Peace Action of Wisconsin joined the international observance of the UN Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on January 22. That day the new treaty went into effect, 90 days after the 50th country had ratified it. As of now, 62 countries have officially ratified.

Our delegation began the local event at Northwestern Mutual Insurance Company headquarters, braving the cold as they marched to Sen. Ron Johnson’s office in the Federal Building, went on to Rep. Gwen Moore’s office and then demonstrated in front of Wells Fargo and Chase banks at Water and Wisconsin Ave. Northwestern Mutual and the two banks have significant investments in the nuclear weapons industry. We have sent letters to the Congresspeople asking them to work for the US to sign on to the treaty. Letters to the top executives of the financial institutions asked that they divest from nuclear weapons.

This treaty is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons with the ultimate goal being their total elimination. The treaty only applies to those countries who signed and ratified it (62). Not surprisingly, the nine nuclear powers have not signed on.

The treaty is more than a symbolic gesture. It is an important step in the right direction. It is a means for organizing all the non-nuclear nations to band together for a nuclear-free future. International pressure can then shame the nuclear nations into coming on board.

This treaty is a sign of hope that someday we may be free of the radioactive nuclear cloud that has hung over us since 1945.

Photos by Sue Ruggles
Where Will Biden Get the Money?
By David Swanson
Executive Director of World Beyond War
(excerpts from Jan. 15, 2021 online article)

“But where will you get the money?” is usually a right-wing question, completely forbidden during all discussions of the military and corporate bailouts and fossil-fuel subsidies and prison-building rampages, yet somehow immediately front-and-center whenever something good is proposed.

President Biden wants to spend $1.9 trillion as a first step on pandemic and economic relief, to be followed by other possibly larger steps. Setting aside mandatory spending required by law, such as spending Social Security money on Social Security and paying the interest on past spending sprees, the discretionary money that Congress decides on each year is currently spent as follows:

- $741 billion on Military.
- $595 billion on Education plus Medicare and Healthcare plus Housing and Community plus Veterans Benefits plus Energy plus Environment plus Science plus Social Security plus Unemployment plus Labor plus Food plus Agriculture plus Transportation plus International Affairs plus every tiny program too small to show up on a pie chart but dominant in media coverage of government spending.

Adding this: $1,900 billion on Biden’s new plan, is a major addition. So will be his next proposal. So will be a Green New Deal.

Shifting away from war industries and environmentally destructive industries (the two overlap heavily) leads to major savings on healthcare and environmental cleanup and assistance to refugees and the supposed need for yet more wars, etc. It is also the key to immediate funding.

What’s missing from Biden’s proposal and the reporting around it is that little item in the federal budget that sucks down $741 billion every year. That treats Veterans benefits as non-military, nuclear weapons as “energy,” the State Department as independent of the Pentagon, the secret alphabet spying and coup-instigating and drone-murdering agencies as separate, Homeland Security as having something to do with home economics, etc. The full cost of militarism is well over $1 trillion every year. The “militarized budget” includes all militarized activities and costs 64% of discretionary spending.

After decades of watching increased military spending increase wars, rather than somehow prevent them, and seeing how much good just not spending dollars on the military does for the environment and the economy and transparent government, never mind the good that can be accomplished by redirecting those funds to positive actions, we have a responsibility when it comes to spending money to take at least some of that money out of the military.

The United States is rolling in money. Much of it is in the hands of the super-wealthy, much of it in the hands of the weapons makers (two groups with a lot of overlap). The savings involved in redirecting money to peaceful purposes is so huge that not one single person has to suffer in the process. Central to any decent “rescue plan” or demilitarized Green New Deal or conversion to sustainable peaceful practices should be a commitment that not one single person be harmed, that no one lack anything they need to transition to new employment which they approve of at least as much as they liked their old jobs destroying the earth or distant dark-skinned children.

Pandemic rescues, economic rescues, and Green New Deals should not fail to draw on the plans and successes and scholarship that has for decades been poured into the project of conversion to peaceful industries. Congress Members elected to finally represent their constituents, and a Progressive Caucus finally claiming it will use its power, and a Military Spending Reduction Caucus finally being formed, should not fail to make clear to President Biden that only a commitment to take 10% of military spending and put it to good use will get his spending plans through Congress.
Biden: Stop the US War on Yemen

One of the last acts of the Trump administration was to designate the Houthi rebels in Yemen as a terrorist organization. This will seriously impede international aid organizations from supplying the Yemeni people with food and medical aid and condemn thousands to starvation. The humanitarian relief system is barely keeping millions alive.

