

Well, friends, we've had a lot of talk about the second amendment and the "right" of an individual to have a gun, and recently former supreme court justice Stevens said we should abolish the second amendment. Well, maybe he's right, but the fact is that the destruction of the second amendment was done by former justice Scalia. We have scholars, and one of them is Dorothy Samuels, senior fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice. She served as a member of the New York Times editorial board from 1984 to 2015. She is writing on this matter of the second amendment and how it was really messed up by former justice Scalia. She writes;

In common with other big rightward swerves by the Roberts court the 2008 ruling in *District of Columbia v. Heller* was an aggressive exercise in mendacity. By upending the well-established meaning of the Second Amendment, the Court made the country less safe and less free. It did this under the guise of a neutral and principled "originalism" that looks to the text as it was first understood back in 1791 by the amendment's drafters and their contemporaries.

Heller's 5–4 majority decision, written by Justice Antonin Scalia and joined by Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito, was less in sync with the founding generation than with the top priority of a powerful interest group closely aligned with the Republican right. The National Rifle Association had been waging an intense 30-year campaign to secure an individual's constitutional right to keep and bear arms by winning over members of the public, high-level politicians, and, ultimately, the Supreme Court. Mission, to an alarming degree, accomplished.

The decision declared, for the first time, that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to a gun, at least for self-defense in the home. It invalidated key parts of the District of Columbia's unusually strict handgun ban, which prohibited the possession of nearly all handguns in the violence-prone city and required that firearms be stored unloaded and disassembled, or bound with a trigger lock.

To grasp the audacity of what Scalia & Co. pulled off, turn to the Second Amendment's text: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." To find in that wording an individual right to possess a firearm untethered to any militia purpose, the majority performed an epic feat of jurisprudential magic: It made the pesky initial clause about the necessity of a "well regulated Militia" disappear. Poof! Gone. Scalia treated the clause as merely "prefatory" and having no real operative effect—a view at odds with history, the fundamental rules of constitutional interpretation, and the settled legal consensus for many decades.

"The Second Amendment was a response to concerns raised during the ratification of the Constitution that the power of Congress to disarm the state militias and create a national standing army posed an intolerable threat to the sovereignty of the several states," then-Justice John Paul Stevens correctly noted in his minority opinion, joined by Justices David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer. "Neither the text of the Amendment nor the arguments advanced by its proponents evidenced the slightest interest in limiting any legislature's authority to regulate private civilian uses of firearms."

Then there was Scalia's peculiar breakdown of the phrase "keep and bear arms" into its component words to argue that the Second Amendment protects a general right to possess guns—even though, as Stevens pointed out, the term "bear arms" was most commonly used in the 18th century to describe participation in the military.

And let's not overlook the most absurd thing, which Breyer tried to get at in a separately filed minority opinion: At a moment in modern America when more than 30,000 lives are lost to gun violence each year, and mass shootings are a common occurrence, the majority opinion relied heavily on a guesstimate (and a rotten one at that) of what the Second Amendment meant more than 200 years ago, with no common-sense balancing test taking into account the real-world consequences for today.

"The idea that the founders wanted to protect a right to have a Glock loaded and stored in your nightstand so you could blow away an intruder is just crazy," says Saul Cornell, a leading Second Amendment scholar cited by the dissenters in both *Heller* and *McDonald v. Chicago*, the 2010 Supreme Court sequel that struck down Chicago's similarly strict handgun ban and extended the new Second Amendment right to states and cities. Adding to the dishonesty, Scalia refused to acknowledge that he was overturning the Court's venerable Second Amendment precedent, *United States v. Miller*, instead straining mightily, if unconvincingly, to draw distinctions.

As radical as the holding is, the majority could have done even more damage. Scalia stopped short of applying the newly discovered individual right beyond "hearth and home," leaving the constitutional status of toting guns outside the home for another day. And, possibly to secure the vote of a wavering justice, he offered assurance that *Heller* posed no threat to long-standing gun-control laws and regulations short of total gun bans.

