



### Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents a growing number of area residents of diverse backgrounds brought together over the 2002 Iraqi crisis.

We support multilateral action for non-violent conflict resolution, human rights, ecological integrity for the planet and international law, through education and dialogue locally and globally.

We encourage everyone's participation as we strive for peace and justice to build a better world for future generations.

BPI web site: [www.boundarypeace.20m.com](http://www.boundarypeace.20m.com)

**Boundary Peace Initiative suspends regular meetings until at least 3 commit to attend. For info call 250 442 0434.**

### To Do

Mir Center for Peace at Selkirk College Castlegar, offers a course starting January 2016 to learn principles of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping. For more info contact Randy Janzen at 250-365-1288 or email [rjanzen@selkirk.ca](mailto:rjanzen@selkirk.ca)

*The survival of democracy depends on the renunciation of violence and the development of nonviolent means to combat evil and advance the good.*  
A.J. Muste

### Peace Pledge Union on the White Poppy

The White Poppy symbolizes the belief that there are better ways to resolve conflicts and embodies values that reject killing fellow human beings for whatever reason. Our work, primarily educational, draws attention to many of our social values and habits which make continuing violence a likely outcome. From economic reliance on arms sales (Britain is the world's second largest arms exporter) to maintaining manifestly useless nuclear weapons Britain contributes significantly to international instability. The outcome of the recent military adventures highlights their ineffectiveness and grim consequences. Now nearly 100 years after the end of the 'war to end all wars' we still have a long way to go to put an end to a social institution, which in even in the last decade contributed to the killing of millions. - See more at:

<http://www.ppu.org.uk/whitepoppy/index.html#sthash.1uis1aJg.dpuf>

***Ed. Note: White Poppies for \$2 each with proceeds to the BPI to cover cost at the following locations:***

**Kocomos  
Jogas  
New West Trading  
Women's Resource Center  
The Wooden Spoon  
USCC office**

### White Poppies are for Peace

From: The Peace Pledge Union

The idea of decoupling Armistice Day, the red poppy and later Remembrance Day from their military culture dates back to 1926, just a few years after the British Legion was persuaded to try using the red poppy as a fundraising tool in Britain.

A member of the No More War Movement suggested that the British Legion should be asked to imprint 'No More War' in the centre of the red poppies instead of 'Haig Fund' and failing this pacifists should make their own flowers.

The details of any discussion with the British Legion are unknown but as the centre of the red poppy displayed the 'Haig Fund' imprint until 1994 it was clearly not successful. A few years later the idea was again discussed by the Co-operative Women's Guild. In 1933 the first white poppies appeared on Armistice Day (called Remembrance Day after World War Two). The white poppy was not intended as an insult to those who died in the First World War - a war in which many of the white poppy supporters lost husbands, brothers, sons and lovers - but a challenge to the continuing drive to war. The following year the newly founded Peace Pledge Union began widespread distribution of the poppies and their annual promotion.



## Letter to a Young Army Ranger (From an Old One)

By: Rory Fanning (*from TomDispatch Jan. 2014*)

Dear Aspiring Ranger

You've probably just graduated from high school and you've undoubtedly already signed an Option 40 contract guaranteeing you a shot at the Ranger indoctrination program (R.I.P.). If you make it through R.I.P. you'll surely be sent off to fight in the Global War on Terror. You'll be part of what I often heard called "the tip of the spear."

The war you're heading into has been going on for a remarkably long time. Imagine this: you were five years old when I was first deployed to Afghanistan in 2002. Now I'm graying a bit, losing a little up top, and I have a family. Believe me, it goes faster than you expect.

Once you get to a certain age, you can't help thinking about the decisions you made (or that, in a sense, were made for you) when you were younger. I do that and someday you will, too. Reflecting on my own years in the 75th Ranger regiment, at a moment when the war you'll find yourself immersed in was just beginning, I've tried to jot down a few of the things they don't tell you at the recruiting office or in the pro-military Hollywood movies that may have influenced your decision to join. Maybe my experience will give you a perspective you haven't considered.

