

Dismantling the Pro-War Cult. The Myth of the Soldier as Guarantor of Freedom

A Conversation with Stan Goff and Joshua Key. Global Research News Hour
Episode 82

By [Michael Welch](#)

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"If a soldier beat up or shot somebody, all he had to say - if he said anything at all - was that he felt threatened. As a result, our behaviour at war was completely unchecked. That's why it was possible for American soldiers to decapitate Iraqis by means of machine-gun fire and then use their heads as objects of play." -Joshua Key (2007) [1]

"We use words like honor, code, loyalty. We use these words as the backbone of a life spent defending something. You use them as a punchline. I have neither the time nor the inclination to explain myself to a man who rises and sleeps under the blanket of the very freedom that I provide, and then questions the manner in which I provide it. I would rather you just said thank you, and went on your way. Otherwise, I suggest you pick up a weapon and stand a post. Either way, I don't give a damn what you think you are entitled to." - Colonel [Nathan Jessep](#), played by Jack Nicholson, from the fictional 1992 movie [A Few Good Men](#).

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Veteran's Tales

As noted in [last week's program](#), the myth of the soldier as guarantor of freedom and security for our fellow citizens has become wide-spread and reinforced in the imaginations of citizens, particularly in America, and lately in Canada.

We therefore see the "Support the Troops" monicker adorning bumpers and webpage banners.

Veterans' Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies increasingly are, in the opinion of this author, becoming celebrations of the sacrifice of 'heroic' men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country. These sentiments overwhelm any sense of regret about the tragedy of their loss and the resolve to put an end to such military conflicts so future

generations of soldiers (and civilians) need not suffer the same gruesome fate.

Even on [Canada Day 2014](#), Prime Minister Stephen Harper in his public remarks, chose not to mention scientific, medical, artistic or other such achievements, nor the creation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, nor the debut of national projects such as publicly funded health care.

Instead he chose to focus almost exclusively on the accomplishments of our military personnel abroad, and the prowess of our Olympic and Paralympic athletes. Evidently, PM Harper seeks to transform Canada's image away from the land of friendly 'hosers' to that of a Modern Day Sparta.

Not surprisingly then, this unthinking devotion to all things military has affected policy. It is fueling more US wars of aggression in the Middle East and prompting Canada's enthusiastic support.

This week's Global Research News Hour takes a close look at the toll war takes on the fighting men and women and particularly on the broader society. Critically, it examines the roots of the pro-war mentality that has gripped the imaginations of the people, and of the men in particular. This show also probes possible remedies that might potentially de-program members of the pro-war cult.

Both of the show's two guests are veterans of the US Armed Forces, and have served in missions abroad. They are now staunch critics of US military adventurism.



*Stan Goff began his military service in January, 1970 as an infantryman with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam. His service took him to seven more conflict areas after Vietnam, including Guatemala, Grenada, El Salvador, Peru, Colombia, Somalia, and Haiti. He retired as a Master Sergeant from the US Army in 1996. He has taught military science at the US Military Academy at West Point. Over the last decade he has published a number of articles and three books, including [Sex and War](#), and [Full Spectrum Disorder: The Military in the New American Century](#). He currently authors the blog [Chasin' Jesus](#). His latest book, *Borderline – Reflections on War, Sex, and Church from Wipf and Stock* (Cascade Books) is expected to be released in February of 2015.*



Joshua Key who hails out of Guthrie, Oklahoma was trained as a US combat engineer was dispatched to Iraq in April of 2003. He claims to have witnessed numerous instances of abuse of the Iraqi civilian population by US forces, which went unaddressed by commanding officers. He fled the war for reasons of conscience at the end of 2003, and with his then wife and children in tow, made his way across the border to Canada in early 2005. He has sought and been denied refugee status in that country. Remarried to a Canadian, he along with other Iraq War Resisters and deserters are 'living in limbo' waiting for deportation orders back to the US where they face the prospect of dishonorable discharge and lengthy prison sentences for the crime of desertion. Joshua Key is the author, along with Lawrence (Book of Negroes) Hill of [The Deserter's Tale: The Story of an Ordinary Soldier who Walked Away from the War in Iraq](#).

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Notes

1) Joshua Key (2007) 'The Deserter's Tale: The Story of an Ordinary Soldier who Walked Away from the War in Iraq' p.216

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