Owing a good deal to that flash of moderation, *Heller*'s appalling jurisprudence and real-world harms have tended to be under-recognized. The decision gave the NRA a big jolt of energy and a potent new rhetorical tool that has bolstered the group's already formidable ability to stop needed gun-safety reforms—to the point of blocking hugely popular congressional proposals such as extending background checks to all gun sales, even following the 2012 school massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. *Heller* is also wielded to advance the NRA's maniacal drive to normalize the presence of guns and spread "concealed carry" permits, even absent a special need and adequate screening or training. Coincidentally or not, the number of states with lenient or no concealed-carry permitting requirements has grown significantly since *Heller* changed the terms of the debate.

We may be approaching another moment of reckoning. Since 2008, several federal courts have upheld state rules that allow officials discretion in issuing concealed-carry licenses. The Supreme Court declined to review those decisions. But forthcoming rulings by federal appellate courts in cases testing the constitutionality of similarly restrictive permitting requirements in San Diego and the District of Columbia could become fodder for a new round of Scalia-style “originalism.” If that happens, we may look back at *Heller* as a step toward something worse.

These are the thoughts of Dorothy Samuels, one of our major experts on the second amendment and senior fellow at the Brennan Center for Justice, serving as a member of the New York Times editorial board from 1984 to 2015. Scalia just devastated the meaning of the second amendment. There is absolutely no law that would stop every gun in the United States from being licensed. We license automobiles, which are deadly weapons. We have a right to call having a firearm a privilege that must require a license. I think this is extremely important, and I want to thank the students who have risen up to fight for commonsense gun control because they are the ones who are getting killed; they have managed to create the greatest stress to the NRA in its history. Here's wishing them and all of us victory because the connection between the NRA and military industrial government is absolute and total.

What are some of our Bush officials saying? Here's Lawrence Wilkerson:

"The military industrial complex is much more pernicious than Eisenhower ever thought." Col. Lawrence Wilkerson is tired of "the corporate interests that we go abroad to slay monsters for."

As the former chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, Wilkerson played an important role in the George W. Bush administration. In the years since, however, the former Bush official has established himself as a prominent critic of U.S. foreign policy.

"I think Smedley Butler was onto something," explained Lawrence Wilkerson, in an extended interview with Salon.

In his day, in the early 20th century, Butler was the highest ranked and most honored official in the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. He helped lead wars throughout the world over a series of decades, before later becoming a vociferous opponent of American imperialism, declaring "**war is a racket.**"

Wilkerson spoke highly of Butler, referencing the late general's **famous quote**: "Looking back on it, I might have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents."

"I think the problem that Smedley identified, quite eloquently actually," Wilkerson said, "especially for a Marine — I had to say that as a soldier," the retired Army colonel added with a laugh; "I think the problem is much deeper and more profound today, and much more subtle and sophisticated."

Today, the military-industrial complex "is much more pernicious than Eisenhower ever thought it would be," Wilkerson warned.

In his **farewell address** in 1961, former President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously cautioned Americans that the military and corporate interests were increasingly working together, contrary to the best interests of the citizenry. He called this phenomenon the military-industrial complex. As a case study of how the contemporary military-industrial complex works, Wilkerson pointed to leading weapons corporations like Lockheed Martin, and their work with draconian, repressive Western-allied regimes in the Gulf, or in inflaming tensions in Korea.

"Was Bill Clinton's expansion of NATO — after George H. W. Bush and [his Secretary of State] James Baker had assured Gorbachev and then Yeltsin that we wouldn't go an inch further east — was this for Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon, and Boeing, and others, to increase their network of potential weapon sales?" Wilkerson asked.

"You bet it was," he answered.

"Is there a penchant on behalf of the Congress to bless the use of force more often than not because of the constituencies they have and the money they get from the defense contractors?" Wilkerson continued.

Again, he answered his own question: "You bet."

