Local

January 26 Meeting
Dr. Stephen Zunes on Current Mideast Policy

The rocky road of the Trump administration is marked by typically unpredictable heavy-handedness in the Middle East region. The president has zig-zagged on Syria policy (putting the Kurdish population there in grave danger); undermined the Palestinian population by supporting Israeli settlements on Palestinian land; tried to explain away a brutal murder of a journalist by the Saudis; and rendered the Iranian population and government vulnerable with sanctions that followed his pulling out of the Iran nuclear weapons agreement.

For details and implications on such precarious military and diplomatic moves, PASMC will turn to Dr. Stephen Zunes, Professor of Politics and International Studies at the University of San Francisco. Dr. Zunes will explore the nature of Trump’s Middle East policy, as well as possible strategic alternatives should a different political party in the U.S. assume leadership next year. (Assuming said party is thinking about alternatives.)

Dr. Zunes will speak on Sunday, January 26 at the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue (at Ellsworth) in San Mateo. The evening begins at 7 PM; admission is free, contributions will be welcome. The UUSM is wheelchair accessible.

Along with his professorial position at USF, Dr. Zunes serves as coordinator of the program in Middle Eastern Studies. Recognized as one the country’s leading scholars of U.S. Mideast policy and of strategic nonviolent action, he is also a senior policy analyst for Foreign Policy in Focus’s project of the Institute for Policy Studies, an associate editor of Peace Review, a contributing editor of Tikkun, and a member of the academic advisory council for the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. Dr. Zunes has made frequent visits to the Middle East and other conflict regions, meeting with top government officials, academics, journalists and opposition leaders.

We hope to see you January 26 for an insightful look at Middle East affairs, Trump-style.

Summary of October 20 Meeting
Sharon Tennison’s Alternative Take on Russia

At the time she came to speak to a PASMC gathering in October, citizen diplomat by avocation Sharon Tennison had just returned from the latest in a 36 years-long string of visits to Russia – which was of course the Soviet Union when these trips along with other American citizens began. Sharon talked about the evolution of her group, the Bay Area-based Center for Citizen Initiatives (CCI), the nature and content of the visits, and what she has found in and about the country that has often been an adversary to the U.S.; with which it has at best historically had an uneasy peace. She also offered opinions about recent actions by Russia that were counter to mainstream media as well as some in the audience on this evening.

Sharon talked about how CCI began, when as a nurse she became connected with Physicians for Social Responsibility, and was called upon to discuss the medical implications of nuclear war. Grasping our country’s tense and dangerous relationship with the Soviet Union, she decided that “someone should go see the enemy”. Upon her group’s first arrival there in 1983, she said, they “found a country we didn’t dare want to live in, but…people we really did respect”, and “activities we wish we had in the United States” such as free health care and education, and safe streets. This was, Sharon said “a peaceful, placid society” – as long as it kept in line with the Soviet government.

The trips by CCI continued into the Mikhail Gorbachev era of the mid-1980’s, and included efforts to address tensions and solve problems between the two countries. Sharon cited an effort to address Soviet citizens’ oft-documented drinking problems with Alcoholics Anonymous-type methods. The Soviet breakup brought the idea of helping Russia build its business acumen, and the result was an offer to Sharon from the U.S. State Department for millions of dollars in grants through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). While she spent far less money than she was offered, she reported good results on programs to help Americans and Russians work together, including helping Russians with, in two examples, beginning a sewing industry and cleaning up a polluted lake.

Sharon’s efforts led to a meeting with Vladimir Putin, long before he was in his current position. She said she
found him to be untypical of Soviet bureaucrats whom she had met; he was straightforward and seemingly would not take a bribe. She added that she remains impressed with him. As if by contrast, she also cited “growing discomfort” with Russia in the late 1990s, which has persisted in Congress despite some of its members’ expressions of appreciation for CCI programs to help Russia make progress. Sharon cited what she deemed anti-Russian propaganda in U.S. mainstream media, and felt “ignored” and “blacklisted” herself in a desire to tell the truth about how things are there.

