



Peace and Security Program

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NORTH CAROLINA SUFFERING GREATER SHARE OF WAR COSTS

New report documents consequences of state push to be “most military-friendly state in America”

DURHAM – Billboards across North Carolina declare the state’s new slogan: “the most military-friendly state in America.” But a new report released today finds North Carolina is suffering “devastating costs” from war, and calls on state officials to rethink their push to make the state more dependent on military dollars.

The new report by the Durham-based Institute for Southern Studies was put together by a team of researchers and students across the state to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the Iraq war. The study also comes after the launch of the N.C. Military Foundation last December, a public-private entity which aims to lure more defense contracts to North Carolina.

A full copy of the report can be found at www.southernstudies.org/NCatWar.pdf

“State officials are pushing hard to increase North Carolina’s dependence on the military, touting big economic gains – but what do we lose in the bargain?” said Chris Kromm, director of the non-profit research center. “Leaders need to slow down and look at the costs, from lost lives and damaged communities, to the ‘boom-bust’ nature of a war spending.”

The report, “North Carolina at War,” examines a wide range of social and economic costs North Carolina shoulders as it becomes more deeply entangled with military adventures abroad:

- **North Carolinians have suffered heavily from casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq.** In 2007 alone, 21 soldiers from North Carolina bases have been killed, including five members of Fort Bragg’s 82nd Airborne in a March 5 bomb explosion in Samarra, Iraq. 74 service members born in North Carolina have died in the wars since 2002.
- The state report claims North Carolina stands to gain economically from a state of “permanent war,” but **defense dollars aren’t free.** Two leading economists put the total price tag of the Iraq wars at \$2 trillion. According to a budget watchdog group, North Carolina taxpayers alone have already paid \$12.3 billion for the two wars.
- Official reports also fail to account for **the instability and costs of military politics:** base towns rise and fall with ever-shifting troop deployments; decisions about base sizes and defense contracts often hinge on back-room Washington deal-making; and military-dependent states are often devastated when national priorities shift to a “peacetime” economy.
- **The state’s international reputation has been jeopardized by mounting evidence of complicity in “extraordinary rendition” flights** that ship terror suspects to countries with lax torture laws for interrogation. The Johnston County Airport is now the target of prosecutors in

Germany and Italy, and a U.S. federal lawsuit, for its ties to what human rights groups call “torture taxis;” 20 state legislators have called on Gov. Mike Easley to investigate the issue.

The study also features profiles of North Carolinians who question the state’s push to expand its military ties, including Jimmy Massey, a veteran of the current Iraq war and former military recruiter in North Carolina, and Azadeh Shahshahani of the ACLU’s Muslim/Middle Eastern Community Outreach program, who reflects on the chilly climate for civil liberties since the 9/11 attacks.

“As the casualties and money needed for war escalate and opposition grows in our state,” said report author Jill Doub, “We hope this report helps ignite a long-overdue conversation in our state about the costs of being ‘the most military-friendly state in America’ – and a dialog about what real security means for North Carolina.”

The report is the latest from the Peace and Security Program at the Institute for Southern Studies, which examines the impact of war in North Carolina and the South. In October 2006, the Institute and the School of Public and International Affairs at North Carolina State University published the first major poll on Southern attitudes about the Iraq war, and in August 2005, the Institute released “The South at War,” a detailed account of the impact of the military in the region. The non-partisan Institute was founded in 1970.

To see a full copy of the report, please visit:
<http://www.southernstudies.org/NCatWar.pdf>