

Peace Messenger

News, Connections & Commentary

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Speaking the truth in love

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Anti-Torture Legislation: An Update and Call to Action

by Monte Sahlin



The House Armed Services Committee did not include anything in its Department of Defense Authorization bill regarding habeas corpus or reforming the Military Commissions Act. This is a huge disappointment to the Adventist Peace Fellowship and others in the [National Religious Coalition Against Torture \(NRCAT\)](#).

The Nadler/Harmon bill (HR 1416) has been referred to the Judiciary Committee. Future habeas restoration actions could be attached to the upcoming Department of Defense appropriations bill (divvying up the money in the budget among the programs authorized by the authorization bill). There is also a habeas restoration provision in the Reclaiming the Constitution Act (H.R. 1415).

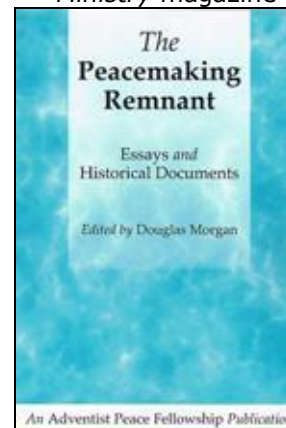
The Senate Department of Defense Authorization Bill does not address habeas but it does include several provisions with respect to amending the Military Commissions Act, including prohibiting the use of coerced testimony, giving detainees the right to counsel during the process to determine whether or not they are an enemy combatant, providing a more

Peace Messenger Recent Issues:

- *"Last Throes": The Second Anniversary (June 1)
- *Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund (May 25)
- *Doss Statue Unveiled (May 18)
- *U.S. Military Aid Goes to Governments Using Child Soldiers (May 11)
- *Third Option for Iraq (May 4)

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independent judge to hear detainee cases, and limiting the definition of enemy combatant. The Senate Judiciary Committee has held a hearing on habeas.

NRCAT has designated June 26 as a "Day of Action." Many people from the religious community who care about these issues will go to Washington for a large rally and to make lobbying visits on their lawmakers. All APF supporters within driving range of Washington, DC are strongly encouraged to participate. If you are interested in doing so, please let us know at info@adventistpeace.org.

Also, there is a need for meetings to be held that day in congressional districts. Here is an opportunity for APF chapters and all Adventist peace-oriented groups to host such a meeting. If you are interested, contact Suzanne O'Hatnick at suzanneohatnick@comcast.net or (410) 362-2604. She chairs the committee for NRCAT and works for the Baltimore unit of the Society of Friends (Quaker denomination). Tell her you are part of APF, which is one of the member organizations of NRCAT.

Go to the [NRCAT web site](#) for further information and registration for the "Day of Action."

The NRCAT coordinating group is working on the possibility of two more letters that may go to members of congress. APF, along with all of the other members of NRCAT, will be asked to sign these once a draft is settled on and the timing worked out:

--One letter would be a cover letter endorsing a long, detailed report prepared by Steve Rickard of the Open Society Institute on the rules under consideration by the administration with respect to the CIA's "alternative interrogation techniques." It is a very compelling and informed document, and it has been suggested that NRCAT should bring it to the attention of the members of Congress as a way to get the White House to pay attention to it.

--A second letter would be to the chairs and ranking members of key committees with oversight jurisdiction of torture and detention, asking them to do investigations and hold hearings on these issues.

Monte Sahlin represents Adventist Peace Fellowship on the NRCAT council of member organizations. [top](#)

The Global Peace Index

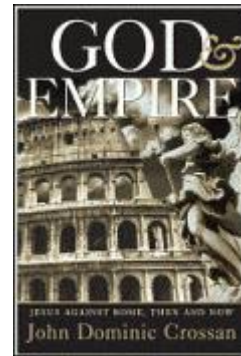


Norway tops the list in the first study to rank countries around the world according to their peacefulness and the drivers that create and sustain their peace. The U.S. ranks 96th.

The [Global Peace Index](#), which was released on May 30, studied 121 countries from Algeria to Zimbabwe.

The [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) measured countries' peacefulness based on wide range of indicators - 24 in all -

Book Note



God and Empire

Jesus Against Empire, Then and Now

by John Dominic Crossan
HarperSanFrancisco/2007

Ryan Bell invites conversation on this compelling new book by the prolific New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan.

From the Prologue, Ryan quotes the following comment on Jesus' words to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world . . ." (John 18:36):

Had Jesus stopped after saying that "my kingdom is not of this world," as we so often do in quoting him, that "of" would be utterly ambiguous. "Not of this world" could mean: never on earth but always in heaven; or not now in present time, but off in the imminent or distant future; or not a matter of the exterior world, but of the interior life alone. Jesus spoils all of these possible misinterpretations by continuing.... Your soldiers hold me, Pilate, but my companions will not attack you even to save me from death. Your Roman Empire, Pilate, is based on the injustice of violence, but my divine kingdom is based upon the justice of nonviolence (4).

Go to Ryan's [intersections](#) blog to join the conversation.

Consider ordering the book

including ease of access to "weapons of minor destruction" (guns, small explosives), military expenditure, local corruption, and the level of respect for human rights. After compiling the Index, the researchers examined it for patterns in order to identify the "drivers" that make for peaceful societies. They found that peaceful countries often shared high levels of democracy and transparency of government, education and material well-being. While the U.S. possesses many of these characteristics, its ranking was brought down by its engagement in warfare and external conflict, as well as high levels of incarceration and homicide. The U.S.'s rank also suffered due to the large share of military expenditure from its GDP. [comment](#) [top](#)

Imperialism on the "Korea Model"

"For the first time, the Bush administration is beginning publicly to discuss basing American troops in [Iraq](#) for years, even decades to come," the [New York Times](#) reported June 2.

