



## **FIGHT COVID! NOT VENEZUELA!**

by Christy Breihan

As governments around the world focus on keeping their people safe in the face of a terrible pandemic, the president of the United States continues to threaten military force against any leaders or governments that resist US domination and the free reign of big business. At the top of Trump's list of target regimes is the twice-elected government of Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela.

Trump has been threatening war against Venezuela for almost three years. He has imposed economic sanctions and frozen their assets, inflicting hardship on its people because they have chosen a leader who stands up to imperialism.

On April 26, the Trump administration brought bogus drug charges against President Maduro and put out a \$15 million reward for information leading to his capture—this despite evidence that 92% of the cocaine in the US comes from Colombia. The indictment is being used to justify a large deployment of US Navy ships, warplanes, sailors and Marines to surround Venezuela—the biggest military mobilization in Latin America in 30 years.

Not only do these war moves threaten Venezuela—the health of the thousands of US troops on these ships is also put at great risk. We have seen how quickly COVID-19 spreads in the close quarters of ships like the USS Theodore Roosevelt. In fact, the Defense Department has reported more than 4,700 service members had tested positive by early May, and this new deployment is sure to make things worse.

### **Invasion and Attempted Coup Thwarted**

Just two weeks after the indictment, the Venezuelan Navy captured a group of armed mercenaries traveling by speedboat toward the Venezuelan coast. The heavily

armed contingent of Venezuelan Army deserters and Maduro opponents was led by former US Green Beret Jordan Goudreau, who now heads a private mercenary group called Silvercorp. Eight more infiltrators, including two US nationals with connections to Silvercorp, were captured the next day, thwarting their Bay of Pigs-like plan to enter Caracas and stage a violent coup.



Iranian tanker heads to Venezuela.

### **Venezuelan/Iran Trade Deal Threatened by US**

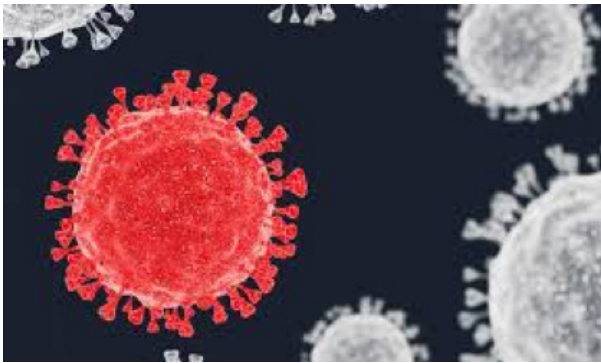
In an effort to fight back against the US efforts to strangle both of their economies, the government of Iran has announced that it will send oil tankers to Venezuela as an act of solidarity to supply fuel to the Venezuelan internal market, so severely damaged by US sanctions. In exchange, Venezuela will provide gold to Iran's cash-starved economy. The tankers will be protected by ships and planes of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces as the US has threatened to intercept vessels of both these nations.

The first of these Iranian vessels, loaded with fuel for Venezuela, arrived in

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Venezuelan waters on May 23, and was escorted by boats, helicopters and planes of the Bolivarian National Armed Forces (FANB) of the South American country. The following day the ship safely arrived at the port of the El Palito refinery, located in the municipality of Puerto Cabello, with no violent encounters with the US Navy. In the days that followed, four more ships were expected to reach Venezuelan shores.

As tensions mount, the possibility of war with both Venezuela and Iran increases. The UN Secretary General has called for a global ceasefire to focus on harnessing ALL of our resources into stopping the virus that is killing our people and our economies. In contrast, Donald Trump's policy is to divert our energies and resources toward starting a new war. This is madness.



**Fight COVID-19! NOT WAR!**

## The Militarization of the Coronavirus

Air Force fighter jets and bombers are being used to salute health care workers in flyovers around the country. The problem with this goes beyond the cost, exorbitant use of fuel and added CO2 into the atmosphere. Every time these planes are used for dramatic flyovers, whether it be at the Superbowl or Blue Angels formation demonstrations on the 4th of July, it is a tool for military recruitment.

“We are truly excited to take to the skies with our Navy counterparts for a nation-wide tribute to the men and women keeping our communities safe.” said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. John Caldwell, Thunderbird 1 and mission commander for the flyover.

Unfortunately, these tributes are an exciting (and costly) way to attract young people to join the armed forces and promote militarism as US policy.



