. . . And Leave No Bases Behind

Remarks of Ellis Boal
Northern Michigan People for Peace
Delegation Member, Traverse Area Peace and Justice Community
Meeting with Senator Carl Levin
December 2, 2005

Revised and Annotated December 8, 2005

Thank you for meeting with us Senator. We are not aware that you have met

with a specifically antiwar group in Michigan since the Iraq war started, and are hopeful our meeting here may signal a reconsideration of your thinking.

For that is our purpose in asking to see you. You voted against the war resolution in October 2002, and we are certainly pleased for that. But our own reasoning is different from what you stated. I will outline it in the couple of minutes I have.

First though, a word about my own constituency, Northern Michigan People for Peace (NMP4P). We are based in Petoskey, 60 miles north of here. On September 24th we joined hundreds of thousands of others across the country, and had our own "out now" demonstration. We attracted 100 according to the *Petoskey News-Review*, and 140 by our own reckoning.

A few weeks later eight of us met with aides of Congressman Bart Stupak. In early November he and we had an exchange of guest commentaries in the *News-Review*. The upshot was that he deleted his website position that the troops can come home "[o]nly when order and security are restored." His *News-Review* commentary calls for "troop withdrawal over the coming year."

Again, we are pleased Congressman Stupak is moving the right way, but for NMP4P it's not good enough. The troops should come home now.

Which brings me back to the rationale of your proposed amendment to the war resolution in October 2002. We recognize of course the administration manipulated the intelligence as you have been at pains to point out, in committee hearings and in the Washington Post last October 10, where you also called for setting a timetable for troop withdrawal.

In offering your 2002 amendment you said Saddam Hussein must be forced to disarm, and it would take force or the threat of force to get him to comply. Because Iraq did not pose an imminent threat to the US, you argued the UN would be the best and the only legal way to do that. Finally, your amendment provided if the UN failed to act the president could call Congress back into session to consider unilateral US force.

Had the amendment passed, and had the US convinced the UN and gone into Iraq to disarm Saddam with its support, the situation on the ground would not be materially different today.

Within the antiwar movement at the start of the war there were differing opinions whether Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. For myself, I conceded the possibility he might have them.

Yet I was on a busload of 50 that travelled from Petoskey to Washington in March 2003 to try to prevent the war. Why? Because I didn't believe weapons were what the war was about. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz summed it up nicely in 2003. He said the difference between North Korea and Iraq was that Iraq "swims on a sea of oil." That is why we invaded Iraq, and not North Korea.

But that was then and here we are today. What's to be done now?

War critic Stephen Zunes notes that some who opposed the invasion have since concluded that because the Iraqi government is reasonably representative, because much of the insurgent movement is dominated by fascistic Islamists and Baathists, and because the Iraqi government is weak, the troops should remain. These activists say the premise of the invasion was a lie and the occupation was mishandled but the consequences of withdrawal would result in a far worse situation.

Such a case might be worth consideration if the administration and congressional leaders had shown they had the integrity and competence to lead a counterinsurgency war. To support the continued prosecution of the Iraq War, however, would require trusting the same people who sweet-talked the country into a war in the first place.

NMP4P asserts that such leaders cannot be trusted to control the insurgency, extricate the United States, and facilitate Iraq's development. According to a NY Times/CBS poll in September, 52% of Americans agree the US should get out now.

Yes, leaving Iraq will make for chaos there. But staying brings about the same result. US troops are the primary targets of the insurgency. And with continuing revelations implicating the US in torture, secret prisons, and paying for propaganda in the Iraqi media, democratic traditions are taking a beating.

A final point. What exactly do we in TAPJC mean when we call for "immediate withdrawal"? How quickly is "immediate" and to where should the troops be "withdrawn"?

Congressman Stupak says get them out by the end of 2006. Congressman John Murtha says do it within six months. After the Paris peace accords the US was out of Vietnam in 90 days.

Our answer is that the time-frame is "now." With shock and awe the US got into Baghdad in a matter of weeks. An orderly retreat can occur in a like period.