I imagine you're entering the military for the same reason just about everyone volunteers: it felt like your only option. Maybe it was money, or a judge, or a need for a rite of passage, or the end of athletic stardom. Maybe you still believe that the U.S. is fighting for freedom and democracy around the world and in existential danger from "the terrorists." Maybe it seems like the only reasonable thing to do: defend our country against terrorism.

The media has been a powerful propaganda tool when it comes to promoting that image, despite the fact that, as a civilian, you were more likely to be killed by a toddler than a terrorist. I trust you don't want regrets when you're older and that you commendably want to do something meaningful with your life. I'm sure you hope to be the best at something. That's why you signed up to be a Ranger.

Make no mistake: whatever the news may say about the changing cast of characters the U.S. is fighting and the changing motivations behind the [changing names](#) of our military "operations" around the world, you and I will have fought in the same war. It's hard to believe that you will be taking us into the 14th year of the Global War on Terror (whatever they may be calling it now). I wonder which one of the [668 U.S. military bases](#) worldwide you'll be sent to.

In its basics, our global war is less complicated to understand than you might think, despite the difficult-to-keep-track-of enemies you will be sent after — whether al-Qaeda ("central," al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, in the Magreb, etc.), or the Taliban, or al-Shabab in Somalia, or ISIS (aka ISIL, or the or the Islamic State), or Iran, or the al-Nusra Front, or Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. Admittedly, it's a little hard to keep a reasonable scorecard. Are the Shia or the Sunnis our allies? Is it Islam we're at war with? Are we against ISIS or the Assad regime or both of them?

Just who these groups are matters, but there's an underlying point that it's been too easy to overlook in recent years: ever since this country's first Afghan War in the 1980s (that spurred the formation of the original al-Qaeda), our foreign and military policies have played a crucial role in creating those you will be sent to fight.

(Continued next column)

## (From last column) Letter to a Young Army Ranger

Once you are in one of the three battalions of the 75th Ranger Regiment, the chain-of-command will do its best to reduce global politics and the long-term good of the planet to the smallest of matters and replace them with the largest of tasks: boot polishing, perfectly made beds, tight shot groupings at the firing range, and your bonds with the Rangers to your right and left.

In such circumstances, it's difficult — I know that well — but not impossible to keep in mind that your actions in the military involve far more than whatever's in front of you or in your gun sights at any given moment. Our military operations around the world — and soon that will mean you — have produced all kinds of blowback. Thought about a certain way, I was being sent out in 2002 to respond to the blowback created by the first Afghan War and you're about to be sent out to deal with the blowback created by my version of the second one.

I'm writing this letter in the hope that offering you a little of my own story might help frame the bigger picture for you.

Let me start with my first day "on the job." I remember dropping my canvas duffle bag at the foot of my bunk in Charlie Company, and almost immediately being called into my platoon sergeant's office. I sprinted down a well-buffed hallway, shadowed by the platoon's "mascot": a Grim-Reaper-style figure with the battalion's red and black scroll beneath it. It hovered like something you'd see in a haunted house on the cinder block wall adjoining the sergeant's office. It seemed to be watching me as I snapped to attention in his doorway, beads of sweat on my forehead. "At ease... Why are you here, Fanning? Why do you think you should be a Ranger?" All this he said with an air of suspicion.

Shaken, after being screamed out of a bus with all my gear, across an expansive lawn in front of the company's barracks, and up three flights of stairs to my new home, I responded hesitantly, "Umm, I want to help prevent another 9/11, First Sergeant." It must have sounded almost like a question.

"There is only one answer to what I just asked you, son. That is: you want to feel the warm red blood of your enemy run down your knife blade."

Taking in his military awards, the multiple tall stacks of manila folders on his desk, and the photos of what turned out to be his platoon in Afghanistan, I said in a loud voice that rang remarkably hollowly, at least to me, "Roger, First Sergeant!"

He dropped his head and started filling out a form. "We're done here," he said without even bothering to look up again.

