

Update

Summer 2018

Ron Zucker, Editor

Local

PASMC Potluck Dinner – July 15

Come join us on Sunday, July 15 for our annual summer get-together. This is our time to exhale a bit from (and invariably share perspectives on) the whirlwind of events swirling around us, get social, catch up with old friends and meet new friends. We'll also have a short "business meeting" for our members to elect our slate of board members and officers, followed by some live musical entertainment.

It's a potluck dinner, so please bring a dish to share. Appetizer, main dish, dessert, it doesn't matter...we always walk away well-fed! Beverages of various types will also be on hand.

We begin at 5:30 PM in Beck Hall of the Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo, 300 E. Santa Inez Avenue (at Ellsworth) in San Mateo. After we feed each other, we'll have our elections, then be treated to the sounds of Stan Eng and Don Fullerton, playing acoustic tunes of the 1960s and 1970s.

On July 15 let's celebrate what we do, as well as why and with whom we do it, as advocates of peace and justice who endeavor to walk our talk. We look forward to seeing you!

Summary of June 10 Meeting **The Iran Nuclear Accord – Truth and Consequences**

While stating that "every country in the Middle East has a role" in the issue of nuclear weapons in Iran, Paul George, Executive Director of the Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, came to discuss that of the U.S. This had become more crucial when Donald Trump pulled us out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement among six countries meant to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Paul proceeded to debunk the Trump talking points meant to justify his actions, then speculated on what might happen as a result of them.

Paul first focused on some history of U.S. military connections in the region, noting that Iran's 1979 revolution caused us to replace it with Israel, along with Saudi Arabia, as one of the "twin pillars" of military policy and a recipient of increased support. With Israel now seeing Iran as an "existential threat", wealthy supporters of Israel such as casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and evangel-

ical Christians donated heavily to "Candidate Trump", while pressuring him to criticize and then call off the accord.

Paul noted President Obama's choice of diplomacy over war when Iran was seen working "feverishly" on nuclear development. Paul said that such research was intended to help Iran's economy rather than directly build a weapon, though he added that it gave them a "back-ground" to construct one. The resulting concern eventually led to the JCPOA, which stopped any weapon-related work – and which, as he put it, Trump "torpedoed".

Paul began with the notion that the deal allows for Iran to continue enriching uranium. In fact, it allows enrichment levels to about 5%, a decrease from the 20% enrichment before the deal, and far less than the 80-90% required for a nuclear weapon. Paul said Iran also gave up 97% of its stockpile of enriched uranium and two-thirds of its centrifuges, leaving the rest to be monitored.

Paul addressed Trump's statement that the U.S. gave Iran billions of dollars by pointing out that this was Iranian assets previously frozen by sanctions and released as a condition of the accord. It is "their money, not ours", and there was no cost to American taxpayers.

As for Trump's idea that Iran could resume building nuclear weapons at any time, Paul explained that a post-deal "nuclear breakout" period – the time between a decision by Iran to pursue a bomb and its reality – had under the JCPOA increased from an estimated 2-3 months to at least a year, and that Iran would first have to renounce the entire agreement. The deal also limits Iran's enrichment capacity to less than one bomb over 15 years – and overall prohibits it from pursuing a nuclear weapon. Paul also called "very old news" published documents released by Israel about Iran's stated pursuit of nuclear weapons. These dated back to 2001, he said, while all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies had determined that Iran's nuclear weapons research ended in 2003.

Paul addressed Trump's claim that the inspection provisions are inadequate to prevent cheating. Arms control experts have called the provisions "historic," he said – adding that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed Iran's compliance with inspections on 10 occasions since 2016, with about 60 "snap inspections". There is 24-hour access (as well as cameras with audio) to sites directly involved in Iran's nuclear program as identified by western intelligence for dec-

ades. Paul also called out Trump's demand for access to important (including military) locations not necessarily identified as nuclear, saying such unfettered inspection "would amount to espionage."

