

Disabled vet warns of Gulf bloodbath

by William Jones

Robert Muller, a disabled Vietnam veteran and founder and executive director of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, lambasted administration policy and warned of a coming bloodbath in the Gulf war, at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington on Feb. 5.

Muller, who is now confined to a wheel chair, described his experiences as a junior grade officer in the U.S. Marine Corps in Vietnam. He was to attack a Viet Cong position which had been subjected to four hours of bombing by Marine jets. "The massive bombing didn't destroy the enemy at all. It just made them more angry," he said. Muller was hit in the chest by machine-gun fire as his unit started to attack the enemy positions.

Muller referred to comments of a French commander in the Gulf theater who said Feb. 2 that the massive bombing of Iraq and Kuwait probably degraded Iraqi defenses by less than 5%. "There were 7.5 million tons of bombs dropped on Vietnam. This did not destroy either the will or the capacity of the enemy to resist," he said.

Casualties will be higher

Muller also attacked the sanguine views of Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, who predicted casualties of no more than 500-1,000 for the entire Gulf operation. "There were more Marine casualties in Vietnam than in all of World War II," said Muller. "In Vietnam, 85% of the junior Marine officers were casualties. We are facing a bloodbath in the Gulf. Make no mistake about it."

Muller also pointed out how relatively easy it was in Vietnam to quickly medevac the wounded out of the war zone. "This will be extremely difficult to do in the Gulf because of the tremendous anti-artillery capabilities of the Iraqis. It will be very difficult to get our medevac choppers in to get the wounded. More people will die of their wounds."

Muller noted the racist nature of the Vietnam war, in that respect comparable to the war in the Gulf. "We were told to consider the enemy as gooks, dinks, chinks, everything except what they actually were: real human beings." Muller, who spent a year convalescing in a Veterans Administration (VA) hospital, related how the war had ripped apart the lives of many of the young soldiers crippled in it. "I saw wives and fiancées coming in, looking at the shape of their loved ones, and turning around and leaving, saying 'I can't deal with this,'" said Muller. "I saw 19- and 20-year-olds crying

pathetically when their dressings were changed."

In an interview with *EIR*, Muller attacked the notion that air power alone could win the war, a position that was mooted by congressmen and think-tankers in the initial phases of the Persian Gulf war. "It's a fact," said Muller. "Air power never defeated the enemy. Even [Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen.] Colin Powell and [Gen. Norman] Schwartzkopf have admitted as much. The strategic bombing during World War II failed to achieve this objective. In Okinawa, Korea, Vietnam—there is no way to conclude that any dedicated enemy could be expected to be defeated by air power alone. Les Aspin tried to create the false illusion that it would be the case in the Gulf. But even he has had to back off in the light of recent events."

Bush deceived the American people

Muller also attacked the Bush administration for having foreknowledge of what the real costs of a Gulf war would be. "An assessment was made that this war could go on for months and would be very bloody," said Muller. "Members of Congress were briefed on this at an early stage. Why didn't the information go out to the U.S. public?" he asked. "We were brought into this war through a policy of deception. . . . The administration thinks that the hype about rallying around the flag will keep people behind administration policy. But as the reality of the war becomes horrifically clear, this cannot continue."

In response to a question from *EIR* on what he thought of Iraqi capabilities, Muller said, "They have more tanks and more artillery. They have 700 Exocet missiles. They have a tremendous military capability. They are just hunkered down there in their bunkers, waiting to engage the U.S. on their own terms."

Asked what he thought the long-term reaction from the other Muslim nations would be to the mass destruction of Iraq, Muller commented, "We have no idea whatsoever where this is going to lead. Both Jordan and Pakistan have been very upset about the tremendous civilian casualties caused by the U.S. bombings, and it's going to get worse."

Muller joked about the reliability of the Pentagon briefings on developments in the Gulf, referring to them as the "five o'clock follies," a term used disparagingly during the Vietnam war to characterize the official briefings which were solely based on the propaganda needs to maintain the ever-dwindling support for that war.

Muller noted that the reason for the total commitment of himself and his associates to stop this war comes as a result of their experience in Vietnam. "It was a failed venture, a national tragedy, a total waste. Those of us who lost friends, our body parts, our dreams, our futures, who have endured pain, anguish, despair, and anger were considered suckers. Our only consolation was that such a great price paid for nothing, would surely guarantee that we would never allow it to happen again."