On Wednesday, May 30, White House press secretary Tony Snow said that "Korea was one way to think about how America's mission could evolve into an 'over-the-horizon support role,' whenever American troops are no longer patrolling the streets of Baghdad."

The following day, the Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, and Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, who oversees daily military operations in Iraq, both said that "they favor a protracted U.S. troop presence in Iraq along the lines of the military stabilization force in South Korea," according to the [Washington Post](#). U.S. forces have been in South Korea for over 50 years. Gates suggested that an analogous "long-term presence would assure allies in the Middle East that the United States will not withdraw from Iraq as it did from Vietnam, 'lock, stock and barrel.'"

All of this brings up the question of long-term military bases in Iraq, a key indicator of the agenda for the invasion launched in 2003. The *Times* article states:

Administration officials and top military leaders declined to talk on the record about their long-term plans in Iraq. But when speaking on a not-for-attribution basis, they describe a fairly detailed concept. It calls for maintaining three or four major bases in the country, all well outside of the crowded urban areas where casualties have soared. They would include the base at Al Asad in Anbar Province, Balad Air Base about 50 miles north of Baghdad, and Tallil Air Base in the south.

See the "[Progress Report](#)" for June 4 for an excellent synopsis of this development. [top](#)

Bi-Partisan Consensus on Massive Military Build-Up

From "[A Trillion Dollars and Nowhere to Go but Up](#)" by Robert Dreyfuss at [TomDispatch.com](#)

War critics are rightly disappointed over the inability of congressional Democrats to mount an effective challenge to President Bush's Iraq adventure. What began as a frontal

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**At the Peace Messenger
weblog . . .**

Further comments stimulated by [A.T. Jones' denunciation of pro-war preachers](#), excerpted from the *Review and Herald* (June 27, 1899).

Responding to comment from Doug Morgan, **Nicholas Miller** writes: "EGW [Ellen G. White] was opposed to voluntary involvement in the military, but showed a flexibility to circumstances when a compulsory draft was at issue. She made it clear that extreme positions should not be made a matter of public show. While she seemed to support those who would quietly refuse any military service, she also seemed to equally support those who cooperated in compulsory military duty. Compare Test. I,

assault on the war, with tough talk about deadlines and timetables, has settled into something like a guerrilla-style campaign to chip away at war policy until the edifice crumbles.

Still, Democratic criticism of administration policy in Iraq looks muscle-bound when compared with the Party's readiness to go along with the President's massive military buildup, domestically and globally. Nothing underlines the tacit alliance between so-called foreign-policy realists and hard-line exponents of neoconservative-style empire-building more than the Washington consensus that the United States needs to expand the budget of the Defense Department without end, while increasing the size of the U.S. Armed Forces. In addition, spending on the 16 agencies and other organizations that make up the [official U.S. "intelligence community"](#) or IC – including the CIA – and on homeland security is going through the roof....

How astonishing are the budgetary numbers? Consider the [trajectory](#) of U.S. defense spending over the last nearly two decades. From the end of the Cold War into the mid-1990s, defense spending actually fell significantly. In constant 1996 dollars, the Pentagon's budget dropped from a peacetime high of \$376 billion, at the end of President Ronald Reagan's military buildup in 1989, to a low of \$265 billion in 1996. (That compares to post-World War II wartime highs of \$437 billion in 1953, during the Korean War, and \$388 billion in 1968, at the peak of the War in Vietnam.) After the Soviet empire peacefully disintegrated, the 1990s decline wasn't exactly the hoped-for "peace dividend," but it wasn't peanuts either.

However, since September 12th, 2001, defense spending has simply exploded. For 2008, the Bush administration is requesting a staggering \$650 billion, compared to the already staggering \$400 billion the Pentagon collected in 2001. Even subtracting the costs of the ongoing "Global War on Terrorism" – which is what the White House likes to call its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – for [FY 2008](#), the Pentagon will still spend \$510 billion. In other words, even without the President's two wars, defense spending will have nearly doubled since the mid-1990s. Given that the United States has literally no significant enemy state to fight anywhere on the planet, this represents a remarkable, if perverse, achievement. As a famous Democratic politician once asked: Where is the outrage?

Neocons, war profiteers, and hardliners of all stripes still argue that the "enemy" we face is a nonexistent bugaboo called "Islamofascism." It's easy to imagine them laughing into their sleeves while they continue to claim that the way to battle low-tech, rag-tag bands of leftover Al Qaeda crazies is by spending billions of dollars on massively expensive, massively powerful, futuristic weapons systems.... [top](#)

361-62 with Man. 33, 1886
(published in Sel. Mess. II, 335.)

"As far as Christ's teachings, I believe that the sermon on the mount is often misused on this point. Christ's teachings regarding the impropriety of vengeance and retaliation are taken as speaking to the question of defense of self and others. Such a reading puts Christ into opposition with the Old Testament, Paul's writings, as well as his own instructions to his disciples to carry swords on their later missionary journey. . . ."

Charles Scriven writes:

"Nicholas: Remember that during the Civil War, when Adventists clearly opposed slavery, church leaders, including Ellen White, found ways to help members NOT participate, uniformed, in the conflict.

"One way to say how this makes sense is to invoke the Red Cross today. Nobody demonizes that organization for having a non-military, and essentially neutral, mission during international conflicts."

Get in on the full discussion and add your insights at the [Peace Messenger weblog](#).

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Editor: Doug Morgan

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