Turning to Trump's criticism of "sunset provisions" in the deal, Paul asserted that expiration dates are not unusual in international agreements – such as arms agreements between the U.S. and Russia as well as the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The timelines in the JCPOA include a slightly increased use of centrifuges in 8 ½ years, a cap on enrichment levels for 15 years, monitoring and inspection of centrifuges for 20 years, and a ban on uranium mining and milling for 25 years. A requirement to get rid of spent nuclear fuel that could become enriched uranium and a prohibition against weaponization activities are both permanent. Despite these numbers, Paul says Trump is engaging in fear mongering, "as if the agreement is about to run out at any minute..." As for the agreement not addressing Iran's missile program, Paul says it "was never meant to" – typical of many agreements that deal with specific issues but not everything outstanding.

Paul turned to the question of what happens next, and cited a speech by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to the Heritage Foundation in which he talked about financial pressure in the form of new and resumed sanctions – with other countries doing business with Iran expected to comply. Paul called this another "abrogation" of the deal, and warned it could lead to the same degree of economic suffering as in 2012 with shortages of food and necessary raw materials. Following Trump's election, the decrease in investment in Iran minimized the sanctions relief that was supposed to have resulted from the agreement.

Paul expects Iran to "try to keep its head above water" by using its cash reserves to help its people with programs such as food and job training. But another aspect of Pompeo's speech was calling on Iranians to rise up against their government. This, said Paul, is a call for "regime change" to "the very same people Trump and Pompeo are threatening with malnutrition." On that idea, he added that Iranians are unhappy with their government but know the economic problems are not its fault as much as U.S. sanctions. "They are no longer pro-U.S.," he said.

The European Union, he added, will do its best to preserve the JCPOA, including keeping sanctions lifted. It's unclear how that will play out against the U.S. role in international markets, but it is one way of getting around the U.S. Iran could also seek out regional neighbors to do business with, but some of them are more economically tied to the U.S. than in the past, and might also not want to risk sanctions. Smuggling and bartering for food

are options, but mostly Iran will try to outlast the Trump administration.

Paul discussed scenarios involving a U.S. war with Iran, which he said is now more possible but certainly not inevitable. He speculated that we could be waiting for a provocation, such as Iran restarting its nuclear program. (While they have vowed to keep their end of the agreement, hard-liners in the country are pushing for other options.)

He also thought it more likely that we could be "dragged in" by an Israeli or Saudi action.

Regardless of the reason, Paul drew comparisons between Iraq's military in 2003 when the U.S. attacked and Iran's military now, with Iran showing far bigger numbers in soldiers and equipment. He also expressed doubt that the U.S. would have a coalition similar to 2003, due to rifts with Europe over not just Iran policy but also global warming and trade issues. And yet, he said, Pompeo continues to evoke the idea of "freedom of navigation" in the Persian Gulf – where both Iranian and U.S. naval vessels roam, and where, Paul said, "an unplanned incident is very possible".

Paul did have a positive note, that the House of Representatives added an amendment forbidding an attack on Iran to its 2019 military spending bill. He called for pressure on the Senate to keep that amendment in its version, and to pass other legislation to restrict going to war. Sanctions relief is also possible, though Paul thought it more likely if a Democratic majority took over Congress. But mostly, he said, our members need to "exhibit moral and political courage." That might be with our help.

Ron Zucker

The Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, has a YouTube channel with the monthly TV program "Other Voices".

Go to <https://www.youtube.com/ppjvideo>.

