

“Support the Troops” as Propaganda Weapon?

Conversations with David Swanson, Stan Goff, and Joshua Key. Global Research News Hour Episode 120

By [Michael Welch](#) and [David Swanson](#)

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“I spent thirty- three years and four months in active military service as a member of this country’s most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from a Second Lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high class muscle- man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.” – Major General Smedley D. Butler (1935) [1]

“Following the Korean War, the U.S. government changed Armistice Day, still known as Remembrance Day in some countries, into Veterans Day, and it morphed from a day to encourage the end of war into a day to glorify war participation.” -David Swanson [2]

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The idea of questioning the heroism of the soldier may seem heretical. Even sacrilegious. Especially on the occasion of Remembrance Day, or Veterans’ Day as it is known in the United States.

All too often, we are told that the soldier “fought for our freedoms.” As has been argued in numerous articles on the [Global Research website](#), the major wars of the last two decades, and for that matter much of the last century, were not about fighting for “democracy” and “freedom” so much as fighting for elite interests, such as those mentioned in the Smedley Butler quote above.

Still, cannot the sentiments of Remembrance/Veterans’ Day be preserved without promoting the agendas of these elite rulers who give them their marching orders? Can you not ‘support the troops’ without promoting militarism?

In a [2011 essay](#), written on the occasion of his 60th birthday, Retired Special Forces Master Sergeant turned anti-war activist Stan Goff exposes a problematic aspect of this notion. He speaks of this generic soldier-hero in the following terms...

“He is to be honored because he makes himself available to fight, whether he knows why he is fighting or not, and whether he agrees with the reasons or not. And the overarching reason — the deity to which we can make some final reference to justify this soldier — is the nation-state.

Without belief in the civil religion – American nationalism – this soldier is merely a hired killer.

So let’s get this straight. Veterans Day is not a celebration of actual veterans — who are too diverse to characterize; Veterans Day is a High Holy Day of our nationalist religion. It is a proliferation of flags, a mass genuflection before the altar of the late modern Rome.”

If the original thrust of Armistice Day was the need to put an end to war, then the rash of military mobilizations over the last decade and a half would seem to be a slap in the face, or at least a disappointment to those who thought in a by-gone era that they fought the war to end all wars.

This episode of the Global Research News Hour takes a dissenting look at the Remembrance and Veterans’ Day ceremonies, and similar memorializing and valorization of the soldier. It postulates that placing the soldier on a societal pedestal effectively subverts anti-war sentiments and organizing. In conjunction with an economic system which makes war preparation and war-making profitable, as in Dwight Eisenhower’s “military-industrial complex,” the Western-world would seem to be placed in a permanent war-footing.

In the first half hour, we speak with outspoken anti-war activist, writer and blogger, David Swanson.

David Swanson is the author of several books including *‘War is a Lie’* and *‘When the World Outlawed War’*. He is also director of WorldBeyondWar.org and campaign coordinator of RootsAction.org. In this conversation we discuss the role of Veterans’/Remembrance Day in military boosterism, as well as some of the economic and other obstacles to be overcome if a world without war is to be achieved.

Afterward, we hear a repeat broadcast of an interview from November 2014 featuring Stan Goff and Joshua Key. It originally aired as [part of a show](#) examining the toll the “pro-War” cult takes on soldiers and the wider society, the roots of this pro-War mentality, and possible remedies to this affliction.



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 is [Borderline – Reflections on War, Sex, and Church](#) from Wipf and Stock (Cascade Books).



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) Butler, Smedley D. (November 1935). "[America's Armed Forces. 2. "In Time of Peace": The Army](#)". Common Sense 4 (11): 8-12.
- 2) <http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-glorification-of-war-veterans-day-is-not-for-veterans/5488096>

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