

September/October 2007

Peace Matters



There Is No
Peace Without
Justice

2007 ANNUAL PEACE CONFERENCE IN OMAHA OCTOBER 6

By Mark Welsch, Omaha Coordinator

Saturday October 6 is the day of the 2007 Annual Peace Conference. Omaha's First United Methodist Church is the place. Although the entire conference runs from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., the public can -- without registering -- attend the morning joint address by Emeritus Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit and Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, for free. The title of the address is "StratCom's Role in the Militarization of Space: An Update and Christian Response."

Early registration (received by October 1) is \$25, which includes lunch. Continuing Education Units will be available for social workers and licensed mental health practitioners.

No one is more qualified to address the political and ethical implications of the new role StratCom has assumed since 9/11 than these two men. Bishop Gumbleton, a disarmament advocate of world acclaim, has consistently warned of the dangers of nuclear weapons. For 20 years Mr. Gagnon has organized against the U.S. Government's effort to militarize space. Thanks to his interest in StratCom, the Global Network chose to hold its next annual conference in Omaha in April of 2008.

A variety of peacemaking workshops are also on the agenda. The University of Nebraska School of Social Work and Nebraskans for Peace are again sponsoring this year's event. For more information see the **Nebraska Report** or call the Omaha office at 453-0776. Flyers will be sent to NFP members.



Palestinian Ambassador to United States Will Visit Nebraska November 1-3, 2007

By Musa Al-Hindi, NFP Member

The United States has agreed to provide Israel with \$30 billion in defense grants over the next decade. The proposed military aid package, amounting to \$3 billion per year, represents a 25 percent boost over the current U.S. annual military aid to Israel of \$2.4 billion. The Jewish state is already the largest recipient of U.S. military aid.

Rather than increasing military aid, the United States should sanction Israel by ending military aid to it, given its notorious violations of the U.S. Arms

Export Control Act and U.S. Foreign Assistance Acts. The U.S. Arms Export Control Act outlaws the use of American weapons against civilians and civilian infrastructure and restricts their use to "legitimate self-defense" or for "internal security." The U.S. Foreign Assistance Act states that "no assistance may be provided to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

Flagrant violations by Israel of Palestinian human rights, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return home, have been well documented by numerous international and Israeli organizations, as well as by the U.S. government. In January 2007 the Department of State sent a top-secret report to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Sen. Joe Biden, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, asserting that Israel may have violated American arms exports laws by indiscriminately



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dropping U.S.-made cluster bombs on Lebanese villages during last year's war.

Omahans will get a rare chance to learn about the Arab-Israeli conflict when **Dr. Afif Safieh, the Palestinian Ambassador in Washington, D.C., visits Nebraska during the weekend of November 1-3, 2007.** Prior to coming to the U.S., Dr. Safieh was the Palestinian General Delegate to the Vatican.

A native of Jerusalem, Dr. Safieh holds graduate and post graduate degrees in international relations and political science. From 1976 until 1978, he was deputy director of the Palestine Liberation Organization Observer Mission to the United Nations, Geneva, before heading the European Affairs and U.N. institutions bureau in President Yasser Arafat's office in Beirut, Lebanon. From 1987 until 1990, Safieh was PLO representative to the Netherlands, where he played a central role in Stockholm negotiations that led to the official and direct American-PLO dialogue in 1988. In 1990, he became Palestine's General Delegate to the United Kingdom.

For more information about Dr. Safieh's Omaha speaking schedule, please contact Musa Al-Hindi at 402-551-0674 (malhindi@netzero.net), or Anne Else 402-556-5184.

WHAT WAR ON TERRORISM?

By Stuart Williams, NFP Member and Former Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala

Colombia needs to be a priority for all of us. Right in our hemisphere, thousands of fellow (Latin) Americans have been murdered, millions of refugees created, and billions of U.S. tax dollars spent. Incredibly, there is virtually no media coverage, nor is there much of a solidarity movement (a topic which needs



serious examination).

The United States has intervened in Colombia since the 1950s vis-à-vis the CIA, Pentagon and "missionary" groups. Communism was one reason; another, the rich mineral and oil deposits. At the root of the conflict is the very unequal distribution of economic resources. The Yarborough Commission, sent by the JFK government in 1962, recommended the formation of paramilitaries. In recent years these forces have murdered union members, peasant leaders and leftist politicians. In addition, the paramilitaries have forced millions of peasants and indigenous peoples off their lands. In spite of the U.S.-sponsored war on drugs, these same forces derive most of their funding from drug trafficking.

The United States trains Colombian military officers both here and there and has spent over \$3 billion in the last five years, the vast majority military-related. The largest guerrilla group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known as FARC, has been fighting for over 40 years, but does not have much popular support, due to its brutality and drug trafficking.

What to do? Educate yourself, lobby Congress and practice solidarity. Check out the following for action items:

- ✂ www.colombiasupport.net,
- ✂ www.peacebrigades.org and
- ✂ www.soaw.org.

WORK ON IMPEACHMENT OF CHENEY AND BUSH

By Victoria Peterson, Assistant Editor

Please contact U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi using the information below. You may call her at 1-800-828-0498 (ask for Nancy Pelosi's office) or send her an email message at AmericanVoices@mail.house.gov. In addition to that, you may join NFP members every Saturday from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Impeach Cheney and Bush Demonstration on the footbridge over Dodge Street near the University of Nebraska at Omaha near 60th Street. Contact Elaine at 415-9500 for more information.

