

## “Peace Dividends”

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In the world I live in, countries do not have friends. They have interests. Victims of war are not individuals. They are statistics. Human life is expendable. Profits must be achieved at all human costs. Morals have disintegrated. Truth has fallen by the wayside – a major fatality.

Year after year, experience after experience, we have not learned that war is not an option. In the name of a campaign to promote democracy, we have engaged in disloyal subversion of our own essential values.

A casualty is not a statistic. I see a grieving mother whose life has been destroyed by the news of her son’s death, as she hangs on to the remnant memories of the baby to whom she gave birth, the toddler whose eyes twinkled as he gave her a toothless smile, the little boy who climbed trees and tested her patience, the handsome young man who comforted her and promised to return soon, never to keep his promise.

How can we, as a people, tell this grieving mother that her son was just another statistic – only one among 1,177,743 others who have died in Iraq since the war began? How can we tell her that her son gave his precious life in vain?

How can we tell an anguished father that the lifeless child that he holds in his arms was killed by a roadside bomb in a conflict that was not necessary? How can we bring such devastation into the life of a family and hail ideological ideals and moral superiority to justify it?

If we, in fact, have grown into a hopeless society that reacts only to cues of profits reckoned in dollars, let us play some deception with ourselves. Let us go to war. Let us spend the trillions of dollars not to fight fellow humans but devastating poverty, illnesses, and ignorance around the world. Three-trillion dollars could buy whole countries. A fraction of that amount would support major research to find cures for widespread illnesses such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, AIDS, and hepatitis B. Today, we can vaccinate children in China against hepatitis B for a dollar per child. The same is true for vaccinating children against measles in Africa.

Trillions of dollars spent in a war to eliminate suffering, illnesses, and pain not only in the United States but throughout the world would, in fact, become a catalyst to effect tremendous positive change that would enable many, many people and generations to live a life of comfort and peace.