Membership Report

PASMC welcomes the following new members:

Judy Adams, Judy Starling, Mo Weimer, Gary White

And we are glad to have back these renewing members: Inge Etzbach, Louis Facchino, Daniel Gilbrech, Vany Laurenti, Adrienne Lonzarich, Tom Newman, Gary Parma, Gloria and James Purcell, Peter Rothaug, Stephen and Joanne Rovno, John St. Peter, Edna Steele, Marianna Tubman

Finally, we sadly note the passing of one of our members: Richard Howse. *Presente*

Summary of May 6 Meeting
Issues of Violence –
U.S. Police and Mexico

In the midst of his talk to PASMC, John Lindsay-Poland of the Oakland office of the American Friends Service Committee took a moment to make clear that there were many members of police forces that were doing a good job, and there for the right reasons such as protecting their community. But John had come to talk about ways that police are capable of running afoul of their mission – in part because of military-related tools and institutions. He also talked about our country’s connection to gun violence in Mexico, enhanced by a futile “war on drugs”. Always most important, he offered possible legislative-related actions with which the audience could respond.

Using his hometown of Oakland as an example, John talked about the increased responsibility police have been given by civilian government officials to deal with such issues as drugs, the homeless, mentally ill, school violence and migrants that are added to a full plate of crime cases. He cited the weaponry with which police are supplied, which leads to an emphasis on the use of force over de-escalation. Thus, he added, police behavior is “ripe for abuse” and has led to documented incidents of violence, some publicized, some not. John is concerned over what he called a lack of accountability in “preventable incident(s)” in which police are often not found at fault.

He added that police have begun to behave like the military (a reverse of the *Posse Comitatus* law in which the military can’t enforce the law) with no-knock raids and “stop and frisk” tactics. These are ways, he says, that the 4th Amendment (against illegal search and seizure) has been “frayed”. Also, the targets have largely been people of color. Another part of the plan, he perceives, is to give police a bigger role in emergency preparedness – which can include a natural disaster or a terrorist attack.

Thus John discussed Urban Shield, an event put on every year around September 11 by the Alameda County Sheriff’s Department, funded by the Department of Homeland Security and open to law enforcement agencies all around the Bay Area. What he calls a “militarized emergency preparedness exercise” includes a SWAT team competition with terrorism-related scenarios such as a simulated ambush of a terrorist cell. “That is not a law enforcement protocol”, John said of the Urban Shield format, “that is a total military protocol”.

Urban Shield also features a “vendor show” whose product is primarily weapons. That shows, said John, how police are part of the gun culture. He added that the Oath Keepers, a far-right organization, has attended the event. This was an example of what he called its racist

aspect, which might include targeting people of color in the roleplay.

The good news is that, after a fair amount of both physical and legal protest (the latter on the part of the AFSC), Alameda County has decided not to continue with Urban Shield. The task now, said John, is for the community to decide and lead on alternatives for emergency preparedness.

He discussed the Pentagon’s 1033 Program, in which surplus military weaponry from U.S. wars are given basically free of charge for the asking to local law enforcement agencies. These include tank-like vehicles and AR-15 assault rifles. While such hardware is welcomed by police for its ability to “intimidate a suspect”, John cited killings of people with such assault weapons for far less than capital crimes.

To this problem John offered a legislative solution in California: AB 3131 would require civilian oversight and approval for law enforcement agencies to acquire such military equipment, whether via purchase or a grant. The measure would also require an annual report on the results of such local acquisition of weapons. The measure passed the Assembly in early June (since John’s talk) and is now in the State Senate, where it is supported by local Senator Jerry Hill.

While acknowledging the importance of dealing with cases of killings by law enforcement, John stressed the mission we have of reordering our priorities to such needs as housing and mental health. He also noted a changing narrative on gun violence, in which the NRA still “holds sway” over Congress, but the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre has led to state-level actions based on shifting public opinion on guns. (The February Parkland shootings could result in further action, though we await something significant.)

John stated that guns are a foreign policy issue as well as a domestic issue, and that brought him to the subject of our connection regarding guns to Mexico. There, he said, guns are primarily used for organized crime in the control of territories over the trafficking of drugs, humans – and more guns. Gun shops in Texas and Arizona are thus hubs for moving assault weapons across the border – often by taking them apart first – and John cited that 70% of the guns used to commit crimes in Mexico come from the U.S.