And to where should they retire? Not beyond the horizon, as suggested by Congressman Murtha. In 2004 occupation chief Jay Garner said "one of the most important things we can do right now is start getting basing rights.... [T]hat's what Iraq is for the next few decades."

We have just the opposite view: "Leave no bases behind."

All of this is summed up in the button NMP4P sold at its rally on September 24: "Support our troops: Bring them home now!"

Please note the exclamation point.

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Sources (chronological order):

US out of Vietnam within 90 days of Paris peace accords*:*
http://www.vietnamwar.com/timeline69-75.htm

Levin 10/10/02 debate on authorization of the use of US armed forces against Iraq: *2002 Congressional Record vol. 148, pages S10251, 10262,*
http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/retrieve.html

War critic Robert Fisk 3/16/03 acknowledgement that perhaps Iraq has VX or anthrax:
http://www.robert-fisk.com/articles181.htm

Paul Wolfowitz, 5/31/03, on Iraq swimming on a sea of oil*:*
http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030531-depsecdef0246.html

Hearing, 1/28/04, of the Senate Armed Services Committee Subject: Iraqi Weapons of

Mass Destruction: *http://www.ceip.org/files/projects/npp/pdf/Iraq/kaytestimony.pdf*

Jay Garner, 2/6/04, on US basing rights in Iraq for decades to come:
http://www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0204/020604cdam3.htm

NY Times/CBS 9/17/05 poll reports 52% of Americans say get out now even if it means abandoning the president's goals:
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/17/politics/17poll.html

Petoskey News-Review 9/26/05 coverage of NMP4P 9/24/05 rally:
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Levin 10/10/05 op-ed call for setting a timetable and critique of administration's dangerous pre-war rosy scenario: *http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/09/AR2005100900533.html*

Levin, 11/7/05, on administration's refusal to provide CIA policies on secret prisons and interrogation: *http://www.newyorker.com/printables/fact/051114fa_fact*

Boal/Stupak PNR guest commentaries 11/8/05 and 11/15/05, and now-withdrawn Stupak 11/9/05 website Iraq position: *attached*

John Murtha, 11/17/05, get the troops "over the horizon" in six months:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/17/AR2005111700982.html

John Murtha, 11/18/05, on US troops as the primary targets of the Iraqi insurgency:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/17/AR2005111700794.html

Stephen Zunes, 11/22/05, on whether the US should remain in Iraq even though it was wrong to go there: *http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=15&ItemID=9183*

Senate armed services committee on paid articles in Iraqi media, 12/2/05:
http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/02/international/middleeast/02cnd-propaganda.html?ex=1291179600&en=180840f646c854e2&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss

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TAPJC delegation members:

Simon Anton, Traverse City
Ellis Boal, Charlevoix
Randy Bond, Beulah
Joanna Dueweke, Traverse City

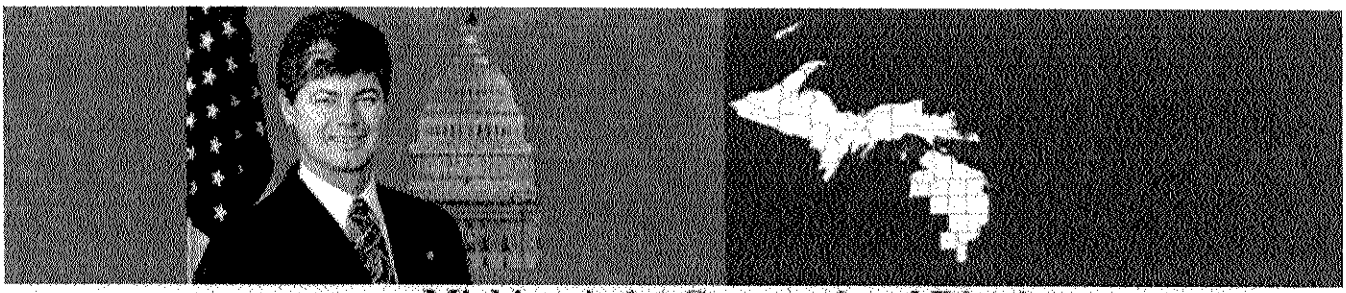
Larry Helvie, Grayling
Tim Keenan, Traverse City

TAPJC Demands:

1) An immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq and an end to funding all hostile activities. 2000 U.S. soldiers have died in Iraq. Over $200,000,000,000 has been spent and it could have been better spent.