The platoon sergeant's answer had a distinct hint of lust in it but, surrounded by all those folders, he also looked to me like a bureaucrat. Surely such a question deserved something more than the few impersonal and sociopathic seconds I spent in that doorway.

Nonetheless, I spun around and ran back to my bunk to unpack, not just my gear but also his disturbing answer to his own question and my sheepish, "Roger, First Sergeant!" reply. Until that moment, I hadn't thought of killing in such an intimate way. I had indeed signed on with the idea of preventing another 9/11. Killing was still an abstract idea to me, something I didn't look forward to. He undoubtedly knew this. So what was he doing?

As you head into your new life, let me try to unpack his answer and my experience as a Ranger for you.

(Continued page 3)

## (From page 2) Letter to a Young Army Ranger

*Let's start that unpacking process with racism:* That was the first and one of the last times I heard the word "enemy" in battalion. The usual word in my unit was "Hajji." Now, Hajji is a word of honor among Muslims, referring to someone who has successfully completed a pilgrimage to the Holy Site of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. In the U.S. military, however, it was a slur that implied something so much bigger.

The soldiers in my unit just assumed that the mission of the small band of people who took down the Twin Towers and put a hole in the Pentagon could be applied to any religious person among the more than 1.6 billion Muslims on this planet. The platoon sergeant would soon help usher me into group-blame mode with that "enemy." I was to be taught **instrumental aggression**. The pain caused by 9/11 was to be tied to the everyday group dynamics of our unit. This is how they would get me to fight effectively. I was about to be cut off from my previous life and psychological manipulation of a radical sort would be involved. This is something you should prepare yourself for.

When you start hearing the same type of language from your chain-of-command in its attempt to dehumanize the people you are off to fight, remember that **93% of all Muslims** condemned the attacks on 9/11. And those who sympathized claimed they feared a U.S. occupation and cited political not religious reasons for their support.

But, to be blunt, as George W. Bush **said early on** (and then never repeated); the war on terror was indeed imagined in the highest of places as a "crusade." When I was in the Rangers, that was a given. The formula was simple enough: al-Qaeda and the Taliban represented all of Islam, which was our enemy. Now, in that group-blame game, ISIS, with its mini-terror state in Iraq and Syria, has taken over the role. Be clear again that **nearly all Muslims** reject its tactics. Even Sunnis in the region where ISIS is operating are increasingly **rejecting the group**. And it is those Sunnis who may indeed take down ISIS when the time is right.

If you want to be true to yourself, don't be swept up in the racism of the moment. Your job should be to end war, not perpetuate it. Never forget that.

If you get shipped off to the Middle East, keep in mind that 93% of Muslims denounced the 9/11 attacks.

*The second stop in that unpacking process should be poverty:* After a few months, I was finally shipped off to Afghanistan. We landed in the middle of the night. As the doors on our C-5 opened, the smell of dust, clay, and old fruit rolled into the belly of that transport plane. I was expecting the bullets to start whizzing by me as I left it, but we were at Bagram Air Base, a largely secure place in 2002.

Jump ahead two weeks and a three-hour helicopter ride and we were at our forward operating base. The morning after we arrived I noticed an Afghan woman pounding at the hard yellow dirt with a shovel, trying to dig up a gaunt little shrub just outside the stone walls of the base. Through the eye-slit of her burqa I could just catch a hint of her aged face. My unit took off from that base, marching along a road, hoping (I suspect) to stir up a little trouble. We were presenting ourselves as bait, but there were no bites.

When we returned a few hours later, that woman was still digging and gathering firewood, undoubtedly to cook her family's dinner that night. We had our grenade launchers, our M242 machine guns

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## Book Recommendations



### Guantanamo Diary

**By:** Mohamedou Ould Slahi

**Publisher:** Little, Brown and Company © 2015

**Excerpts** from a review by Matthew Behrens coordinator for TASC

Following December's (Ed. Note--2014) release of the U.S. Senate report on American complicity in torture, Prime Minister Stephen Harper quickly declared, "It has nothing to do whatsoever with the government of Canada." Despite the CIA's close relationship with Canadian state security agencies, as well as two judicial inquires finding Ottawa complicit in the torture of Canadian citizens in Syria and Egypt, Harper preferred to ignore the facts.