A B-2 Spirit bomber performs during a flyover

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## Global Military Spending Report – April 27, 2020

The Global Military Expenditures Report released April 27, 2020, shows that in 2019, countries spent **\$1.917 trillion on militaries**. The United States accounted for 38% of military spending around the world in 2019. Organizations around the planet have spoken out in opposition to this exorbitant amount of money spent on war and preparation for war, calling it “an irresponsible and harmful use of global wealth.”

The devastating impact of this \$1.917 trillion in military spending has become painfully clear as the world struggles to keep pace with the healthcare needs created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The US joint opposing statement said, “Had our government chosen to invest in hospitals, production of life-saving medical devices, and the training of medical professionals across the country in 2019, our health system would be better prepared to face the current threat to our safety. Instead, it chose to sink \$732 billion in taxpayer dollars into weapons and endless wars.”

The joint US response went on to say, “The release of 2019 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) data on global military expenditures reaffirms what has been true for decades - the United States spends an astronomical amount of money on the Pentagon. Under the guise of providing ‘security,’ this spending has actually made global communities less safe, hindered the global economy, and contributed to environmental degradation. At a time when public health concerns are paramount, it is unconscionable that our leaders continue to pour money into weapons & war instead of prioritizing global cooperation and investment in industries like healthcare.”

Global military spending must be reduced and the US bears a huge responsibility to take the lead in changing global priorities to fund human needs, not war and destruction.

# Deadly Sanctions on Cuba During Deadly Pandemic

by Christy Brehan



To people around the world, it seems clear that a pandemic threatening the lives, health, and social and economic well-being of everyone should call for unprecedented international cooperation to understand, contain, treat, and prevent this virus.

However, the US government, rather than collaborating with other nations to fight the virus and ensure adequate food and medical supplies around the world, continues to enforce draconian economic sanctions on the people whose governments resist US domination.

The longest and most severe of these is the economic blockade against Cuba, in place since 1960. The stated goal of the blockade is to “bring about hunger, desperation, and the overthrow of government,” (1960 State Dept. memo). Some easing of the blockade’s restrictions occurred during Obama’s presidency, but now the Trump administration has tightened them more severely than ever, causing extreme food shortages across the island. Two Wisconsin students studying medicine in Havana have reported to us that they have difficulty even concentrating on their studies because, like others there, they just do not know where their next meal will come from.

Especially cynical are the attacks on Cuba’s program of sending doctors around the world to help fight COVID-19. The US is imposing fines on companies that are in any way involved with getting medical supplies to Cuban medical teams. When the founder of Alibaba donated medical equipment to 150 nations to fight COVID, the US sanctions caused the Colombian shipper to refuse delivery to just one country—Cuba!

This policy not only violates the tradition of exempting humanitarian aid from political considerations, it also denies Americans and the rest of the world the benefit of Cuban medical advances and their skills in public health. Cuba’s experience in reaching out to find victims of the virus and tracing their contacts has kept its COVID cases low, and its high doctor-patient ratio and treatment advances have minimized the death rate (81 as of May 20, in a nation of 11 million). The Cuban drug, Interferon Alfa 2B Recombinant (IFNrec), is considered by many to be a promising component of COVID treatment and a preventative measure to protect healthcare workers. Doctors in at least 45 other countries have requested it, and some American doctors familiar with Cuba’s biomedical research would like to try it, but because of US policy, cannot.

While the US president responds with belligerence, perhaps to divert attention away from his policy failures, we should demand an end to sanctions and the removal of all barriers to working together. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said it well: “Humanity faces a common challenge. This pandemic does not respect borders or ideologies. It threatens the lives of all, and it is everyone’s responsibility to address it.”

“The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war. I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.”  
*UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres*



# Provocative US Military Exercises in Europe and the Pacific

by Julie Enslow

While the battle here at home is against the COVID-19 virus, the US military is beginning dangerous and provocative military exercises in Europe and naval maneuvers in the Pacific.

There is reason to be seriously concerned about this turn of events. Most Americans are fully distracted from US foreign affairs while struggling to survive a deadly pandemic. This provides an opportunity for militarists to move forward with plans that could lead to deadly international conflicts.



Airborne training operations are to take place during a June 2020 drill called Allied Spirit involving American and Polish forces. (Getty Images)

Retired Army Col. and US diplomat Ann Wright, a prominent peace activist, warns that, “The U.S. military have the largest maritime military maneuvers in the world, with Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) coming to the waters off Hawaii August 17-31, 2020, bringing 26 nations, 25,000 military personnel, up to 50 ships and submarines and hundreds of aircraft in midst of a worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

“Plans are also underway for a U.S. Army division-sized exercise in the Indo-Pacific region in less than a year -- in 2021. Known as Defender 2021, the U.S. Army has requested \$364 million to conduct the war exercises throughout Asian and Pacific countries.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. military war games in Europe, “Defender Europe 2020,” is already underway with troops and equipment arriving at European ports and will cost about \$340 million. Defender 2020 will take place in Poland, provocatively right next door to Russia.

