

**THE 99%
VS. WAR &
INJUSTICE**

Counter-Summit
for Peace &
Economic Justice
Chicago • May 18-19, 2012



**American Friends
Service Committee**

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Summit: the Beginning of the End of NATO

Official Summit An Exercise in Self-Justification of Alliance

Counter Summit Events Represent the Pro-Peace Majority

CHICAGO – In the wake of the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) Summit in Chicago, the U.S. Network for a NATO-Free Future and the international No to NATO/No to War Network called today for the dissolution of NATO as an anachronism that fights “wars of choice” and undermines people’s real security. They celebrated the courage and moral vision of the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who disavowed their military service medals in a moving ceremony following a peaceful march and rally on Sunday.

“NATO leaders met to refine plans to continue the war in Afghanistan with fewer troops and to reinforce preparation for future resource wars,” noted Joseph Gerson of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a key organizer of last week’s Counter Summit for a NATO-Free Future that drew over 300 participants from around the world. Gerson referred to further NATO expansion eastward to Russia’s borders and the declaration of interim operational capacity for a putative “missile defense” system which are fueling tensions with Moscow, “out of area” operations and expanded partnerships and operations across Asia and the Global South and continued reliance on nuclear weapons.

“On the other hand, veterans, peace and justice activists, community organizers and our supporters from around the U.S. and at least a dozen countries gathered to chart a new course for a more peaceful and just future free from NATO’s anachronistic policies,” said Gerson.

Michael Lynn, a board member with Chicago Area Peace Action, added, “All recent polls show strong bipartisan majorities in the U.S. wanting a rapid end to the war in Afghanistan, and a University of Maryland poll showed overwhelming support for deep cuts in U.S. military

spending. Clearly the public understands what NATO, which clearly appears to be struggling to justify its existence, doesn't – the time for endless wars and unsustainably excessive military spending and the accompanying austerity measures literally taking food out of the mouths of children is over." Lynn referred to Republicans in the U.S. Congress who voted recently to increase the massive U.S. military budget while cutting food stamps and school lunch programs for low income children.

"While NATO leaders seem to think they are entitled to a bottomless bounty of our tax dollars to continue their wars and useless weapons systems, we gathered with veterans making a powerful anti-war statement, nurses demanding just economic policies for the 99% and local Chicago activists working to prevent the closing of community mental health clinics," stated Mary Zerkel of the Chicago AFSC office.

Footage of the veterans' ceremony throwing their military service medals over a fence toward the NATO Summit site is available at http://www.democracynow.org/2012/5/21/no_nato_no_war_us_veterans

The final statement of the Counter Summit for a NATO Free Future is available at <http://www.natofreefuture.org/2012/05/statement-network-for-a-nato-free-future-counter-summit-for-peace-and-economic-justice/>

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The international network No to NATO was established in Stuttgart, Germany in October 2009. It works for the withdrawal of all NATO and U.S. forces from Afghanistan and the retirement rather than the repurposing of NATO. It includes more than 650 organizations from over 30 countries worldwide.

The American Friends Service Committee is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.

Founded in 1957, Peace Action (formerly SANE/Freeze), the largest peace and disarmament organization in the U.S., with over 100,000 paid members and nearly 100 chapters in 36 states, works for nuclear disarmament, promotes government spending priorities that support human needs and encourages real security through international cooperation.