2) A restoration of veterans' benefits and depleted uranium testing for all veterans of wars since 1991. The US should not even be using depleted uranium in its weapons. All vets should be tested. Vets should not go homeless or have their Post Traumatic Stress Disorders go untreated.

3) Military recruiters should not be in our schools. Joining the military is a private family decision. Parents or students should "opt-in" to release the student's name to recruiters and not "opt-out" as is currently required by the No Child Left behind Legislation.



Michigan's 1st Congressional District

MI-01

Position on Iraq

I disagreed with the Bush Administration's decision to pursue this unnecessary war in Iraq. But we are there now, and we cannot simply walk away. To do so would be an insult to the brave men and women who have served there and their families, especially those who have been injured and killed serving their country.

While I am pleased that President Bush has taken the first steps to involve the United Nations and NATO in the stabilization and rebuilding of Iraq, he needs to do more. The task ahead requires that the United States work with the international community as full partners to stabilize Iraq. Only when order and security are restored will the Iraqi people be able to decide the future of their country. Only then will we be able to bring our troops home with the hope that Iraq will not descend into civil war.

Unfortunately, we have a long way to go. Please be assured that I will continue monitor the situation in Iraq closely, and do all I can to ensure that our troops ha they need to accomplish their mission and come home safely.

Read Bart's Views on Curr Issues

- Position on Iraq
- 602P Myth
- ANWR(Arctic National Wildlife
- Campaign Finance Reform
- Child Custody Protection
- Cloning Bill
- Congressional Benefits My
- Energy
- Federal Marriage
- Gasoline Prices
- Indecency
- Marriage Penalty
- Prescription Drugs
- Roadless
- Social Security Notch Issu
- Stem Cell Research
- Veterans Benefits

Send Congressman Bart Stupak a Message

Write Your Representative

Guest commentary

Rep. Stupak, we need a forum on Iraq

The following guest commentary was written by Ellis Boal of Northern Michigan People for Peace.

The Web site of Congressman Bart Stupak, who represents Northern Michigan, is http://www.house.gov/stupak. The front page links to his "position on Iraq."

There, Rep. Stupak asserts (1) the U.S. cannot walk away from the Iraq war because that would insult the soldiers and families who have served and sacrificed for their country, (2) only when order and security are restored can the troops come home hoping there will not be a civil war, and (3) to restore order and security the full partnership of the international community is required.

Boal

As to (3) Rep. Stupak is "pleased that President Bush has taken the first steps to involve the United Nations and NATO in the stabilization and rebuilding of Iraq."

Rep. Stupak's position is not serious. True, in 2003 the UN went into the country, but it was bombed out in August. In February 2004 it came back to help construct a new interim government. But Washington has kept it politically weak. Its role in planning the national elections on December 15 — the last step in establishing a new government — is minimal.

As to NATO, last year its secretary-general said it would take a commanding role in peacekeeping functions in the south-central areas. Today it plans only a training mission in the green zone and a military academy outside in a Baghdad suburb. A private security company will protect the academy. NATO's own forces will not fight.

This is nothing to be pleased about. There is no prospect of an international partnership. The partners in Iraq are disintegrating not coalescing. Under the reasoning of Rep. Stupak's Web site, order and security will never be restored and U.S. troops will never come home.

Several months before the war, Rep. Stupak voted in Congress against it. Northern Michigan People for Peace is the local Petoskey peace group. NMP4P opposed the war when Stupak voted against it, opposed it on the day it started, and has opposed it ever since. We have mounted several big rallies, including one at Central Elementary School with 300 people, and we sent a busload of 50 to Washington in March 2003, to try to prevent it or end it.

War and peace are the most important issues Rep. Stupak has before him. In October, NMP4P met with his aides in the Petoskey office, had e-mail correspondence with the Iraq expert on his staff in Washington, and held a candlelight vigil outside his office on the day of the 2,000 U.S. death.