At about the same time, a stunning memoir was published that paints another damning portrait of Canadian authorities from even before 9/11. Guantanamo Diary was originally composed by hand in 2005 from a cell at the infamous US torture camp, which remains open despite President Obama's promise to close it eight years ago. It tells the remarkable story of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, a Mauritanian national who remains detained there despite a 2010 U.S. release order.

Indeed, readers familiar with Canadian human rights abuses against Arab Muslims will recognize in Slahi's memoir a similar pattern that reveals the dangers of 'information sharing' with foreign governments, 'intelligence' data dumps that are full of inflammatory and false allegations, 'cooperation' with secret police, and using the fruits of torture.

Unfortunately, Slahi's request for disclosure of his RCMP/CSIS files, as well as the notes from Canada's Gimo interrogations, was turned down when a Federal Court judge ruled that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms did not protect him, even though Slahi's nightmare began because of two months in Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear Slahi's subsequent appeal to find out what Canada actually has on him, if anything.

Canadians wondering what the future will look like with passage of new anti-terrorism legislation (Bill C-51) have another frightening roadmap with Slahi's must-read memoir.

**Ed Note: If you read a book or see a film you feel is of value and interest to others, please let me know at [LApeace@telus.net](mailto:LApeace@telus.net).**

### (From page 3) **Letter to a Young Army Ranger**

that fired 200 rounds a minute, our night-vision goggles, and plenty of food — all vacuum-sealed and all of it tasting the same. We were so much better equipped to deal with the mountains of Afghanistan than that woman — or so it seemed to us then. But it was, of course, her country, not ours, and its poverty, like that of so many places you may find yourself in, will, I assure you, be unlike anything you have ever seen. You will be part of the most technologically advanced military on Earth and you will be greeted by the poorest of the poor. Your weaponry in such an impoverished society will feel obscene on many levels. Personally, I felt like a bully much of my time in Afghanistan.

*Now, it's the moment to unpack "the enemy":* Most of my time in Afghanistan was quiet and calm. Yes, rockets occasionally landed in our bases, but most of the Taliban had surrendered by the time I entered the country. I didn't know it then, but as Anand Gopal has [reported](#) in his groundbreaking book, *No Good Men Among the Living*, our war on terror warriors weren't satisfied with reports of the unconditional surrender of the Taliban. So units like mine were sent out looking for "the enemy." Our job was to draw the Taliban — or anyone really — back into the fight.

Believe me, it was ugly. We were often enough targeting innocent people based on bad intelligence and in some cases even seizing Afghans who had actually pledged allegiance to the U.S. mission. For many former Taliban members, it became an obvious choice: fight or starve, take up arms again or be randomly seized and possibly killed anyway. Eventually the Taliban did regroup and today they are resurgent. I know now that if our country's leadership had truly had peace on its mind, it could have all been over in Afghanistan [in early 2002](#).

If you are shipped off to Iraq for our latest war there, remember that the Sunni population you will be targeting is reacting to a U.S.-backed Shia regime in Baghdad that's done them dirty for years. ISIS exists to a significant degree because the largely secular members of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party were labeled the enemy as they tried to surrender after the U.S. invasion of 2003. Many of them had the urge to be reincorporated into a functioning society, but no such luck; and then, of course, the key official the Bush administration sent to Baghdad [simply disbanded](#) Saddam Hussein's army and tossed its [400,000](#) troops out onto the streets at a time of mass unemployment.

It was a remarkable formula for creating resistance in another country where surrender wasn't good enough. The Americans of that moment wanted to control Iraq (and its oil reserves). To this end, in 2006, they backed the Shia autocrat Nouri al-Maliki for prime minister in a situation where Shia militias were increasingly intent on ethnically cleansing the Sunni population of the Iraqi capital.