Sharon fast-forwarded to the most recent CCI trip in September-October, with a goal to absorb knowledge about “the current state of Russia”. 50 people from 17 states visited 20 different cities, she recalled. There were meetings with experts in weapons, finance and other areas; this began in Moscow, with subsequent trips by the delegation to cities in other parts of the country. Members noted such aspects as local governments, infrastructure and schools – both kids’ and higher education. She added that the Americans were assisted by Russian citizens who helped coordinate visits and drive them around the cities and towns.

After 5 days the delegation re-convened in St. Petersburg to share such observations as good public transportation and well-paved streets with minimal litter – just two examples, in Sharon’s opinion, of a nation making progress (and what she also called an outgrowth of the Soviet era). There also was no real anti-American sentiment, partly because American news – the “other side” – is internationally available, and the American travelers generally noted the kindness of the Russian people they met. These are stories which Sharon feels reflect the truth, and that she wants to share with other Americans.

The question and answer period allowed the audience to ask questions delving deeper into how Russia functions, and Putin’s role in the country. Some skepticism was revealed through inquiries about alleged Russian election hacking, which Sharon contended did not happen; about political repression, which she felt was partly because of people protesting where they should not have been; about reports of the invasions of Ukraine and Crimea, which she felt were exaggerated; and about Putin’s role in the KGB, which she downplayed as “more of an office person than an operations person”. Her impression of Putin included the idea that he had brought more law codes to Russia, and that he “is doing the best job he could have possibly done” in a country like Russia. The interaction made for a lively evening.

Ron Zucker
Log on to www.ccisf.org

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**February 23 Meeting**

**Hallinan on Peace, Water and Climate Change**

Water is a resource easily taken for granted around the world. While it is central to the economies and welfare of the people of Asia and the Middle East, retired journalism professor Dr. Conn Hallinan finds it remarkable that there are virtually no treaties for sharing it. We see a similar impasse when it comes to climate change, as demonstrated at the various United Nations-sponsored and other conferences held to address it.

Dr. Hallinan notes that in 2018, India and Pakistan exchanged minor military attacks, and one of the adversaries threatened to shut down a river system. This would have been an act of war, which between Indian and Pakistan has a significant chance of going nuclear. Such a “local” nuclear war would have worldwide effects.

Thus, he suggests water, peace and climate change are major related issues, and the lack of agreements – indeed, the retreat from other international agreements such as the Intermediate Nuclear Force Agreement and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty – suggest that other agreements will be difficult to reach. If such efforts fail, peace is at stake.

On Sunday, February 23, Dr. Hallinan will make that case using other examples from the Middle East and Europe. The evening will begin at 7 PM at the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue in San Mateo. Admission is free, contributions will be welcome. The UUSM is wheelchair accessible.

Dr. Hallinan is an analyst for Foreign Policy in Focus, which is part of the Institute for Policy Studies. He oversaw the journalism program at UC Santa Cruz for 23 years, and he is a winner of a Project Censored “Real News” award.

Don’t miss this talk about the politics of water policy, climate change and peace.

**Weekly Peace Vigils**

Please join PASMC every Saturday in San Mateo as we come together for an hour to call for peace and justice here and around the world. 3-4 PM is the time, 3rd Avenue and El Camino Real – in front of the Bank of America Building – is the place. Bring a sign or use one of ours!

And on Thursdays from 4-6 PM, Declaration of Peace-San Mateo holds its weekly “Stand for Peace” at 5th and El Camino. Add your presence and your feeling!
Summary of November 17 Meeting
The Current State of Military Resistance

Jeff Paterson, co-founder and Executive Director of the G.I. resister advocacy organization Courage to Resist, was not always an activist for peace and military resistance. Growing up in the agricultural Gilroy area, he joined the Marine Corp thinking it would be “fun”, he said, adding that killing the enemy would certainly be for a “good reason”. Trained to assemble fuses for nuclear warheads, Jeff’s mindset – already beginning to focus on the implications of war and killing – went through a big change while he was about to be deployed in the 1991 Persian Gulf War: A commanding officer assured his unit that if a combat situation became unfavorable, Paterson would “nuke all the ragheads”.

