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**Vets To Top US Military Commanders:  
REMEMBER NUREMBERG  
Veterans For Peace  
13 February 2003**

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**Vets To Top US Military Commanders:  
REMEMBER NUREMBERG**

Veterans For Peace has sent an open letter to fifteen generals and admirals in the top ranks of the US Military advising them of their possible liabilities, under international law, to criminal prosecution for being part of a pre-emptive war against Iraq. Veterans For Peace, headquartered in St. Louis, MO, is an organization of men and women who have served in peacetime and in most of the wars of the last century, with 92 chapters nationwide.

**OPEN LETTER TO THE NATION'S TOP MILITARY COMMANDERS**

General Richard B. Myers, Chairman, USAF;  
General Peter Pace, Vice Chairman, USMC  
Admiral Vern Clark, Chief of Naval Operations  
General Michael W. Hagee, Commandant USMC  
General John P. Jumper, Chief of Staff, USAF  
General Erick Shineski, Chief of Staff, USA

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United States Unified Combatant Commanders:

General James L. Jones, USMC, US European Command,  
Admiral Thomas B. Fargo, USN, US Pacific Command,  
Admiral E.P. Giambastiani, USN, US Joint Forces Command,  
General James T. Hill, USA, US Southern Command,  
General Tommy R. Franks, USA, US Central Command,  
General Ralph E. Eberhart, USAF, US Northern Command,  
General Charles R. Holland, USAF, US Special Operations Command,  
General John W. Handy, USAF, US Transportation Command,  
Admiral James O. Ellis, Jr., USN, US Strategic Command,

February 13, 2003

Dear Gentlemen,

Veterans For Peace is an organization whose members have served with honor in the armed forces of the United States of America. Among our members we count decorated veterans of WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War. Many served during two, and in several instances, three of these wars. Two of our members are recipients of the Medal of Honor, dozens received Silver and Bronze Stars for valor in combat, and hundreds were awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received in action. One of our members was a POW for over seven years in the Hanoi Hilton.

We learned the horrors of war through our military experience and we want the killing stopped. We believe it is not just enough to be against war, we must also work against war and that is the purpose of our organization.

We, like you, know the world is a dangerous place and that our military forces are necessary for our defense. We realize that you too have seen and do not want war. War must only be the option of last resort.

We believe the war against Iraq that the US government is planning and preparing for is in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and customary international law. The judgment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg noted, "Resort to war of aggression is not merely illegal, but is criminal."

The principle of renunciation of the use or threat of force is now one of the fundamental principles of international law and, as such, is stated with the utmost clarity in Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which imposes definite obligations on states participating in international affairs. States are bound in their international relations to renounce "the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the UN".

The US seeks to justify a pre-emptive strike on Iraq on the basis of self-defense. Article 51 of the UN Charter permits the use of force by a state to repel an armed attack or a substantial and immediate threat to the national security of the state until the Security Council exercises jurisdiction. A threat which permits the use of force must be an immediate, specific threat to US national security and not a general threat to the Gulf region or a possible future threat. The legality of pre-emptive self-defense has been rejected on the basis that use of force to deter future use of force constitutes punitive rather than defensive action. If the US fails to gain Security Council approval for war, the US is bound by Article 51 and may not lawfully, unilaterally take military action.

It is clear that the planned massive attack on Iraq is not based upon self-defense. Iraq has not attacked the US nor does Iraq constitute an immediate and specific threat to US national security. We are not apologists for Saddam Hussein but we believe there are ways to deal with his regime without the resort to a war of aggression. Other countries and many Americans have suggested reasonable and safe alternatives.

We members of VFP remember well our military service. We swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. We were informed of the Nuremberg Tribunal and the conviction and punishment of soldiers for following illegal orders. We were taught that we must not follow an illegal order. US military leadership must not only know and teach the obligations of international law but must respect and follow them.

You are in high military positions and you have awesome responsibilities under our Constitution and international law. We believe you are honorable men. We respectfully urge that you do the right thing in this terribly difficult situation. Clearly your duty is to not engage in the political leaderships' illegal war. Many veterans will support you if you refuse to participate in an illegal war and we believe that you can successfully use your high positions to warn the American people and you will be supported.

If you fail your sworn duty to the Constitution and international law by engaging in an illegal war against Iraq, we fear the US will become a rogue nation that will believe in and act on the principle that might is right to the great dishonor of all our professed values and to the great discredit of all who served in the armed services of the US so that their children and future generations could live in peace and freedom.

With great urgency,

David Cline  
National President  
Veterans For Peace

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## References:

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<http://www.ratical.org/co-globalize/BillOfRights.html>
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