Given the [reign of terror](#) that followed, it's hardly surprising to find former Baathist army officers in positions in ISIS and the Sunnis choosing that grim outfit as the lesser of the two evils in its world. Again, the enemy you are being shipped off to fight is, at least in part, a [product](#) of your chain-of-command's meddling in a sovereign country. And remember that, whatever its grim acts, this enemy presents no existential threat to American security, at least so [says](#) Vice President Joe Biden. Let that sink in for a while and then ask yourself whether you really can take your marching orders seriously.

*Next, in that unpacking process, consider noncombatants:* When unidentified Afghans would shoot at our tents with old Russian rocket launchers, we would guesstimate where the rockets had come from and then call in air strikes. You're talking 500-pound bombs. And so civilians would die. Believe me, that's really what's at the heart of our ongoing war. Any American like you heading into a war zone in any of these years was likely to witness what we call "collateral damage." That's dead civilians. (Continued next column)

The Boundary Peace Initiative (BPI) welcomes articles. All articles are the responsibility of the author and may not be common consensus. To submit an article, contact **Laura** at **250-442-0434** or **L4peace@telus.net**. The BPI is a member of: BC Southern Interior Peace Coalition, Abolition 2000, Lawyers Against the War, affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation; we work with local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

### (From last column) **Young Army Ranger**

The number of non-combatants killed since 9/11 across the Greater Middle East in our ongoing war has been breathtaking and horrifying. Be prepared, when you fight, to take out more civilians than actual gun-toting or bomb-wielding "militants." At the least, an estimated [174,000 civilians](#) died violent deaths as a result of U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan between 2001 and April 2014. In Iraq, over [70%](#) of those who died are estimated to have been civilians. So get ready to contend with needless deaths and think about all those who have lost friends and family members in these wars, and themselves are now scarred for life. A lot of people who once would never have thought about fighting any type of war or attacking Americans now entertain the idea. In other words, you will be perpetuating war, handing it off to the future.

*Finally, there's freedom and democracy to unpack, if we're really going to empty that duffel bag:* Here's an interesting fact that you might consider, if spreading freedom and democracy around the world was on your mind. Though records are incomplete on the subject, the police have killed something like [5,000](#) people in this country since 9/11 — more, in other words, than the number of American soldiers killed by "insurgents" in the same period. In those same years, outfits like the Rangers and the rest of the U.S. military have killed countless numbers of people worldwide, targeting the poorest people on the planet. And are there fewer terrorists around? Does all this really make a lot of sense to you?

When I signed up for the military, I was hoping to make a better world. Instead I helped make it more dangerous. I had recently graduated from college. I was also hoping that, in volunteering, I would get some of my student loans paid for. Like you, I was looking for practical help, but also for meaning. I wanted to do right by my family and my country. Looking back, it's clear enough to me that my lack of knowledge about the actual mission we were undertaking betrayed me — and you and us.

I'm writing to you especially because I just want you to know that it's not too late to change your mind. I did. I became a war resister after my second deployment in Afghanistan for all the reasons I mention above. I finally unpacked, so to speak. Leaving the military was one of the most difficult but rewarding experiences of my life. My own goal is to take what I learned in the military and bring it to high school and college students as a kind of counter-recruiter. There's so much work to be done, given the [10,000 military recruiters](#) in the U.S. working with an almost [\\$700 million](#) advertising budget. After all, kids do need to hear both sides.

I hope this letter is a jumping off point for you. And if, by any chance, you haven't signed that Option 40 contract yet, you don't have to. You can be an effective counter-recruiter without being an ex-military guy. Young people across this country desperately need your energy, your desire to be the best, your pursuit of meaning. Don't waste it in Iraq or Afghanistan or Yemen or Somalia or anywhere else the Global War on Terror is likely to send you.

As we used to say in the Rangers... Lead the Way,

Rory Fanning

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6  
Go to the Government of Canada website for emails of all MPs, Ministers at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>