While the rest of the unit cheered, Jeff was in tears. “That’s when my life changed”, he said, having decided not to board the plane to the Persian Gulf and instead become a conscientious objector. The decision exposed him to death threats and landed him in a military prison – for a five-year sentence that became just a few months when the Marines thought he would be a “distraction” in the midst of antiwar protests. After he regained his freedom, Jeff decided to advocate for other military resisters, and Courage to Resist was born. Noting the strategy of organizing in communities that were home to military bases, he also cited the organization’s courtroom presence in roughly 50 resistance-related trials, and its generally successful track record of reducing many prison sentences.

Jeff discussed the “first big case” for Courage to Resist – that of Ehren Watada, an Army lieutenant who refused to deploy to the Iraq War. After a three-year court fight, charges and a court martial against Lt. Watada were dropped in 2009. Not long after, the story of Bradley (now Chelsea following her gender change) Manning emerged when in 2010 the officer, outraged by what seemed like a war crime, shared with Wikileaks the notorious “collateral murder” video of Reuters journalists in Afghanistan being killed by a U.S. gunship. With Manning in military prison, Courage to Resist, Jeff said, spent much of 2012 and 2013 in courtrooms in her defense. “Chelsea Manning risked throwing her life away”, he said, in order to try to make a difference.

With hundreds of Manning supporters sitting in the courtroom, the organization organized outside of is as well, with a march on the National Security Agency spearheaded by the LGBTQ community. It was considered a victory when President Obama commuted Manning’s sentence; however she is now back in prison for refusing to testify to a Grand Jury against Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Jeff agrees with her that the Grand Jury is being used as a tool of repression to go after political opponents. Criticizing a judicial action to fine Manning $1000 a day for the 18 months she will be held (which will be a total of $441,000 by the time she is released), he termed it a tactic of coercion rather than punishment. Courage to Resist continues to assist in the case.

Jeff next turned to the story of National Security Agency whistleblower Reality Winner, in jail since 2017 for sending documents relating to Russian involvement in the 2016 elections to investigative news outlet The Intercept. Winner got the information from an internet search, yet was accused of violating the Espionage Act of 1917 after the “leak” was traced back to her. Courage to Resist is also funding her defense, which includes a clemency petition scheduled to go to the President’s desk in a year…when the identity of the next President is known.

Another whistleblower case on the organization’s docket is that of Daniel Hale, an Air Force veteran security analyst also now in prison for violating the Espionage Act. Hale incurred that accusation by collaborating on the documentary film “National Bird” – about the U.S. military drone program, but the Trump administration contends he went above what was allowed about sharing information about drones. Jeff suggested there is a chilling effect that the Trump administration has put on whistleblowers, in which the president’s tweets could raise repercussions by labeling someone trying to speak out as “an enemy of the state”.

Jeff discussed other projects of Courage to Resist. One concerns the deployment of U.S. troops to the Mexican border to help enforce current immigration policy. He contended that sending the military to conduct what he calls police actions are unconstitutional. The organization is also generating podcasts with Vietnam-era war resisters telling their (sometimes “colorful”) stories. And Jeff is also getting the planet and climate change involved in the debate with the notion that the U.S. military is the world’s largest polluter not also a nation-state. Regarding the counter-recruitment issue, Jeff talked about a new military program – as an alternative to the patriotism and warfighting angle – of luring recruits by offering to forgive their student loan debts.