Marylyn Felion, California NFP member, has provided a sample letter to Speaker Pelosi:

Answer:

William Ford

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

You have stated that impeachment is off the table.

I understand that as Speaker of the House and next in line after the president and vice president, it would be unseemly for you to aggressively pursue impeachment of Dick Cheney and George W. Bush.

Bruce Fein, a constitutional scholar formerly of the Heritage Foundation and American Enterprise Institute and now a writer for the Washington Times, has voiced his deep concern about the violence being done to the U.S. Constitution by these men and about the danger of handing over these unconstitutionally enhanced powers to the next president. I suggest that you quietly place impeachment on the table and nudge someone else in the House to pick it up and run with it.

I am fearful about what is being done to our Constitution and to the balance of powers which the Founding Fathers in their wisdom so carefully constructed.

Please put impeachment back on the table!

Respectfully,

MARCH FOR PEACE INSPIRES THE MIDWEST

By Elaine Wells, Chairperson NFP Peacemakers Group

When Ashley Casale of Clinton Corners, N.Y. and Michael Israel of Jackson, Calif. (ages 19 and 18) walked into Omaha at 7:00 p.m. on July 13, they had already trekked 1,500 miles through deserts and over mountains, and they still had 1,500 miles to go--yet they were very reluctant to "cheat" by letting Mark Welsch pick them up on the outskirts of town and drive

them to my house for food and lodging. That kind of character and their sweet, considerate personalities are winning them friends all across America. Tom Chemler of Chicago had joined them just that day, and his strained Achilles tendons needed some ice and TLC, but they assured him that the first day was the hardest.

Ashley had hoped that walking to Washington D.C. would get her generation involved in ending the war in Iraq, stopping the genocide in Darfur, and saving the planet from catastrophic warming. But on May 21 only Michael, his parents and younger brother, and a Berkeley student named Susan left San Francisco with her. Before they got across the Golden Gate Bridge, police stopped them for displaying an earth flag and March 4 Peace banner. At Rocky Mountain National Park a ranger prevented them from entering until they removed the March 4 Peace placards from their T-shirts and wrote the message directly on their shirts.

Nebraskans welcomed them enthusiastically, and almost 20 Omahans walked with the marchers into Levi Carter Park as the festival crowd cheered. State Sen. Don Preister lauded them and recalled The Great Peace March of 1986. A dozen interesting speakers recommended ways to envision the world we really want, reverse global warming, welcome immigrants, improve conditions for Native Americans, confront StratCom, end the U.S. occupation of Iraq, etc. John Jensen, Nebraska field director of Americans Against Escalation in Iraq, noted that Carter Lake was formed when the Missouri River changed its course and assured us that we can change the course of America.

Isn't it strange that people who volunteer to kill people and destroy their property are hailed as heroes, while two young people sacrificing for peace and the planet are detained by authorities? Isn't it time that we tell everyone that we want an about-face in the ends and means of our country? Please call, write, visit and educate your elected officials!



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Question: *Who said, concerning his son, . . ." he is somewhat of a queer duck. Henry is not much of a farmer--he is a tinkerer"?*

(See inside.)

Calendar of Events

Every Wednesday, 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Peace Vigil at StratCom/UNO, 6825 Pine Street (three blocks east of 72nd and Pine Streets, which is 16 blocks south of Dodge Street, east of UNO Scott Technology Center). This is a cooperative effort with the Omaha Catholic Worker House. For more information contact Jerry Ebner, omahacw@hotmail.com 502-5887.

Every Saturday, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. Impeach Cheney and Bush Demonstration on the footbridge over Dodge Street near UNO at about 60th Street. Contact Elaine at 415-9500 for more information.

September 6, 6:00 p.m. (first Thursday of every month) Peace Seekers and Pizza, 7:00 p.m., discussion, reflection and leadership support at 4924 Chicago Street. Contact person is Jo Peterson at 350-3019.

September 10, 5:30-6:30 p.m. (first Monday of every month, except on holidays) Peacemakers Task Force at First United Methodist Church, Conference Room, 7020 Cass Street. Enter the church office door on the south side and turn left down first hallway. For more information contact Elaine Wells at 415-9500.

September 12, 6:30 p.m. (second Wednesday of every month) NFP Omaha Leadership meeting at Augustana Lutheran Church, 3647 Lafayette Avenue. All are welcome. Contact person is Mark Welsch at 453-0776.

September 24, 7:30 p.m. Norman Solomon, author of *Made Love, Got War: Close Encounters with America's Warfare State*, and syndicated columnist, will speak at UNO's Milo Bail Student Center in the Gallery Room. All are welcome. Contact Mark Welsch at 453-0776 for more information.

September's Palestinian Task Force meeting. Contact Anne Else at 556-5184 for location, date and time of meeting.

October 1, 5:30-6:30 p.m. (first Monday of every month) Peacemakers Task Force at First United Methodist Church, Conference Room, 7020 Cass Street. Enter the church office door on the south side and turn left down first hallway. For more information contact Elaine Wells at 415-9500.

October 4, 6:00 p.m. (first Thursday of every month) Peace Seekers and Pizza, 7:00 p.m., discussion, reflection and leadership support at 4924 Chicago Street. Contact person is Jo Peterson at 350-3019.

SATURDAY October 6, Annual Peace Conference, First United Methodist Church, 7020 Cass Street. See front-page story.

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November 1-3, Visit to Omaha by Dr. Afif Safieh, Palestinian Ambassador to the U.S. More details later.