"It's not like Dick Cheney or someone like that went and said let's have a war because we want to make money for Halliburton, but it is a pernicious on decision-making," the former Bush official

explained. "And the fact that they donate so much money to congressional elections and to PACs and so forth is another pernicious influence."

"Those who deny this are just being utterly naive, or they are complicit too," Wilkerson added. "And some of my best friends work for Lockheed Martin," along with Raytheon, Boeing and Halliburton, he quipped.

Wilkerson — who in the same interview with Salon [defended Edward Snowden](#), saying the whistle-blower performed an important service and did not endanger U.S. national security — was also intensely critical of the growing movement to "privatize public functions, like prisons." "I fault us Republicans for this majorly," he confessed — although a good many prominent Democrats have also jumped on the neoliberal bandwagon. In a 2011 speech, for instance, Secretary of State [Hillary Clinton declared](#), "It's time for the United States to start thinking of Iraq as a business opportunity" for U.S. corporations.

Wilkerson lamented, "We've privatized the ultimate public function: war."

"In many respects it is now private interests that benefit most from our use of military force," he continued. "Whether it's private security contractors, that are still all over Iraq or Afghanistan, or it's the bigger-known defense contractors, like the number one in the world, Lockheed Martin." Journalist Antony Loewenstein detailed how the U.S. privatized its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in another [interview with Salon](#). There are an estimated [30,000 military contractors](#) working for the Pentagon in Afghanistan today; they [outnumber](#) U.S. troops three-to-one. Thousands more are in Iraq.

Lockheed Martin simply "plans to sell every aspect of missile defense that it can," regardless of whether it is needed, Wilkerson said. And what is best to maximize corporate interest is by no means necessarily the same as what is best for average citizens.

"We dwarf the Russians or anyone else who sells weapons in the world," the retired Army colonel continued.

"We are the death merchant of the world."

Now that's coming from our former military and I think it's very much in order. It shows some people are quite alive. And then the connection between the NRA and the military - it's so clear. Here's Pat Elder, who recently released a book called *Military Recruiting in the United*

States. He's the director of the National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy, an organization that confronts militarism in the schools. He just wrote a piece entitled *JROTC - Military Indoctrination and the Training of Mass Killers*. It states:

Nikolas Cruz, the south Florida shooter, was enrolled in the Army's Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) program as a 9th grader at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The Army taught Cruz to shoot lethal weapons at a very young and impressionable age.

Few in America have connected the dots between military indoctrination and firearms instruction on the one hand, and the propensity for training mass killers, whether their crimes are committed as enlisted soldiers in atrocities overseas or in American high schools.

Let's examine the JROTC program and the militarization of Florida's schools as a contributing factor to the Parkland massacre. When Cruz was apprehended he was wearing his JROTC polo shirt, sending a message to the world of his affiliation with the military program.

There are 1,600 American high schools that enroll students in military-run marksmanship programs, teaching children as young as 13 to shoot lethal weapons. It's probably not the wisest public policy. The kids shoot .177 caliber lead pellets at 600 feet per second using CO2 propelled rifles. The Daisy Avanti 887, a cousin of Ralphie's Red Ryder BB gun, is classified as a lethal weapon by the Army. Florida, along with a dozen other states, specifically prohibits carrying pellet guns into high schools, although the prohibition does not extend to the military. Pellet rifles are extremely dangerous and some are powerful enough to kill a boar.

Good guns and bad guns?

It must be confusing to the 13-year-old mind. Broward County Schools has a strict anti-gun policy in place. The school system classifies pellet rifles as a "Class A" weapons, along with a variety of rifles, hand guns, and shotguns.

The use of lead projectiles in the nation's high schools also threatens public health by spewing minute lead articulate matter into the air and on the floor at the muzzle end of the gun and at the target backstops. Children track the deadly particulates throughout the building. There is a linkage between firing pellet rifles indoors and elevated blood lead levels among participants.