Jeff turned to recent developments with the draft, for which he noted registration requirements have been violated by millions since its reinstatement in the 1970s. But he noted that while just 13 (outspoken) people ever went to jail over it, not registering can have a negative effect on job prospects when someone turns 25 years old – and on immigration prospects for anyone who is undocumented. Meanwhile, the Selective Service System was ruled unconstitutional in the spring of 2019 on the grounds that it excludes women, who are eligible for combat. Jeff remarked on the unusual coalition of his group (along with Quaker and Mennonite groups) in op-
position to the draft on grounds of its “involuntary service”, along with right-wing activists who feel the military, in the case of women, is “not their place”.

The variety of testimony could result in a cancellation of the draft, he said Jeff. However that happens, he added, “I’ll take that, if millions of people don’t have their lives ruined by having to choose between following the law or screwing up…their conscience.”

Ron Zucker and Cheryl Kozanitas
Log on to www.couragetoresist.org

Membership Report
PASMC warmly welcomes our newest member, David Rubinson.
And we thank and welcome back these renewing members: David Amendola, Mary Beavins, Jerry Brozell, Mike Caggiano and Keiko Kim, Cheryl Kozanitas, Harvey Rarback, Elaine Salinger, Connie Spearing, Eve Visconti, Ron Zucker

Holiday Fundraiser for Palestinian Refugees
At our annual Holiday Potluck on December 15, PASMC raised $250 for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

A good time was had by all, and we thank all those who showed up with great food and a giving spirit. We’ll see you in 2020!

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Because of our advocacy and political action programs, membership is not tax deductible.

National

How Peacebuilding Can Replace Endless War
By Madeline Rose / December 18 /
www.responsiblestatecraft.org

On (December 13), Win Without War’s Erica Fein argued that the National Defense Authorization Act “should serve as a roadmap for ending needless conflict and charting a new, better, and more sustainable direction for [the United States] and the world.” Last week’s announcement of a $738 billion 2020 Department of Defense budget and publication of the Afghanistan Papers, revealing our nation’s military and civilian leaders’ inability to manage the war machine honestly or effectively, make her comments an all the more urgent wakeup call to chart out said new, better, more sustainable direction.

But what does this new direction look like?

Where Samuel Moyn and Stephen Wertheim argue that America has normalized war, I would add that it has also lost a collective fluency for credible, confident alternatives to war. Decades of glorified militarism in popular culture alongside fearmongering and enemization of “Islam” and “Islamic extremism” have created a political environment in which anything but warmongering is perceived as politically weak and practically unrealistic.

But the truth is that evidence is on the side of non-militarized solutions “winning” the so-called “War on Terror.” Let’s review. If the primary justification for the post-9/11 “War on Terror” is to “defeat” al-Qaida and its affiliated “violent extremist” networks, policy should most centrally consider what actually works to reduce and end terrorism. In the RAND Corporation’s seminal review of the topic, it found that most terrorist groups end due to politically mediated processes or improvements in local policing or intelligence. Military force, RAND found, has rarely been a primary reason for the end of terrorist groups.

If mediation and intelligence approaches are the pathways to dismantling terrorist groups, what do we know about why people join terrorist groups in the first place? Again, military solutions do not hold muster. A robust body of evidence now shows that people join terrorist groups for intrinsically personal, communal, or political reasons — to defend one’s tribe, to ensure political participation, or to fight for justice in the face of no alternative outlet. Every day, communities are on the frontlines to reduce and prevent participation in violent extremist or terrorist organizations. Often, U.S. military actions make their efforts harder, not easier.

What would it look like to prioritize peacebuilding as a pathway out of endless war in practice?
For example, for nearly twenty years in Afghanistan, the U.S. government’s endless war policy approach has been predicated on two core assumptions: that force would threaten its way to changing Afghan citizens’ governance preferences, and that elite, closed-door peace deals without Afghan civil society buy-in would still somehow hold. But as Dartmouth associate professor Jason Lyall stated and the Afghanistan Papers now publicly confirm, neither of these fundamental assumptions bore out throughout the war. The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan continued to preference hard security tools for soft security problems, and without any serious oversight from Congress or the public, those fundamental assumptions still drive overarching policy today.

