with an iron ball still attached to his leg for allegedly having stole some immigrants’ horses. To this particular spectacle, the bodies of two friendly Lakotas, Two Face and Blackfoot were added. Having learned of the opportunity toreturn “Mrs. Eubanks,” an immigrant woman captured and held by the Cheyennes, they brought her to Fort Laramie, only to have the commanders order them hanged and also left to dangle.

While acts like the above seem to be all too common in warfare, they become particularly problematic when those guilty of committing are not held accountable. The U.S. Army commanders were supposedly responsible for the care and protection of both the immigrants and the Indians. The young Crazy Horse did not see this happening. By age 14, he had witnessed two peaceful camps being fired upon and, in the case of Harney, a massacre perpetrated. He saw no protection afforded Indians from the occasional abuse by the immigrants—or, more importantly, from the abuse by the white soldier chiefs themselves. But perhaps worst of all, not only for him and the others at that time—but also for us who look back on all of this today—there seems to have been little if any justice meted out for those guilty of committing the atrocities. To the contrary, some were honored, memorialized and even, in the case of General Harney, monumentalized. In his biography, The Journey of Crazy Horse, author Joseph Marshall III puts it this way:

One wonders what Crazy Horse would think of the modern day irony associated with General Harney, dubbed ‘Woman Killer’ by the Sicangu Lakota: In the middle of the Black Hills is the highest of all the granite peaks. Like Bear Butte to the north, it was a favorite location for vision quests and other ceremonies. It was and is considered by the Lakota to be the spiritual center of our world. The highest and holiest of places was named Harney Peak by the whites. I have seen old Lakota men simply shake their heads at what they considered to be the most grievous of insults, because they could find no words to adequately describe their feelings.

While one can only speculate on the suffering that could have been avoided had justice been better esteemed by those who were living in those times, we today can still do our bit to redress the wrong that troubled those “old Lakota men.” At the very least, we can seek to erase the insult of “Harney Peak” in the Paha Sapa by removing this ignoble name. To engage in bringing this about would be a gift in justice for our ancestors, ourselves and all of us into the future. So may it be.
I don’t get fan mail. My wife sometimes tells me I have done a good job. My ‘good old boys’ Monday luncheon group occasionally discusses a column I wrote. That’s about it.

But recently, with great emotion, I received fan messages from people I don’t even know. I had written a *Lincoln Journal Star* guest editorial on the “brain-washed pacemakers” who’d organized the Hiroshima Day lantern float at Holmes Lake August 5. In the op-ed, I suggested that competent military people and historians doubted that Hiroshima and Nagasaki produced the Japanese surrender. I argued that the bomb violated the highest principles of international law and “Just War” theory calling for the avoidance of civilian deaths. I said that whatever we think of Hiroshima/Nagasaki, we cannot continue the proliferation of nuclear arms in the U.S., Pakistan, India, Israel, the UK, France, China, Russia and so forth. Proliferation only purposes more innocent deaths.

My fans soon appeared. One told me that, like most UNL professors, I *did not love America*. Another told me that I had better find out fast whether or not I was an “Israelite because God would destroy me if I wasn’t.” Other judgments said that I was “pathetic, near the top of nonsense, wacko, ripe for the cat’s litter box” (that really hurt both me and Sapphire, my kitty), and an arrogant professor from a smugly wacko, ripe for the cat’s litter box
told me if I wasn’t.

Other judgments said that I was “in harm’s way”…I wonder what the choice of whether to do so with a conventional or nuclear weapon.

None of my responders disputed the military authority of my generals and admirals—Eisenhower, Leahy, LeMay, Marshall. None dealt with the historians—Gar Alperowitz of the University of Maryland, Herbert Bix of SUNY, Ernest R. May of Harvard and Barton Bernstein of Stanford—who questioned the efficacy of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki attack and nuclear armaments in general. Harbison cited the neo-con Oliver Kamm’s inaccurate article for *The Guardian* (www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,2142224,00.html; http://crooked-timber.org/2007/08/22/kamm-versus-anscombe/). No one else provided even pseudo-evidence. Yet no one said that we needed more nukes and more nuclear nations. Apparently, only the White House, the nuclear industry and a few military types believe that.

A few favorable comments appeared.

Jody P. wrote:

One’s perspective changes when one is “in harm’s way”…I wonder what the perspective was of the innocent women and children in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. [One can get an idea from Ibsen’s *Black Rain*] I imagine it made 9/11 look pretty tame by comparison. Even if you assume that dropping those bombs was somehow justified, I don’t see how anyone could deny that it was still a tragedy. Many Americans talk casually about making such-and-such country back to the Stone Age. But when it comes to being on the receiving end of a mushroom cloud, or even the 9/11 attacks, Americans don’t seem to like the idea nearly so much.

Jody is right. How can the killing of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians appear right because the armies of our opponents did similar things? The attacks on my column were full of pictures of the cruelty of “the Japs.” We can concede that they were cruel. Does that justify cruelty in us? How can murder justify murder? If we end up launching a nuclear attack on Iran over White House allegations that they’re creating like weapons, how does that make it any less of a tragedy?

In February, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh wrote that “the Pentagon is continuing *intensive planning for a possible bombing attack on Iran, a process that began last year at the direction of the president*”—a plan “that can be implemented, upon orders from the president, within twenty-four hours” and could include nuclear weapons. Indeed the president refused to take nukes off the Iran table. New weapons developed for field use heighen the possibility of a nuclear attack. Under CONPLAN 8022, the president can order the commander at StratCom to take out a target in one hour, and the commander has the choice of whether to do so with a conventional or nuclear weapon.

No consultation. No congressional input. A StratCom commander can decide to start a nuclear war. And some of your neighbors in Omaha and Bellevue might very well be the ones implementing the attack.

Given that we have had one president, Nixon, who by friendly accounts was often drunk; given that we have now or have had, in the recent past, others at the top of the executive branch who had been sensitive, emotionally unstable or recovering alcoholics and drug users, the Congress and the government appear to have vested a dangerously inordinate amount of power in one or two people. And yet the Constitution, on the power to make war, is still pretty clear about it being a congressional responsibility. (Mario Cuomo has recently made the same argument).

We need to raise our voices for a repeal of the president’s power to declare war through StratCom, for a return of StratCom to its traditionally ‘defensive’ mission, and ultimately, for the multilateral abolition of nuclear weapons. StratCom’s plans for propagating more Hiroshimas and Nagasakis, our positions after Holmes Lake might seem less wacko. As one of the denominational representatives (quoting William Sloan Coffin) said at the lantern float, “we are all downwind from nuclear holocaust.”