JROTC programs in Florida and elsewhere were once plagued by low enrollment numbers which threatened to shut down the program. The military responded with a robust lobbying effort directed at states, aiming to allow students to satisfy normal, for-credit course requirements by taking the JROTC elective. Florida is most friendly to the military in this regard. The state allows students enrolled in JROTC to satisfy the curricular requirements of physical education, biology,

physical science, art, and life management. JROTC is regarded as an Advanced Placement course. Students earn 6 Quality Points toward their weighted GPA.

Many of these courses are taught by retired enlisted soldiers with no teaching credentials and little or no college education. Meanwhile, Broward schools require teachers to hold teacher certification and most must have a Master's degree after a certain period of time.

JROTC programs in US schools are run by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. The school shooting programs are regulated by the Civilian Marksmanship Program, (CMP). The program was set up by Congress after the Spanish-American War to ensure that large numbers of Americans knew how shoot guns in the event of a war. The CMP is now a private entity with \$160 million in assets. It sells discarded military rifles, pistols, and ammunition to the American public at the behest of Congress. The CMP downplays the health and safety concerns of the robust shooting program.

Each branch has its own curriculum and textbooks that teach a dangerous and reactionary version of American history. The US bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki to save a million American lives. The North Vietnamese fired on an innocent American warship in the Gulf of Tonkin. History is taught as a kind of American *Fait Accompli*. American exceptionalism and the use of force as an instrument of foreign policy are enshrined values, next to accepting one's place in the chain of command. The civics textbook has a unit entitled, "You the People" rather than "We the People." Schools exercise no curricular oversight. School districts across the country are allowing this intellectual straightjacket of a program to substitute for the arts. In addition, Broward's schools host several dozen other military programs that work with the recruiting command to provide leads for recruiters. The military has also infiltrated the social media networks of high school children.

JROTC members frequently wear their uniforms to school and receive praise from their classmates, like the American reflex to support our troops. The Stoneman Douglas High School Marksmanship Program will be advancing to the Florida State championships this spring. Marksman 1st Lieutenant Diaz took first place in the standing rifle event during the last regional competition! It's a big deal.

Children participate in shooting programs at tournaments hosted by the CMP and supported by the NRA.

The JROTC program is highly respected at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. All proceeds from the sale of the school's branded products at the school's "company store" help fund the JROTC battalion. Revenues from pizza sales also finance the JROTC program. The

Stoneman High JROTC Military Ball will be held on April 21st this year at the Marriot Heron Bay. Nikolas Cruz won't be there.

We're grateful to Pat Elder for these words. I'm privileged today to have one of the international leaders in the peace movement. Colonel Ann Wright, retired US army. As a diplomat, she resigned from the US government in 2003 in opposition to the war in Iraq. She's also the author of *Dissent: Voice of Conscience*. She is a cofounder (2010) of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition. She's giving a presentation this week on the deteriorating conditions in Gaza caused by the illegal blockade and on the ongoing international efforts to challenge Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Welcome, Colonel Ann Wright.

Ann: Thank you, Blase. It's good to be with you.

Blase: It's my pleasure. You're been travelling - you were recently in Mai Lai, 50 years after the massacre.

Ann: Surely was a massacre. I went with Veterans for Peace, and we were there on March 16 in the village of Mai Lai where, in 1968, 50 years ago, US military forces killed 504 women, children and older people in a bloody rampage that will live in the horrific history of the United States as one of the worst massacres that the US military has done.

Blase: I think it's so important to be present and to recall this so that it will not continue. Each war has had it's horrors. Before that, we had the report on US crimes done in Korea by our former attorney general, Ramsey Clark. He went over documents that revealed civilian massacres during the Korean war. So this, I guess, part and parcel of what war becomes. Just before you were on I quote Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson who said that the military industrial complex is more pernicious than Eisenhower ever imagined. You just got back, right?