These military excursions are taking place amidst a serious outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the US military and threaten to spread the disease. Navy vessels have been especially hard-hit by the pandemic with reports of recovered sailors being placed back on duty aboard contaminated ships.

Peace and arms control scholar Michael Klare recently reported on the increasing naval aggression by both China and the US in the Pacific region. He stated, “Both countries have dispatched heavily-armed ships into the East and South China Seas in what might be called “show-of-force” operations, intended to showcase military muscle and discourage further adventurism by the other side — a dynamic that can easily lead to accident, miscalculation, and a perilous spiral into full-fledged war.”

There are disagreements over disputed control of several islands in this area that involve China, South Korea and Japan. Such disputes should be settled by international negotiations among the countries involved, not by military grandstanding. Aggressive actions by both China and US have been accelerating in the past couple of months. This can easily lead to a serious incident with loss of life, intentional or not, leading to a major conflict and full-scale war.



# Draft Women or End Draft Registration?

Source - RootsAction

A new bill, H.R. 6415, would require young women to register for a military draft that -- when and if it happened -- would force them to risk killing and dying in another disastrous war. The same bill would expand military recruitment and the JROTC.

The U.S. government is almost certainly going to either expand draft registration to young women in the name of "equal rights," or it is going to end the outdated barbarism of forcing people into wars. A federal district court has ruled that male-only draft registration is unconstitutional, and the government's appeals of the decision are expected to fail.

**Fortunately, another bill (H.R. 5492) would end draft registration for everyone.**

**H.R. 5492 would:**

- 1. Repeal the Military Selective Service Act** (thereby eliminating Presidential authority to order men to register with the Selective Service System for a possible military draft and eliminating criminal penalties for failure or refusal to register);
- 2. Abolish the Selective Service System;**
- 3. Prohibit all other Federal agencies from imposing civil sanctions** (denial of federal student financial aid, federally-funded jobs, etc.) for nonregistration or using nonregistration as a basis for other adverse determinations (denial of naturalization as a U.S. citizen, etc.);
- 4. "Preempt" (and thereby override and prohibit) all state sanctions** for nonregistration (denial of drivers' licenses, state financial aid, state jobs, etc.); and
- 5. Preserve the rights of conscientious objectors** under other laws and regulations.

**The United States had an active draft** from 1940 to 1973 (except for 1947). It also had numerous wars including WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. The Vietnam War persisted for many years during the draft, which made the war possible. The only reason the war could continue was

because the military had a steady stream of draftees.

Wars have usually been facilitated by a draft, not prevented. Military leaders recently testified that a draft is part of their planning for war.

**Stopping the expansion of draft registration to include women is urgent.** This could be added to the military appropriations bill **in a matter of weeks.** We need to stop all draft registration. Real gender equality requires abolishing the draft for everyone, not conscripting women. Conscription is involuntary servitude - a form of slavery - and is unjust for men and women. Women do not achieve equality by being forcefully trained to fight and kill -and perhaps die- for US corporate economic interests around the world.

## Let's stop H.R. 6415 and pass H.R. 5492.

**CONTACT** your Representative and two Senators and ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 5492 and abolish the Selective Service system. Tell them to vote against H.R. 6415 which would expand draft registration.

**D. C. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121**



Trained to kill as equals or end the draft for all?

### The Mobilizer

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**End Military Intervention, Transfer Military Spending to Human Needs, Abolish Nuclear Weapons & Power, Oppose Racism & Sexism, Protect the Environment.**

# PEACE CALENDAR

*June/July 2020*

With the limitations of the COVID-19 stay-at-home order, we have had to cancel our normal outdoor and in-person summer peace events. Our summer membership picnic, in-person movie series, festival tabling, and Lanterns for Peace will not be taking place. But there are many opportunities for online webinars, meetings, film series and other virtual gatherings. Check these out:

**Sat. June 6 Stand for Peace Returns with Care.** See article and schedule.

**Wed. June 17 End the Wars Coalition meeting** on Zoom. 7pm.

**Fri. June 12 Friday Freedom Flicks Summer Film Series:** Movie showings will be announced weekly, along with a link for showing and discussion. Check our e-alerts,

**Tues. June 16, 2020 Black Alliance for Peace online demonstration.** 4pm Rise Up to Shut Down Africom (US Africa Command)

**Tues. June 23 “Revolutionary Medicine - Story of the First Garifuna Hospital.”** 7pm on-line program featuring film excerpts from “Revolutionary Medicine,” Gail Walker, Ex. Dir. of IFCO/Pastors for Peace and a US graduate of Cuba’s international medical school which is helping transform the delivery & practice of medical care worldwide. Check [www.wicuba.org](http://www.wicuba.org) and WI Coalition to Normalize Relations with Cuba Facebook for sign-in details.

