



Peter Madison/SF IndyMedia

Marches and sabotage team up against war in Iraq. San Francisco, US

Dismantling War

How do you resist the war-mongers, when they have the guns, the bombs, the soldiers, the bankers and the money on their side? Find tactical pressure points. Make it cost more to continue waging war rather than ending it – and cost can be public opinion, political credibility, as well as spiralling budgets. Giant rallies certainly have their place, but there are other strategic and creative ways to resist too. Here are just a few examples.

Spanner in the works

Military bases are built where local resistance is expected to be minimal. So get busy. In the 1980s, women camped outside the US military base at Greenham Common in the UK and set rows of rubber ducks into the concrete on the runways so the planes couldn't take off. In Viéques, Puerto Rico, site of a vast US military

base, locals resisting the testing of bombs camped out for over a year on the bombing range in 2000. After they were cleared off by force, local fishermen remained hiding there, risking their lives to stop the bombing.

During the Gulf War of 2003, numerous acts of sabotage occurred. At a US spy base in Yorkshire, UK, people came with miles of tin foil in an attempt to disrupt satellite communications. Others flew helium balloons in an attempt to prevent aircraft taking off. Access roads into the base were blocked. Some locked themselves to dragnets across runways. One woman destroyed a fleet of military vehicles used to service the bombers by pouring sand and treacle into the engines. In Ireland, military aircraft on their way to bomb Iraq had to stop refuelling at Shannon airport, such was the level of protest.

In Scotland, workers refused to load trains with munitions. In Italy, activists got on passenger trains in front of freight trains carrying arms and pulled the emergency cord, blocking the line. One woman broke into a military base in Scotland and smashed up a Hawk Jet.

In 1996, the same woman, with three others had smashed the control panels of a \$22 million Hawk Jet, putting it out of action. It had been due to be exported to Indonesia. In court they claimed they had acted lawfully to prevent a greater crime – genocide by the Indonesian military occupying East Timor. The evidence was so powerful the stunned jury found the women not guilty.

Cannon fodder

Thousands of British Conscientious Objectors were imprisoned for over two years – 73 of whom died there during the First World War. During the Vietnam War, dodging the draft became a major preoccupation of

young men in the US. Today enforced conscription does not occur in the US or the UK, but is still an issue in many countries, and people around the world are in jail for refusing to serve.

In Israel, every citizen is drafted into the army. Many *refusniks* are in prison for refusing to serve in the military, in protest at the Occupation.

But even where there is no draft, military recruiters come to schools and colleges, where they can also be met with resistance. In the US, poor, black, and Latino communities are targets for military recruitment. Half of frontline US soldiers in the 1992 Gulf War were people of colour. This is 'economic conscription' – when kids with few options join up for the tuition, scholarships and training. Activists are setting up alternative stalls next to army recruitment drives. In May 2003, in Oxford, UK school children left class, occupied the town centre, and blockaded an army recruitment stall for several hours.

Target the profiteers

One of the most powerful long-term strategies is to unmask and obstruct those who have a direct interest in the pursuit of war: go for the moneymen.

A week before the 2003 Iraq war started, 20 activists disrupted trading at London's International Petroleum Exchange, Europe's major centre for trading in futures contracts for crude oil, highlighting the links between war in Iraq and the West's compulsive oil habit. Despite being set upon by traders, the protesters unplugged telephones and computers and brought trading to a standstill for two hours. In other places, petrol stations were shut down.

Others have concentrated on the battle for resources that helps to fuel wars. Coltan in mobile phones fuels war in the Congo; oil and access to oil fuels wars from Colombia to Chechnya to Iraq; diamond money fuelled conflict in Sierra Leone. Boycotts (eg of coltan)

and alternatives (eg converting vehicles to biodiesel) can be innovative ways of highlighting the issue and stopping the root causes of war.

There are increasing numbers of private corporations and mercenaries directly involved in war. British firm Sandline International sent mercenaries to crush the 1996 Bougainville rebellion in Papua New Guinea and is implicated in the Sierra Leone conflict. US firm Dyncorp is contracted by the US military to undertake operations in Colombia. Pipeline builders like Halliburton and Bechtel, and arms dealers like Lockheed Martin have all been ripe targets for office protests and anti-war direct action.

Resources:

- » **Guide to military dismantling:**
www.tridentploughshares.org
- » **UK direct action against war:**
www.disobedience.org.uk