Ann: Yes, we just go back after 18 days on this trip. It started in Hanoi and went all the way down the long long country of Vietnam. Now Vietnam has the 16th largest population of any country in the world. It's really quite amazing what Vietnam has become after the United States kind of left it alone so it could do its own thing. It is a country that is booming with all sorts of businesses and lots of tourism. When countries that don't have to face war, they can flourish. The United States has certainly put other countries in the same predicament. When we look at Iraq and Afghanistan - well, you mentioned that I resigned 15 years ago as US war on Iraq was starting. And we see what's happened to Iraq, and Afghanistan, and Libya, and Syria, and if we look at Mali and Niger -- all of these countries that have suffered US military interventions should give our politicians pause when they start talking about military options being on the table for Iran or North Korea.

Blase: It seems they don't understand what they're talking about, because you have this horror of chemical warfare, Agent Orange, there are still people dying from Agent Orange, are there not?

Ann: Indeed there are. We visited three different places, care facilities for people who have been genetically affected by Agent Orange in Vietnam. We have the same thing in the United States, generations of US servicemen who dumped the Agent Orange on Vietnamese, but a residual part of it came back onto the servicemen, almost as if by karma. The US military in Vietnam got affected by this horrific chemical warfare we were inflicting on the Vietnamese. When you see the types of disfiguration and genetic disabilities that are still coming here four generations later - PLUS the unexploded ordinance still kills and maims every year. Quon Tri, right on the demilitarized zone, the zone between North and South Vietnam, and on that province the US dropped more ordinance that was dropped during World War II. Now that's hard to imagine, but that's what happened. So that area was bombed beyond belief, and not all of them exploded. And now 50 years later those bombs are still surfacing and killing people.

Blase: We find this in Laos, in Cambodia, the massive bombings that took place, and then Pol Pot emerges from the devastation we wrought. You're capturing an international problem. This is spring time, a time that all religions celebrate, a time of resurrection when the flowers return and life renews. We've been in necrophilia, love of death. Can we resurrect ourselves and become biophilic, lovers of life - can we do it?

Ann: I certainly hope we can, but our history has not played out and is not playing out at all. We're involved in seven different death marches, we are killing people in seven different places right now. So I'm not sure we're resurrecting anything, and in fact, when you look at people coming home from doing what the empire wants them to do, killing people in other places for whatever reason it is - to get their resources; to take down governments that we don't like - when you see the coffins coming home and the walking dead who are coming home, and I mean that - the numbers of psychological wounds that our men and women now have after killing people all over the world, when they come back to the United States we see that they are the walking dead. They are so dramatically injured for the rest of their lives, and for the rest of their family's lives. We're not doing anything better, I'm afraid.

Blase: I think the average American cannot believe that lawmakers and other politicians would actually foster wars to make money and support these corporations. That they would be so tyrannical as to want war in order to get more money - I mean, we have various prophets who have written about this. Seymour Melman wrote about it in the 70s and 80s, *The Permanent War Economy*, and he called it American capitalism in decline and exploded the myth that large defense budgets spur economic growth. He showed how military spending creates inflation and offered a plan to slash spending while maintaining national security. We have these prophets, and like the prophets of old, they are simply crucified by the media. But they are out there, people like you, you know...

Ann: Well, we're not listened to at all by the policy makers. Here it is 17 years since 9/11 that we've been at war with someone. This global war on terror in which the United States goes anywhere it wants to and kidnaps and imprisons people, we still have more than 40 people in Guantanamo, most of whom have never been tried for any crime, yet they're being held as

forever prisoners because we are afraid to have them testify as to what we did to them. The torture we did to them. We've got 17 years of the military industrial complex making a killing off of killing. We've got 17 years of politicians lying through their teeth. And now we have John Bolton, for God's sake, you know - and that liar is apparently going to the next National Security Advisor, and he's nothing but a liar. He was part of the Bush team of liars that included Colin Powell and Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney and George Bush and Condoleezza Rice, the people who committed the aggression in Iraq that has just turned the middle east upside down on its head. And we're still seeing the affects of it.