While this is the illegal flow of guns, John noted the *legal* flow, in the war on drugs. Since 2006, he said, we have sent billions of dollars in military equipment – not just firearms but helicopters and similar aid – to fight drug cartels. He noted that in Mexico only the military can legally import guns, and the country has just one place to buy firearms – a government store whose customers must have proper documents.

John's research through the AFSC found that guns in Mexico coming from the U.S. have resulted in human rights crimes by corrupt authorities, such as the massacre of 43 college students in 2014. Many more such cases go unreported, he said, but the U.S. participation in Mexican gun violence is evident in hundreds of millions of dollars in gun contracts between our industry and their government. These sales are licensed, he added, by the U.S. State Department.

On the positive side, he noted some pushback from progressive factions of the U.S. Congress – the most recent example being a “dear colleague” letter from Minnesota Rep. Keith Ellison calling on the State Department to “fully evaluate” U.S. policy in Mexico and its effect on gun violence. The letter also calls for a prioritization of human rights and a reduction of gun violence. John called on the audience to contact Rep. Jackie Speier to ask for her signature on the letter. Sadly she was not among the 12 co-signers, but we should plan to keep in touch with her about issues such as this.

Ron Zucker

Peace Vigil Every Saturday

Come join the PASMCM folks every Saturday from 3-4 PM for a vigil for peace and justice. We gather in front of the Bank of America building at 3rd Avenue and El Camino Real. Keep your ear to the ground (and check Facebook) for special themes, or be there “just because”. We look forward to seeing you.

And on Thursdays from 4-6 PM, Declaration of Peace-San Mateo holds its “Stand for Peace”; any and all are invited there as well.

JOIN PEACE ACTION OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

____ New Member ____ Renewing Member

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\$ ____ Bonnie Burnham Memorial Fund (Supports Video Project in Schools)

\$ ____ Leo Sack Memorial Fund (Addtl. Donation)

\$ ____ Student Activist Scholarship Fund

Please make checks payable to:

PEACE ACTION OF SAN MATEO COUNTY

P.O. BOX 425, San Mateo, CA 94401-0425

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

Summary of April 8 Meeting

Perspectives on North Korea

South Bay activist Dr. Sharat Lin came to speak at a time of uncertain impending change in the relationship between North Korea and the U.S. (and the rest of the world, for that matter). While his slide of a cartoon from the Financial Times – a caricature of Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un glaring at each other with exaggerated big hair and the caption “hair trigger alert” – made the audience laugh, Sharat offered a picture of the possibility of peace in the region. He also showed images and shared his perspectives of North Korea, from his recent trip there, that were meant to humanize the country and its people, which is not often done.

Sharat pointed to North Korea's feeling of being unrecognized and ostracized by the international community as one reason it began pursuing nuclear weapons. Its label as a “hermit kingdom”, he said, is attributable partly to its geography of being surrounded by water and having a river and mountains blocking its borders with China and Russia.

He also traced the separation from South Korea to a chance to “start from scratch” after Japan was defeated in a guerilla resistance (led by Kim Il Song, grandfather of the current President). The North wanted a socialist state with all of its people owning land and farms, while the South opted for more of a free enterprise system, and the differences in approach led to harsh feelings and the Korean War – which caused great destruction of North Korean cities as a result of U.S. bombings, and still has not officially ended with any sort of peace treaty.

The antagonism resulting from a nuclear weapons pursuit by a socialist state led to further tensions over the years, and escalated with well-documented threats between Trump and Kim. Sharat credited the move toward diplomacy with two developments: North Korea's successful testing of a long-range missile that could carry a nuclear warhead and thus threaten the U.S., and the initiative of South Korean President Moon Jae-in to bring the two Koreas together during this year's Winter Olympics. While obviously welcoming the diplomatic initiative (which was still at an early stage at the time of his talk), Sharat thought the summit between Trump and Kim was “going about it backwards”. There should be “low-level negotiations first”, he said, before a summit.