A peacebuilding approach to ending the conflict in Afghanistan would instead recognize that a mediated, inclusive political settlement is the only way out of conflict today. All international actions and operations in the country would therefore focus on ensuring the local, institutional, cultural, and political conditions conducive for an inclusive and legitimate peace process. A peacebuilding approach to Afghanistan would prioritize small but responsible investments in Afghan civil society that would enable them to engage its citizenry around the pillars and spirit of the Afghan Constitution, and enable political stability.

And when asked “what would we do about levels of violence today,” peacebuilders would argue that civilian-led open, transparent, unfettered multi-track dialogues between all parties to the conflict can create civilian protection agreements for long enough to support a mediated resolution of the conflict.

Mediating political conflicts, addressing grievances, and otherwise supporting the nonviolent resolution of conflict is the primary domain of the field of peacebuilding. And according to the evidence, these tools should also be primary components of an ending endless war toolkit.

This is why the global peacebuilding community is working to establish peacebuilding in policy, the public imagination, and political discourse as a credible alternative to excessive militarism and endless war. In 2020, we will launch a new campaign dedicated to bringing accountability to government policies that undermine conditions conducive and reallocating energies currently geared for militarism to supporting locally-led, evidence-backed peacebuilding instead.

Of course, building policy pathways out of endless war will not be easy. In Afghanistan, managing troop withdrawals and security sector reform in ways that do not expose civilians to excessive harm on the American watch has been and will continue to be among the most difficult issues to address. Every theatre will face critical challenges. But we – the public, advocates, experts, and the practitioners – must push through these challenges and start confidently and credibly articulating alternative pathways to the “war on terror” paradigm that would actually advance just peace in the twenty-first century. Peacebuilding offers one critical pathway to help pull humanity out of its endless war rut.

**Trump’s Hypocrisy Knows No Bounds**  
*Jewish Voice for Peace statement, December 10*

“Trump doesn’t care about Jewish safety – this Executive Order is about silencing criticism of Israel”

The…Executive Order by President Trump will do nothing to make Jewish students safer on college campuses, and Jewish Voice for Peace is appalled at this blatant attempt to silence criticism of Israel.

Trump’s Executive Order allegedly targeting campus antisemitism is the culmination of decades of attempts by anti-Palestinian organizations to suppress Palestinian organizing, advocacy, research and teaching on college campuses. The EO, which would codify a dangerous and overly broad definition of antisemitism into federal civil rights law, fails to offer any protection to Jewish students. Instead, it will usher in a climate of fear on college campuses, where university administrations will be incentivized to silence student activism, faculty research, and teaching about Palestine – while white supremacist organizing, which has been steadily increasing under Trump, will go unchecked.

Rabbi Alissa Wise, acting Co-Executive Director of Jewish Voice for Peace, said: “Three days ago, Trump said Jews would vote for him because they like money. And yet now he suddenly pretends to care about Jewish safety? He has never cared about stopping antisemitism – this Executive Order is about silencing Palestinians and the people who speak up with them. The Executive Order is his way of forcing through a deeply unpopular and unconstitutional bill. Jewish Voice for Peace calls on members of Congress to immediately condemn this Executive Order and commit to overturning this authoritarian act.”

This EO essentially duplicates legislation that has failed to garner bipartisan support in the House or Senate for years. Opposition to the so-called “Anti-Semitism Awareness Act” has grown steadily, including objections from activists and free speech groups. Most recently, over 250 Jewish students opposed the 2019 act. In 2016, over 60 Jewish Studies professors, and over 300 Jewish students, opposed this definition. When this definition was proposed by anti-Palestinian activists to the University of California in 2015, over 300 UC faculty came out in opposition, along with the LA Times editorial board, American Civil Liberties Union, and California Scholars for Academic Freedom.
The EO relies on the work of Kenneth Marcus, the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights in the Department of Education. Marcus, and his organization the Brandeis Center, has long harassed students and faculty who disagree with his extremist and right-wing views on Israel. He openly advocates for defunding Middle East studies departments who are too critical of Israeli policy, and has, in his capacity as head of the Brandeis Center, gone after individual students who protest Israeli actions.