And then you look at what you're talking about. North Korea. Here we maybe have an opportunity for a breakthrough and a reduction of tensions on the Korean Penninsula, and then they're appointing a person like John Bolton, who has always been known for hating the North Koreans.

Blase: At no time have I ever felt that he was together psychologically, and Jimmy Carter said that Trump's decision to hire John Bolton is a *disaster for our country*. That's President Carter speaking. He went to North Korea and met with their leaders, and expressed a hope for a planned White House summit, and he warns that Trump may have made the worst mistake of his tenure for naming John Bolton to the sensitive post of National Security Advisor. Why don't we listen to Jimmy Carter?

Ann: Well, isn't that the truth! And listen to all of the people who are saying that this is such a disastrous appointment. I only hope that some of the senior republicans behind the scenes are going to Trump, because I'm sure he didn't check with anybody; I heard today that it turns out that Jared Kushner had been talking to Bolton behind the scenes on a variety of issues, and it was Jared's recommendation that Bolton be appointed National Security Advisor that put him in this position. I don't think Trump clears any of this stuff with his senior staff and just makes these announcements. But if enough republicans want to avoid this disaster of a John Bolton appointment, hopefully they're going to come to him and maybe some of the dealings Bolton has had with various foreign governments (like Flynn) there may be things coming out about Bolton that will prevent him from assuming the duties of the National Security Advisor.

Blase: Well, we certainly hope so. I see you have a 2018 boat to Gaza to challenge the Israeli blockade of Gaza and of the treatment of all Palestinians. That's in formation. Is that right?

Ann: Indeed. We plan to have four boats challenging the Israeli blockade. They'll be starting out from Scandanavia in mid-May, and by mid-July we hope they are positioned to head for Gaza and will be able to evade the Israeli military blockade that usually stops us. Hopefully we can get into those ports and say to the people of Gaza we are not forgetting you, that the world understands what you're going through and we're trying every mechanism possible to get the Israelis to lift that blockade. But we're not having much success. Right now the people of Gaza are going to have what's called the Grand March of Return, and they're going to be out in lots of numbers along the fenceline of Israel. Then there's another grand March of Return on the

outside, in Jordan. A lot of pressure is going to be put on the Israelis in the next month or so on the whole issue of the treatment of Palestinians, whether it's in Gaza which, according to the World Health Organization, will become unlivable by the year 2020 because of the lack of potable water, the sewage that is flowing directly into the Mediterranean because they can't get parts to fix the damage Israel's bombs have done to the sewage system. When you look at the inability of people to get either into Gaza or out of Gaza - to get out for medical help, in fact 50 people died in Gaza last year because they were unable to get out for proper medical treatment with proper medical equipment. The ability to bring medicines in to Gaza has been totally reduced. There are hospitals that have run out of medical supplies, and since the electricity is less than four hours a day, the generators are running out of fuel and hospitals are going without the ability to keep vital machines running. So it is a terrible, terrible situation that Palestinians continue to live under.

Blase: Well, it's tragic that people who are trying to assist are referred to as anti-semites. Now that's a self-condemning word to use about people who are working for human rights. We are very proud of the millions in the Jewish community who have formed peace groups in spite of what the nation of Israel is doing. They are relating to their country as we relate to ours - saying, wait a minute, we're the citizens, we want to see some humanity, we want to see a decent democracy, we are not interested in an apartheid situation in our country. And to call people anti-semites because they oppose an apartheid state is self-condemning. Your actions with the flotilla is so important, and you've had some close calls in those efforts, have you not?