Sharat showed slides from places he was able to visit in the southern part of North Korea, and compared his narrative with that of western thought. While the U.S. government and media cite an impoverished country that spends great amounts on its military and starves its people, he said he never saw such scenes of starvation. There were pictures of a “children's palace” and kids performing in bright-colored clothes. (“They have simi-

lar desires to kids in the U.S.”) Showing a scene of a school building, Sharat observed that in North Korean towns schools were “the biggest” buildings, reflecting the priority given to education – along with agriculture and the military. There were also slides of unfinished buildings, which were the result, he said, of sanctions that curtailed foreign investment.

Sharat talked about North Korea’s infrastructure: 80% of its agriculture is collective while 20% is run by the state. In both cases there is very little mechanization. All housing, while identical in appearance, is state-owned and rent-free as guaranteed by the country’s constitution. Health care, while not as good as in some other countries, is also cost-free. He did note what he called “small signs” of the free market, with some (albeit antiquated) industry, and an emphasis on mining.

Sharat confirmed some of what we hear about North Korea: Its incarceration rate is relatively high, with 100,000 prisoners among a population of 25 million. There are prison labor camps (as described by defectors from the country), at which people lived with their parents in a cluster of villages with a security wall. They are forced to work, said Sharat, but have relative freedom of movement. As for its military, he noted a “hyper-militarized state” but felt it was in answer to South Korea’s large army, and the presence of U.S troops in the region. (The two countries’ war exercises are also well-documented.) North Korea also has an “intranet” as opposed to an internet, which of course hinders connection to the outside world.

Coming back to the peace process (which has of course evolved since this talk), Sharat asserted that North Korea’s part wasn’t just about Kim changing his mind but rather having a “state apparatus” behind him, advising him as a new president and enabling a “continuity in policy”. President Moon also played a big part, influencing not just Kim but Trump as well, about the idea of negotiations and reconciliation – and possibly reunification. Every president, said Sharat, wants a foreign policy legacy, whether war or peace. Regardless of the unorthodox process we have so far witnessed, this is a chance for all three to achieve the latter.

Ron Zucker

Reasons for Hope, Anger and Action

Even a blind squirrel will occasionally find an acorn. That about sums up my explanation of Mr. Trump’s North Korean efforts. Do I hope for some great breakthrough? Of course I do. It is well past time for us to actually sign a peace treaty and nonaggression pact with the North. Regime change efforts and the continued war games played out just below the border need to end. The South needs to have complete sovereignty over who and what is on their land. So who knows – something good

may happen. I won’t be critical at all as nothing productive has been attempted for many administrations. I’d say let’s shut up and see how things go. We’re certainly not among some critics taking pot shots at something that’s just getting started.

On the other hand, there is Iran. President “Bone Spur” seems all too happy to consider putting other folks’ kids in harms way. Rather than listen to Saudi royalty and the right-wing Israeli government, he might heed the rest of the planet that thinks the Iran agreement is worthwhile and expand on it rather than cast all of his newfound acorns into someone else’s fire.

Moving on, our administration is backing the disgusting assault on Hodeida, the main port city in Yemen, putting at risk thousands of desperate Yemenis as well as the international aid workers trying to help them. Meanwhile it demands that there be an additional branch of military service. While totally enamored of the scientific research that goes into developing space weaponry, the administration continues to deny human influences on our warming climate. When a conservative organization like the Catholic Church is calling you out for ignoring science, you’re really behind the 8-ball.

Yet it still continues: How about the tearing apart of refugee families at our border while using “biblical” references? We are extremely glad that nearly the entire nation, Republicans included, is showing amazing revulsion at the spectacle of screaming children being deprived of their parents in government internment camps. It’s on every news media outlet. Folks like you calling and demonstrating their extreme displeasure is having its effect, and that’s good news.