**The American Empire Project**

In an era of unprecedented military strength, leaders of the United States, the global hyperpower, have increasingly embraced imperial ambitions. How did this significant shift in purpose and policy come about? And what lies down the road?

The American Empire Project is a response to the changes that have occurred in America’s strategic thinking as well as in its military and economic posture. Empire, long considered an offense against America’s democratic heritage, now threatens to define the relationship between our country and the rest of the world. The American Empire Project publishes books that question this development, examine the origins of U.S. imperial aspirations, analyze their ramifications at home and abroad, and discuss alternatives to this dangerous trend.

The project was conceived by Tom Engelhardt and Steve Fraser, editors who are themselves historians and writers. Published by Metropolitan Books, an imprint of Henry Holt and Company, its titles include Hegemony or Survival and Failed States by Noam Chomsky, The Limits of Power and Washington Rules by Andrew J. Bacevich, Blood and Oil by Michael T. Klare, Kill Anything That Moves by Nick Turse, A People’s History of American Empire by Howard Zinn, and Empire’s Workshop by Greg Grandin.

*Log on to [www.americanempireproject.com](http://www.americanempireproject.com)*

**Emperor’s lack of clothing**

I distinctly remember the three small soapstone monkeys on the mantle. See no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil. I believe they were supposed to be guidelines to a virtuous life.

“The time has come” the walrus said, “to speak of many things, of shoes and ships and sealing wax, of cabbages and kings”. Yes, we need to associate the cabbages with the kings as in cabbage heads. Indeed, we need to speak of the need to look to our senses and the realities that the evidence presents. Not to do so is to translate the three monkeys into a more pertinent translation. You’d need to be deaf, dumb and blind not to come to the conclusion that our emperor is running around stark naked. It’s time to remove his presence from our eyes.

*Mike Caggiano*

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**Action Alert**

**Let Congress Weigh in on Disarmament**

Since 1970, when the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) entered into force at the United Nations, the nuclear weapons states – led by the U.S. and then-Soviet Union, now Russia – have largely dragged their feet on any real progress toward disarmament. Accords between the two countries such as SALT I and II, ABM, INF and new START have signaled at least a willingness to address the nuclear threat, but all have either gone by the wayside or, thanks to the Trump administration, are on the way out.

Now with 191 signatories, NPT will have its five-year review conference in 2020, with the usual minimal expected results. With an eye on such results up to that time, in July 2017 122 of those nations, also under the auspices of the UN but not including the nuclear weapons states, signed an alternative document – the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which, as stated on its web site, “includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear weapon activities. These include undertakings not to develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.”

Addressing our country’s inertia toward TPNW and such accords in general, in April 2019 Massachusetts Rep. Jim McGovern introduced H. Res.302, “Embracing the goals and provisions of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”. More specifically the bill also takes on previous hallmarks of disarmament, including removing the sole ability to launch a nuclear strike from the president; taking missiles off “hair-trigger alert”, and scrapping nuclear weapons modernization efforts going back to the Obama era and beyond.

Here is a chance for Congress to make a statement on the need to disarm, and to join the international community. While H. Res 302 is a long way from serious consideration, every bit of support from the House can be its own statement.

**Action**: Contact Rep. Jackie Speier or Anna Eshoo, or whomever represents you, and tell them to co-sponsor H. Res 302 and honor the notion of ending the specter of nuclear weapons.

**Help on the Global Stage**

In today’s world we continue to face the threat of terrorism and other violence, either from state- or non-state-sponsored entities. Whether over religious persecution, natural resources or wealth inequity (to name a few sources of conflict), the human race seems compelled to
watch its collective back in a desperate posture of readiness.