**Wed. July 15. End the Wars Coalition meeting** on Zoom. 7pm.

**Sat. July 18 On-Line Mini-Conference: Imperialism in the 21st Century.** 11am to 7pm with generous breaks between the three main panels. Participants will include Medea Benjamin, Vijah Prashad, Lisa Brock, Alfred McCoy, and several others. Watch for email alert with details.

**Fridays, 6pm & 10pm** If you are in broadcast range, remember to listen to the “Grass is Greener” show on Riverwest Radio, WXRW, 104.1 FM. Peace Action members Babette Grunow and Gary Green host programs of interest to peace and social justice advocates.

**Watch for our Peace Action email alerts with more upcoming on-line webinars and events.**

## Stand for Peace to Resume Cautiously

Peace Action of Wisconsin suspended our weekly Stand for Peace these past few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While global attention is focused on fighting the deadly Corona virus, wars are still raging and dangerous US foreign policy threatens more military conflicts. How should the peace movement be safely responding at this point?

With some of the restrictions on public gatherings being lifted, some of our members are carefully restarting the Stand for Peace with directives advised by the Milwaukee Health Commissioner. We will take all precautions and if any stay-at-home orders change, we will suspend the Stand for Peace again.

Stand for Peace participants will obey social distancing guidelines, and we will wear masks. We have chosen corners that have little pedestrian traffic. We are limited to 10 people gathered. If we have reached that limit, some of us will move down to the next corner. Shared signs and flags will be sanitized after each Stand. Coffee following the stand will resume only after Covid-19 is no longer a threat. We will obey any orders that change the requirements of gathering. Please check our website/Facebook page for updates. If you have any concerns or immunity issues, please stay at home. Your health is important, and your voice will be needed after this crisis passes.



### Stand for Peace Saturdays, 12 noon - 1pm

June 6: Layton/Howell  
June 13: Capitol/Humboldt  
June 20: 43rd/Forest Home  
June 27: Layton/76th  
July 4: No holiday Stand for Peace  
July 11: 51st/Silver Spring

Check the Peace Action website for further sites and updates.



## Important Question: Are You a Paid PA Member?

We sincerely hope you enjoy the insights, updates, and opportunities you find every other month in Peace Action of Wisconsin's The Mobilizer. **We thank so many of you who responded to our latest fund appeal letter.**

Peace Action of Wisconsin is a membership organization. For those of you whose membership donation is not up to date we ask you to officially join us.

We are sure you realize that there is a cost involved in printing and mailing this newsletter every other month. Many of our readers are members who help cover our costs with annual membership dues, but quite a few of you are not dues-paying members.

At this critical point in our history, we find it necessary to ask all of our readers to please fill out a membership form, and, if you have not already paid annual dues, try to do so soon. We have a sliding scale for membership so as not to exclude anyone for inability to pay. But we really do need your financial support to keep doing the work that we do.

### Want the newsletter on-line?

Also, you could help reduce our costs and do a good deed for the environment by choosing to receive our newsletter as an e-mail instead of hardcopy. If this would work for you, **please respond to this notice with the e-mail address we can use.**

We are pleased that you are interested in the anti-war and anti-nuke work we do, and we hope you will see fit to support us with your membership.

Thank you,  
Christy Breihan, Co-Chair, Peace Action Steering Committee

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**JOIN / RENEW Peace Action of Wisconsin** \_\_\_\_\_New Member \_\_\_\_\_Renewal

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Make checks out to Peace Action of Wisconsin 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212

**Call office for information on monthly sustainers.**

**Would you like your newsletter sent on-line?** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please send in this form with the above information. (enclosed envelope)

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## Summer On-Line Friday Freedom Flicks



This year our summer progressive film series will be delivered right to your home, on-line. Yes, we'll miss the comradeship and the popcorn but we will continue to be safe from the COVID-19 virus with some appropriate social distancing.

Our online films will be every other week in June and July, culminating with a special month of films and speakers in August around the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and its impact on US foreign policy ever since.

**Check for detailed descriptions in our email alerts for films on Friday June 12, Friday June 26, Friday July 10, and Friday July 24.** Discussions will follow the films, but provide your own popcorn.