Our purpose was to convince him to convene a town meeting, devoted to Iraq and U.S. foreign policy, where all sides can be heard.

A public discussion is needed so Rep. Stupak can update his thinking. If he decides to continue war support, let him do so on intelligible grounds. We have offered to co-sponsor the forum with him, or to let him handle the arrangements alone. We have offered to let him lead it, or to be one on a panel of experts.

In the discussion all sides would be heard respectfully, including those who support continuing the war. In 2003 before fighting began, anti-war and pro-war groups demonstrated simultaneously at Mitchell and U.S. 31 in Petoskey, cordially exchanging discussion while holding up their opposing signs. A public discussion today would continue in the same spirit.

Whatever your views on the war, contact Rep. Stupak today to say we need him in a public discussion on the Iraq war and U.S. foreign policy. Hoping to get out of a civil war is fine. But we need more. We need to talk about it, and then face realities and apply ideals.

Have a viewpoint you wish to express? The News-Review welcomes Guest Commentaries for use on the Opinion Page. They must be personally written by the author and no more than 600 words. Send your guest commentaries to: Editor, News-Review, P.O. Box 528, Petoskey, Mich. 49770-0528, fax them at 347-5461, e-mail to petoskeynews@petoskeynews.com, or fill out the letter form at our Web site: www.petoskeynews.com. Leave a phone number where you can be reached during the day.

PNR 11/15/05

Guest commentary

Attend town hall meetings

The following guest commentary was written by Congressman Bart Stupak, 1st Congressional District of Michigan.

Recently, a guest column appeared in the Petoskey News-Review from Mr. Ellis Boal of Northern Michigan People for Peace calling on me to hold a forum on the war in Iraq. He also took this opportunity to criticize my position on the issue.

While I appreciate Mr. Boal's desire to discuss the war in Iraq and advocate his concerns, I would like to clarify that Mr. Boal has had this opportunity in recent months and neglected to take advantage of the occasion. On July 8th of this year, I held a town hall meeting in his hometown of Charlevoix. This meeting was announced in the Petoskey News-Review on July 6th and 7th and noted in follow-up articles in both the Petoskey News-Review and the Charlevoix Courier on July 11th and July 13th respectively. Neither Mr. Boal or any of the members of his group (listed in the information given to my Petoskey office) attended that meeting according to the sign-in sheets.

Stupak

I appreciate Mr. Boal and other members of the Northern Michigan People for Peace taking the time to meet with my staff about his important issue. My staff and I are always open to listening to constituents' concerns. I hold town hall meetings throughout my district regularly in addition to traveling to meetings and events almost every weekend. In fact, I have addressed this very topic at nearly every town hall meeting I've held since the start of the war. Throughout that time, I have made my position on this war very clear.

I voted against going to war. I believe that the administration has not been truthful with the American people about the intelligence they used to justify going to war. But, we went to war none-the-less and now our young service men and women are putting their lives on the line. Thus, I believe we must support our troops by voting to fund the equipment to keep them safe and the benefits promised. I also feel that it is time for the president to articulate a plan for troop withdrawal over the coming year.

I encourage Mr. Boal and any other concerned constituent to advocate their positions on the war in Iraq. I take the opinions of local residents very seriously and consider their points with a great deal of thought. Additionally, I urge all local residents to attend any of the approximately 20 town hall meetings I hold annually.

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They must be personally written by the author and no more than 600 words.
Send your guest commentaries to: Editor, News-Review, P.O. Box 528, Petoskey, Mich. 49770-0528, fax them at 347-5461, e-mail to petoskeynews@petoskeynews.com, or fill out the letter form at our Web site: www.petoskeynews.com.
Leave a phone number where you can be reached during the day to verify the signature.

Send us your letters!

Letters on public interest issues should be 300 words or less. Guest commentaries should be 600 words or less. Letters and personally written guest commentaries should be signed, and include a telephone number for verification or to answer any questions Send your letters and guest commentaries to: Editor, News-Review, P.O. Box 528, Petoskey, Mich. 49770-0528, fax them at 347-5461, or send an e-mail message to petoskeynews@petoskeynews.com, or fill out the letter form at our Web site: www.petoskeynews.com.