At the same time, the U.S. devotes a minute amount of funding toward violence prevention, which is consistent with figures worldwide. For instance, a group of humanitarian aid organizations found that in 2016 just 2% of U.S. funding for conflict-affected and fragile states went to reduction of violence, and 0.9% to development and peacebuilding; the rest was for “containment”.

Congress has begun to address this situation with bipartisan legislation. Last July, Delaware Sen. Christopher Coons introduced S.727, the Global Fragility Act of 2019, which “directs the President to devise and implement a 10-year plan (for starters) to combat global fragility” as well as provide the funding for such a plan. Along with trying to identify and stabilize conflict areas, S. 727 focuses on reducing causes of violence and resulting fragility of some nations.

In this way, the U.S. can add an element of prevention to conflict-ridden counties, depending on the conditions at hand. The bill, whose companion in the House has already passed, now has 26 co-sponsors, not including Senators Dianne Feinstein or Kamala Harris.

**Action:** Contact both Senator Feinstein and Harris to ask for their support for S.727, the Global Fragility Act. Suggest that an ounce (or more) of prevention of conflicts around the world could prevent U.S. military actions, as well as contribute to stability and peace if used correctly.

**A Disappointing Vote**

We don’t often ask for after-vote Congressional contacts, but in December Congress voted overwhelmingly to approve the National Defense Authorization Act, with yes votes from Reps. Speier and Eshoo as well as Sen. Feinstein, and Sen. Harris “not voting”.

The NDAA is generally termed a “must-pass” bill in separate versions from the House and Senate, with a conference to reconcile both versions. Unfortunately, in the $738 billion final bill, a number of favorable House-passed provisions were taken out, including no funding for an unauthorized war on Iran, ending U.S. participation in the Saudi war on Yemen, and some unnecessary (given the U.S. arsenal) and expensive programs. And of course $738 billion is a great deal of money when compared to what Congress authorizes for health care, education and the homeless – among many other human-based needs.

We were told by Speier’s office that her yes vote was based on “provisions enhancing the rights of service-members and their families”. They also acknowledged the bill could have been better; not only do we agree, we think it’s important to vote based on the same principles that have guided earlier votes and bill co-sponsorships which have supported reining in wasteful spending, reducing the nuclear weapons threat, and stopping endless wars that subvert human rights and the will of another country’s population. The right-wing spin machine will of course fire away about a no vote “not supporting the troops”, which, in the context of such over-the-top largesse, should get all of the eye-rolling it deserves.

**Action:** Contact Rep. Speier or Eshoo, as well as Sen. Feinstein, to express how you feel about a vote in favor of $738 billion for next year’s military budget, and the waste it contains. Given each’s track record, suggest that you hope for and have good reason to expect a better vote on future such bills. If you have time, you can also tell Sen. Harris her no vote would also have been welcome.

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**www.whitehouse.gov/contact/**

**Find out who your Representative is:** [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)

If you are not in California, identify your senators here: [www senate.gov](http://www senate.gov)

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The **Update** is published quarterly by Peace Action of San Mateo County. We welcome all submissions and letters, and reserve the right to exclude or edit for content and other considerations. The views expressed within are not necessarily those of the members of Peace Action of San Mateo County or Peace Action.
Peace Action of San Mateo County

Peace Action of San Mateo County presents

Dr. Stephen Zunes
Professor of Politics and International Studies,
University of San Francisco

"Trump’s Mideast Policy:
Syria, Israel/Palestine, Saudi Arabia,
Iran and Beyond"

Sunday, January 26, 7 PM
Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo
300 E. Santa Inez Ave., San Mateo
Admission free, contributions welcome
Details inside

Peace Action of San Mateo County
Officer
President: Mike Caggiano
Vice President: Cheryl Kozanitas
Secretary: Mary Beavins
Update Editor: Ron Zucker

Peace vigil every Saturday
We will be at 3rd Ave. and El Camino Real in San Mateo at 3 PM for our weekly antiwar vigil, while our military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan continues.
Visit us on Facebook!
www.facebook.com/pasmc