Most of Yemen’s three million people rely on international aid to survive. Houthi rebels control the majority of the population in this ongoing six-year civil war. Although guilty of human rights abuses, they deliver most of the aid for international agencies.

“The Houthis, who control a large part of their nation, are no threat whatsoever to the United States or to American citizens,” declares James North, writing for Mondoweiss. “Secretary of State Pompeo is making the declaration because the Houthis are backed by Iran, and Trump’s allies in Saudi Arabia and Israel want this declaration as part of their aggressive campaign against Iran.”

US-backed Saudi Arabia leads the anti-Houthi coalition in this tragic conflict. US bombs are being dropped on innocent Yemeni civilians every day. President Biden has said in the past that he would stop US involvement in this war. We must now pressure our new President to act to end US participation in this slaughter, withdraw US military support of Saudi Arabia and immediately reverse the designation of the Houthis as a terrorist organization.


Bill to End the War in Yemen

A resolution, H.Con.Res. 123, was introduced in the House of Representatives this past November that calls for an end to US involvement in the war in Yemen. The bill was introduced by Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) and co-sponsored by seven other members of the House, including three Republicans, making the legislation a bipartisan rebuke to the war, similar to a measure President Trump vetoed in 2019.

The legislation invokes the 1973 War Powers Resolution and calls for the president “to remove United States Armed Forces from unauthorized hostilities in the Republic of Yemen.”

As of the end of December, the bill had 32 co-sponsors. At that time the only Wisconsin Representative signed on was Mark Pocan, one of the original seven sponsors. Rep. Gwen Moore needs a lot of calls to get on board and be a part of this urgent legislation.

What you can do:
Call Rep. Gwen Moore and ask her to cosponsor H.R. 123 to end all US participation in the war in Yemen.

DC office, 202-225-4572; district office, 414-297-1140.

For other Representatives call Capital switchboard, 202-224-3121.

Another victim of the war in Yemen.
Editorial: 
Push Biden on Foreign Policy 
by Julie Byrnes Enslow

We can all breathe a sigh of relief that Donald Trump is finally out of the White House. After the horrendous January 6 insurrection and attempted coup on the US Capitol, most of us held our breath until Joe Biden took the oath of office on January 20 and was peacefully inaugurated as our 46th US President.

President Biden lost no time in signing numerous executive orders from day one, many reversing the policies of Donald Trump. Rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, stopping construction of the wall on the Mexican border, renewing commitment to DACA, zeroing in on the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact - the list continues.

On the domestic front there is much to applaud and support. In the coming weeks we will see the direction the president will take us in his foreign policy.

Can the empathy that Joe Biden has expressed for American victims of poverty, racism and the pandemic be expanded to include the victims of American foreign policy throughout the world? Those killed and wounded by US drones and bombs in active war zones? Those suffering from the violence of economic sanctions and blockades? (According to Sanctions Kill.org, US sanctions affect a third of humanity with more than 8,000 measures impacting 39 countries.)

Will President Biden’s empathy extend to the starving children of Yemen? The country of Cuba still under US blockade since 1960? Will he reverse the history of overthrowing democratically elected governments in Latin America? Will he recognize the basic human rights of the Palestinian people? Will he embrace dialogue and negotiations to ease tensions with Iran, Russia, North Korea and China? Will he stop the rebuilding of the US nuclear arsenal and negotiate meaningful nuclear disarmament treaties with Russia?

There are serious concerns in the peace movement that several of Biden’s cabinet appointees have a reputation of supporting a militaristic approach to the world. While we applaud the positive, progressive steps he has taken, we must waste no time in pressuring him to establish a just, peaceful and humane foreign policy.

Let us begin with ending US participation in the war in Yemen.

Foreign Policy? What will he do?

Get on Our E-Mail Alert List!
Make sure we have your email address, so you can receive our action alerts and calendar updates. Keep up to date with lobbying calls, on-line webinars, meetings and speakers, and special demonstrations and events.

Don’t be out of the loop!
Send us your email at: info@peaceactionwi.org
Opinion Column:
Biden Needs to Confront His Crime of War
by Jim Carpenter

People, including me, are celebrating a return to international cooperation and multilateralism under the new Biden administration, such as rejoining the Paris Climate Accords, the World Health Organization and the global initiative known as COVAX that will help secure vaccines for poor countries.

