

PM: Building Peace out of the World of War

By Polly Mann

Just how would you go about changing the environment of this country from its present military bias to one promoting peace? The following are some suggestions for demilitarizing in both the U.S. and foreign countries. Other people and organizations will, undoubtedly, have more ideas.

To begin with--an immediate 50 percent reduction in the military budget followed by an annual 10 percent reduction until the military budget equals the average of European nations' budgets. The Minnesota Arms Spending Alternative (mnasap.org) has been actively working on resolutions to shift federal spending priorities in this direction. The [National Priorities Project](#) is a good resource for information.

The removal of all U.S. foreign bases throughout the world: This should be received with jubilation in each country. Buildings and equipment unrelated to weaponry would be left standing. The buildings could be used for communities--civic purposes such as community centers, county fairs, or schoolhouses, etc. There might be a call for negotiations if a country claimed their land and water had been contaminated, such as at Okinawa, but justice would be served if the U.S. cleaned up the damage it created.

Forbid the use of drones by the military. Restrict use to purposes that benefit people: They could be used for all sorts of exciting purposes to help, not threaten, people--like looking for a lost child or following the path of a storm in order to warn people of its coming.

The removal and destruction of all poison gas facilities: This would, no doubt, have to be carefully accomplished, but who knows what the building could be used for. Americans are very ingenious and maybe a prize could be offered for the most original use?

The removal of all biological warfare laboratories: These could possibly be used for some sort of medical facility--a path from death to life, some might say.



Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares by Russian sculptor Evgeniy Vuchetich, United Nations Art Collection

The removal of all land mines laid by the United States. (At the beginning of this month, the U.S. attended, as an observer, the 12th Conference of the States Parties to the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines held in Geneva. Let's hope citizen pressure from within the U.S., as well as pressure from other countries, finally convinces the U.S. to join other nations as a signatory.)

The decontamination of waters used by the U.S. Navy, such as Subic Bay in the Philippines: It would be an enormous task, but if the Great Lakes were brought back to relative good health, why not other places?

The extension of payments to mothers of children fathered by U.S. military men stationed overseas. U.S. military men are able to go on their way without looking back if they desire, yet the women and children can suffer rejection by people in their own country and experience great difficulties. Surely they are owed economic support at the very least.

Restitution payments to other countries and individuals and businesses in this country who have experienced usurpation and destruction of land, and other problems due to the military being in their midst.

Nothing would be complete without retooling the factories manufacturing weapons here in every congressional district. They could be set on a positive path creating American-made items that don't kill and destroy. It could be a great opportunity to create jobs, stimulate our economy, change our dependence on foreign oil and imperial expansion, and instead develop sustainable manufacturing that is better for the environment and people everywhere.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor and columnist for the WAMM newsletter. She continues to be active with the organization.