Mike Caggiano

National/Intn’l The Military-industrial Drain

By Robert Reich, June 18

As Trump stokes tensions around the world, he’s adding fuel to the fire by demanding even more Pentagon spending. It’s a dangerous military buildup intended to underwrite endless wars and enrich defense contractors, while draining money from investment in the American people.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower noted, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

Eisenhower was a Republican and a former general who helped win WW II for the allies, yet he understood America’s true priorities. But Washington – and especially Trump – have lost sight of these basic tradeoffs.

Since 2001, the Pentagon budget has soared from \$456 billion – in today’s dollars – to \$700 billion, including the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other national security expenses. All told, when you include spending on the military and war, veterans’ benefits, and homeland security, military-related spending now eats up 67 percent of all federal discretionary spending.

According to the 2018 Military Balance report by the International Institute of Strategic Studies, the U.S. already spends more on the military than the next 10 nations combined. Even if the Pentagon budget were cut in half, the United States would still outspend China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea combined.

The military budget has become bloated with waste and abuse. According to the Pentagon’s own internal figures, the department could save at least \$125 billion by reducing operational overhead.

Out-of-control defense contractors also drive up spending. In the coming years, cost overruns alone are projected to reach an estimated \$484 billion. Meanwhile, the CEOs of the top 5 defense firms took home \$97.4 million in compensation last year.

Despite all this, some still argue that military spending is necessary to support good-paying jobs and economic growth. Baloney. America would be much better served by a jobs program that invested in things we really need – like modern roads and highways, better school facilities, public parks, water and sewer systems, and clean energy – not weapons systems.

The biggest reason for increases in Pentagon spending is the incredible clout of the military-industrial complex – Eisenhower’s term. Every year, defense contractors spend millions of dollars on lobbying and campaign contributions to keep federal dollars flowing their way. More than 80 % of top Pentagon officials have worked for the defense industry at some point in their careers, and many will go back to work in the defense industry.

Since taking office, Trump has increased military spending by more than \$200 billion. Let’s take a second to look at how else that \$200 billion could be spent. We could, for example:

Offer free public colleges and universities, as proposed by Bernie Sanders.

And fund the Children’s Health Insurance Program.

And expand broadband Internet access to rural America.

And meet the growing needs for low-income housing, for safe living conditions for families and the elderly.

And help repair the physical devastation in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.

Spending more on bombs and military machinery funnels money away from the American people and into wars. It’s time to rein in Pentagon spending and this endless war machine, and demand investment in America.

The Immigration Law No One is Talking About

In 1951 after dealing with the horrors of WWII in Europe and the thousands of displaced persons, the free world in cooperation with the United Nations sought to protect refugees through a multi-lateral international treaty. It was called The Refugee Convention and spelled out the protections of all refugees and asylum seekers regardless of place of origin or their story.

The United States was not a signatory of the 1951 agreement. The document continued to evolve, giving a more comprehensive understanding of what a refugee is and expanding those protections first offered only to Europeans to all citizens of the world. The completed document was called the 1967 Protocol. In 1968 the expanded Refugee Convention was ratified and signed by the United States along with 144 other nations. The Convention is not a self executing treaty which means each signatory was required to pass appropriate laws for compliance. The United States codified the 1967 Protocol Articles 1-34 into our domestic laws by updating existing statutes or passing new ones.

Daily Kos, June 21

Action Alert

Yemen – “Make it Stop”

The images coming out of Yemen the past couple of weeks have been even more heartbreaking than usual, if that’s possible. The Saudi-led coalition – which is backed by the U.S. – has stormed into the bustling port city of Hodeida, and tens of thousands of Yemenis fled their homes because of this latest offensive. The port is a lifeline in the country where 10 million people are on the brink of starvation.

In a report from the Independent, one aid worker on the ground described the scene last week: “People are trying to leave with rockets and mortars over their heads. Other people are besieged in their homes. It’s hot and there is no water and we are scared.” And then he added, “Please stop what is happening.”

