

## **The Cost of War**

**by Senator Will Espero**

President Barack Obama deserves much credit for ending the Iraqi War. His leadership was instrumental in returning the majority of soldiers deployed in Iraq by Christmas 2011. What a wonderful gift for the families of our troops.

In the decade following the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center, the racial profiling, increase in hate crimes targeted toward specific ethnic and religious groups, and detention without trial, all resound of past eras of injustice.

Before 9/11, Pearl Harbor was the last time American soil was attacked by foreign enemies. More from prejudice than actual evidence or military necessity, and without judicial process, 110,000-120,000 Japanese, 67% of them American citizens, were removed their homes and sent to internment camps. The Census Bureau secretly provided confidential information in the relocation effort. Many Japanese-Americans were held for the duration of the war without charge, hearing, or trial. The only basis for the unconstitutional deprivation was Japanese ancestry. In Hawaii, Japanese were largely spared the drastic measures partly because removing 35% (150,000) of our island population would have crippled the economy. Nevertheless, 1,200 to 1,800 were interned.

The "Cost of War" report is astounding. Over 6,000 Americans in uniform died in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In Iraq alone, over 100,000 were sent through American detention centers. Held for years without a trial, many were subjected to torture and abuse, even though 2/3 were innocent of wrongdoing. The Veterans Administration reports over 170,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have been diagnosed with PTSD. Conservative estimates put the total number of injured U.S. and allied forces at 218,000. Over 2,000,000 million service members have been deployed. When soldiers come home, the wars return with them. Many of those who come home alive bear the emotional and physical scars of war. Families cope with their loved ones' absence and worry about their safety, struggle with the instability and economic impact of their deployment, then deal with the changed person who comes home from the battlefield. Child abuse is three times higher and spouse/partner abuse is up 177% in homes with a deployed parent.

The war touched families on both sides of the world. Evander Andrews, just 36, was the first US soldier to die in the military response to 9/11, far from their family farm in Maine. His 9-year-old son Ethan stood near his father's wooden casket at Evander's funeral in Arlington National Cemetery. Evander's daughters, Leah, Courtney, and Mackenzie, were only 6, 4, and 2 when he died. On the other side of the world, in Afghanistan, five families grieved when a US bomb that failed to explode on impact was instead detonated by accident by five boys on their way to a picnic. Ramin, 15, died instantly. Both legs were blown off 12-year-old Soraj. Ismaeel, 16 and Farhad, 18, were injured, and 5 year old Waheed was wounded in the chest and head.

The war even intruded into ordinary Americans' daily lives. Under "Patriot Act" information gathering, for example, airline records of ordinary travelers were turned over to the FBI not just for particular suspects, but for masses of customers to "identify suspicious travel patterns." Businesses turned over private information to the FBI and were banned from notifying their customers.

The Rand Report, discussed in the section on "Alternatives to Military Response," compared approaches from 1968-2006 to 268 groups that used terror tactics. Military response was the least effective method, resolving only 7% of the episodes of violence. Peaceful political accommodation (43%) and intelligence and policing methods (40%) were more effective and far less costly in terms of human life and treasury in eliminating terrorist groups. Ten percent stopped their violence because the acts itself achieved the groups' objective.

There is wisdom in the adage that those who fail to learn the lessons of history are bound to repeat its mistakes. I am introducing legislation in support of an education center on the site of the Honouliuli WWII internment camp to preserve its lessons for future generations. The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii has taken the lead in preserving this site, and their efforts have received Congressional support as well. Decades after being released from the internment camp, "Farewell to Manzanar" author Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, visited Manzanar to prove to herself that she had not imagined that period in her young life. As those who underwent the experiences pass away, the pain from actions taken out of fear and racism die with them. The lessons are too important to forget. Yes, we must defend and protect ourselves, but it is imperative that we act on evidence and reason and respect civil rights, as befits a nation known around the globe as the great defender of those rights.

"CostsofWar.org" contains an in-depth, comprehensive report by an international team of well-respected scholars, on the impact of the war on Iraq and Afghanistan. The in-depth, comprehensive study on how our American way of life has changed because of our military response to 9/11, was done by scholars from well respected institutes such as the Universities of Toronto, London, Warwick, Manchester, Massachusetts; the Harvard Kennedy School; Center for Defense Information; and New America Foundation.