People are celebrating Biden’s ambition to unite Americans rather than divide them. They are giving Biden credit for bold economic plans that enhance the safety net. (Although they don’t include the guarantee of a government subsidized job for the unemployed who cannot find a job and have no unemployment insurance benefits.)

However, there is one very important discussion that is not occurring and that is Biden’s history as an accomplice to the crime of war.

The War on Iraq was a war of aggression; a war that we chose to start. To say it bluntly, this is mass murder. Hundreds of thousands died as a result. Millions of lives and livelihoods were destroyed in the chaos that followed. Biden not only voted for that war, he was Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that held biased hearings in favor of starting that war.

Biden also served in an administration that used drones to perform extrajudicial assassinations outside war zones to kill suspected terrorists and the unfortunate non-suspects that happened to be near them. President Biden has not stated he will stop these drone attacks.

I campaigned hard for Biden when he was nominated because he was the lesser of two evils. But if he really wants to save the Soul of America, then he needs to seek truth and reconciliation for the crimes of war that he enabled in Iraq and that continue today. I know he has better angels.* He opposed the Vietnam War. He needs to listen to those better angels. Such crimes must end now and never be repeated.

*Abraham Lincoln referred to “the better angels of our nature” in his first inaugural address.
It’s Time to UNBLOCK Cuba!
by Christy Breihan

The time has come to end the US’s 60-year-old economic blockade of Cuba. In order to convince the Biden administration and Congress that there is widespread support for this position, over forty organizations came together last October to form ACERE (Alliance on Cuba Engagement and Respect). Peace Action of Wisconsin, along with End the Wars Coalition of Milwaukee and Veterans for Peace and others, has joined this alliance.

ACERE’s approach is multifaceted. We are asking organizations and individuals to directly contact their elected representatives with letters expressing support for beginning to normalize relations with our Caribbean neighbor. We are also asking elected bodies in government, labor unions, and trade groups to pass resolutions in support of this normalization process.

The end of the Trump administration has given new hope to those wishing to end this mean-spirited relic of the Cold War. Whereas Trump had reversed many of Obama’s openings toward Cuba and implemented some of the most severe restrictions ever imposed, the many failures of his nationalistic policies have enabled us to see how much better it would be to cooperate with other nations to fight the pandemic, climate change, and the arms race.

Cuba has an especially impressive record of fighting COVID, having lost only 180 people in a population of more than eleven million, and having sent medical teams to forty different countries to help them fight the disease. Even as their doctors were preparing to fight COVID in other countries, the US blockade was preventing them from buying parts to make ventilators and other equipment they were taking with them to save lives. Now Cuba is pledging to produce 100 million doses of their COVID vaccine, to be shared with impoverished nations. The US must not be allowed to block their access to the materials they need to do this.

Peace Action of Wisconsin will be sending a letter to all our congressional representatives and to President Biden asking them to normalize relations with Cuba. It will also help if our members take it upon themselves as individuals to do the same. Our unions, religious groups, and other organizations can be asked to pass resolutions and send letters as well.

There are many things we hope to achieve in 2021. Let’s make “Unblocking” Cuba one of them! Call Congress - Capitol Switchboard 202-224-3121

(Please visit the Peace Action website to see our letter and a sample resolution that you can use.)
Thank you Volunteers

- Mailing Crew- Mary Laan, Mary Alice Martinez, Laura Kukor-Shea, Julie Enslow, George Martin, Babette Grunow, Kristina Paris, David Lindberg, Marsha Vila
- Office Help - Jill Ferguson, Joe Radoszewski, Samir Moukaddam
- All of the Stand for Peace participants.
- All who joined our Jan. 22 commemoration of the UN Treaty on Banning Nuclear Weapons.
- Thanks to everyone who gave end of the year financial donations. We wouldn’t be here without you.

Peace Action Wisconsin
1001 E. Keefe Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53212

DATED MATERIAL

12 noon every Sat.

Feb. 6  Pt. Washington/Silver Spring
Feb. 13  King/North
Feb. 20  92nd/North
Feb. 27  Oakland/North
Mar. 6  76th/Layton
Mar. 13  King/Locust
Mar. 20  Capitol/Humboldt
Mar. 27  Chavez (16th)/Greenfield
(March 31 is the birthday of Cesar Chavez)

Please wear a face mask. Stand 6 to 10 feet apart.

Sat. Feb. 20, 10 am
Police Accountability Forum on Zoom
Co-sponsored by Martin Luther King Justice Coalition and Peace Action of Wisconsin

Hold the Date!
Watch for Zoom link on Peace Action’s e-alert.