The Saudis and their allies have no incentive to come to the negotiating table while they are receiving unconditional U.S. support for this war. So peace advocates need to pressure Congress to cut off such support. In March, Peace Action members and allies came close to pulling the plug on U.S. support for the war. We lost, but 44 Senators voted with us...many more than in the past, but still short of ending our country’s role in the suffering.

We are building momentum in Congress. In a sustained political campaign, we are raising awareness around the country about our nation’s unconscionable support for

this war, and the need for diplomacy to replace aggression and killing.

Action: Contact Rep. Jackie Speier or Anna Eshoo, or whomever represents you, and urge them to speak out now and often in favor of cutting off funds and military hardware to Saudi Arabia in its war in Yemen. Contact Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris with a similar message to bring to their chamber. Tell them that no one should have to flee their homes while fighter jets made in and then refueled by the U.S. drop bombs on schools and marketplaces and hospitals. When Yemenis plead with us to “make it stop”, the U.S. needs to listen.

Protection for Yemeni Refugees

They may have avoided addressing the language, but by any measure the Supreme Court upheld a “Muslim ban” desired by Donald Trump. Yemen is one of the targeted countries in his ban.

Defenders of human rights will now be put to the test to stand up against Trump’s bigotry and hate. Considering the devastation described in the previous alert, an early step could involve extending Temporary Protective Status (TPS) to Yemenis now in the U.S. There are currently 1,200 living here, and his administration could deport them at any time; that would result in a horrific return for these people, if not a virtual death sentence.

Congress has the authority to stave off such a sentence, and while we ask members to take a role in mitigating the Yemen human rights disaster in which our country is participating, we can also make them feel the moral gesture and obligation of saving that country’s citizens here.

Action: Contact Rep. Speier or Eshoo, as well as Sens. Feinstein and Harris, and urge them to support extending TPS to Yemenis now living in the U.S. so that they are not deported. Perhaps remind them of the situation to which these people would be sent back, and our country’s role in creating it.

A More Proper AUMF

Shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Congress gave a nearly unanimous vote to George W. Bush for an Authorization for the Use of Military Force, for any President to implement at their discretion. One disastrous result was the Iraq War, after which that country has never been the same. Obama and Trump also used the measure to put U.S. military force in Syria, Yemen and some African countries – or so it seemed, because Congress never voted on any of those actions.

In May, noting the Constitutional fact that declaring war is the purview of Congress, Oregon Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley introduced his own version of the AUMF – the Constitutional Consideration for Use of Force Resolution – that would reclaim Congress’ Article I war powers. His measure would repeal the outdated AUMF, originally meant for al Qaeda and Iraq. It also puts strict

limitations on ground troops, expressly addresses violent extremist groups such as Al Qaeda and Isis, must be renewed every three years, and requires an accurate accounting of both military and civilian deaths and injuries as well as financial costs of such a military endeavor. Merkley’s bill also requires a review of diplomatic and humanitarian alternatives.

This measure places responsibility for making war back on Congress, whose members would once again have to go on record on the issue of committing troops and tax dollars to military action. The results and the consequences – such as ravaging a country, killing civilians and creating more extremists – would belong to them. Also very important, it would take the authorization from a single person, who right now is the last person some of us want to have it.

Action: Contact Sens. Feinstein and Harris to urge their support for Sen. Merkley’s version of the AUMF. Cite the bill’s reasonable limitations, and suggest it is time to give the authority and responsibility to declare war back to Congress, to make them accountable.

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www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

**Find out who your Representative is: www.house.gov
If you are not in California, identify your senators here: www.senate.gov**

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.



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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.

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Peace Action of San Mateo County
invites you to our

Annual Summer Potluck Dinner
featuring

Good food (please bring a dish to share),
Good friends,

Officer and Board elections
and live acoustic music with

Stan Eng and Don Fullerton

Sunday, July 15, 5:30 PM

Unitarian Universalists of San Mateo
300 E. Santa Inez Avenue, San Mateo

The UUSM is wheelchair accessible