Ann: Well, indeed, and if you remember back to 2008 and 2010, when Israeli occupation forces attacked the Mavi Marmara and killed nine people directly on that ship, wounded 50 people (one of whom subsequently died of their injuries), I mean these were executions that the soldiers committed against unarmed civilians who were aboard that boat. And all of the people on the other boats - there were six of them, and I was on the one right next to the Mavi Marmara - the Israeli military shot the windows of the boat out with concussion grenades. When they boarded, they threw people on the the glass that was on the deck and rubbed people's faces into it. They shot people in the face with paint bullets, which can blow out eyeballs and cause a concussion. They were very brutal on all of the boats that were part of that flotilla. Over the years we've had 31 boats that have challenged the blockade of Gaza, and we'll be having four more this summer. So we look forward to it. If you're in Europe, it will take about 74 days for us to go from Scandanavia to the various ports on the Atlantic side of Europe, and then we'll have two boats going down the central part of Europe throught the waterways and canals of Europe, and we'll be stopping every night on those waterways to have educational events. Then we'll stop at various ports on the Atlantic side of Europe to have educational events before we come into the Mediterraeen. So peope traveling in Europe this summer can join us and show solidarity with the people of Gaza and the West Bank.

Blase: How can they get in touch? Do you have a website regarding the flotilla?

Ann: Yes, indeed. You can contact the group on Facebook, and that's 2018 Boat to Gaza, and then also we have a nation builder site for fundraising, and that's also on 2018 Boat to Gaza Nation Builder and you can read all about it there. When you donate any money at all, we can then take your email and send you an email back with all the information about the flotilla.

Blase: You work also with Code Pink, correct?

Ann: Indeed, Code Pink Women for Peace. It was with Code Pink that I first went to Gaza. I was there six times in 2009 and have been back subsequently. Code Pink Women for Peace has been a great supporter of the challenge to Israel. I also work with Veterans for Peace and have been to the West Bank with them twice in the last year and a half. I'll work with any group that's willing to challenge the Israeli blockade of Gaza. Certainly the Boycott Divestment and Sanction international effort is a great one that I totally support. I urge everyone to get behind the movement to challenge Israel's brutal occupation and blockade of Gaza.

Blase: There's so much to be done, and all of it is interrelated. We saw the state department sell 6700 more missiles to Saudi Arabia that are going to kill Yemeni kids, and when our generals were asked about it, they said we really don't know what happens to the missiles after we sell them. Well, that's very nice. Try to say that in a courtroom when you're accused of murder. The situations around the world - well, we're like addicts that are bottoming out. We've been addicted to war, and Frank Dorrell's wonderful book says - we've become addicts of war, and now we see the crowned prince Mohammad Bin Salman and our defense secretary discussing the bombing of Yemen and the missile deal. Is there nothing else beside warfare? Are we going to let our nation deteriorate while our military massacres people around the world? How can we put a stop to this?

Ann: Yes, as you mention about Yemen - talk about a horrific situation. The Saudi air force, using American jets and bombs and airborne intelligence to help them vector in to kill more Yemeni citizens - it's a horrific situation. I was with Code Pink Women for Peace in 2013, and we went to Yemen and stayed about ten days there. At that time we were getting stories from people whose families had been killed by American drones, and we also met with a huge number of citizens of Yemen, from all parts of Yemen, who were in Sanaa, the capitol city, because at that time there was a wonderful transitional national council that was meeting and bringing all factors of Yemeni society together to formulate the direction of their country. And to see the things that happened there and the collapse brought about by the Saudi bombing after the Houthis took control of Sanaa - it was just horrific. It's one of the terrible slaughters of this generation. And to think that the US has sold another 7,600 rockets that will be used to kill Yemeni kids, the remaining ones who haven't starved to death or died of cholera and other diseases...and the Saudi prince here in the US having this plan - which should of course be to stop bombing them and to open the ports so they can get some food in there - this big shell game that the Saudis are playing with both the United Nations and the US to try to put lipstick on this terrible and horrific thing that they have done to Yemen by calling their next effort "humanitarian."

Blase: Ann, I want to thank you for being here today and for your great international efforts at peacemaking and being one of the great leaders in the movement for peace and justice internationally. Thank you so much for being with us today.

Ann: Well, you too, Blase, and please keep up your great work. We look to you and all the people you have on your program and all of the programs that you do with the Office of the Americas. Thank you very much.