

# Prescription For Action

*"Prevent what we cannot cure"*

**Inside:** *The Lancet Reports Iraq Toll, page 3 • PSR-LA Lobbies Congress, page 4 • Concerns With Nuclear Power, page 5 • The Military's Environmental Legacy In LA - A Tour, page 7*

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## Experts Assess Iraq's Horrific Toll

On Saturday, October 21, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles hosted a national conference at UCLA's Kerckhoff Hall on the medical consequences of the Iraq war. Over the course of the day, more than 230 people attended this moving event that included presentations of the war's health impacts on both Iraqi civilians and American service personnel.

We would like to send a special thanks to Linda Polin and Eve Haberfield of UCLA Extension, the UCLA School of Public Health, PSR-LA's conference planning committee, our dedicated volunteers and the media work of Lorna Chiu for making it a successful event. We also thank UCLA Today for granting us permission to re-publish the following article by John Ferrari.

**By John Ferrari**

*Published on Nov., 7, 2006 in UCLA Today*

A standing-room-only crowd of more than 140 glimpsed for a day the depth and breadth of the human toll of the war in Iraq at a conference held on campus recently. The grim images and staggering statistics were sobering.

From around the country, health-care professionals intimately familiar with the war's effects on bodies and minds came to Kerckhoff Grand Salon to share their insights and perspectives at the conference, "The Medical Consequences of the War in Iraq," sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility, UCLA Extension and the School of Public Health.

Gene Bolles, an assistant professor of neurosurgery at the University of Colorado, said he was stunned by the number and severity of the injuries he saw when he served as chief of neurosurgery at the Department of Defense's Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany between 2001 and 2004. He treated service members injured in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Bolles said he witnessed injuries ranging from bullet wounds to spinal

problems — a common ailment caused, he noted, by the heavy weight of the equipment soldiers now carry into combat. While the mortality rate for injured soldiers has been cut to 9%, down from 20% during the Vietnam War and 30% during World War II, the current war is creating a record number of disabled veterans, the neurosurgeon said.

The need to cope with this unexpected influx of veterans has caught the nation



Doctor David Rush assessed The Lancet's epidemiological study of civilian mortality due to the Iraq war.

unprepared, speakers said.

"We have let our veterans down," said Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., of Chula Vista, who called for mandatory federal funding for health care services by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Currently, that funding is discretionary.

Harriet Zeiner, a clinical neuropsychologist with the Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System, noted that

*Continued on Page 7*

## 2006 California Legislative Wrap-up

PSR-LA was at the forefront of a number of legislative battles in Sacramento this year. There were many victories and a few defeats. To follow is a snapshot of how our busy year in Sacramento went.

### Signed

**AB 32:** A landmark global warming initiative that imposes the nation's first cap on greenhouse gas emissions.



PSR-LA's Martha Dina Arguello

**AB 289:** Authorizes CalEPA to request that chemical manufacturers provide analytical test methods for detecting their chemicals in our

bodies and the environment. This will be a useful tool to implement the newly signed SB 1379, the nation's most comprehensive "biomonitoring" law that will screen and document human exposure to

*Continued on Page 4*

## Did You Miss These Events?

PSR-LA's October conference on Iraq was the last in a long season of events. Martha Dina Arguello helped coordinate the May 6 World Asthma Day in Los Angeles — a day of action to unite children, adults, and advocates working to combat asthma in Southern California. On June 10, PSR-LA hosted our groundbreaking new military tour (*see page 7*). On June 25, PSR-LA supported the Program for Torture Victim's presentation on physicians and torture. Held at Barnsdall Park auditorium, Steven Miles M.D. spoke on medical ethics and international law.

From September 24 through October 1, PSR-LA was among the more than 70 environmental justice, social justice, public health, human rights, and workers' rights groups that came together to make the unprecedented national Environmental Justice for All Tour a reality. Martha Dina Arguello coordinated the West Coast leg, which included tours of communities from West Oakland south to Calexico (*see page 6*).

On September 25, at the offices of the Metropolitan Water District, PSR-LA



Recycled water enters Lake Balboa.

hosted a landmark workshop on the health impacts of recycled water. Over fifty regulators and environmentalists attended.

In early October, PSR-LA hosted Dr. Helen Caldicott and screened the film, "Helen's War," at the Laemmle Theaters in Santa Monica. •

## Goings On Around the Office

A buzz with activity, PSR-LA has recently hired two bright young people, said adieu to two great workers, and seen interns and volunteers come and go.

First, we wish to welcome Margaret Wacker M.D. to the PSR-LA board of directors. Dr. Wacker, a neurosurgeon affiliated with Kaiser Permanente in San Bernardino, helped develop the recent conference on Iraq.

Emily Snider, our new administrative and programmatic assistant, is not only a Dartmouth graduate and gifted writer, but a fine musician and accomplished urban gardener.

Jacob Brown is a recent graduate of Wheaton College (near Chicago). He wishes to pursue a career in urban planning — but before that PSR-LA is benefiting from savvy organizing on peace and environmental programs.

Our new intern, Sarah Wallace is a MPH/MD student at St. George's University, Grenada. An Orange County

native, Sarah will be working with PSR-LA through December.

Over the past three months, Enrique Huerta has interned in our environmental programs. He is now studying sustainability principles at the Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. His long term vision is to promote urban policies that will help communities live within the limits of our available resources in order to prevent further environmental degradation.

In August, our super development and security associate, Sharmeen Premjee, joined the staff of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to work on homeland security programs. A true loss, as Sharmeen's departure came only a month after Melissa Burch, PSR-LA's environmental health associate, found her dream job as Organizing Director with a residential treatment program in Watts for women coming home from prison. •

# PSR LA

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*Healthy Homes Collaborative*

Linda Kite x106

*Medical Student Intern*

Sarah Wallace x109

*Wonderful Volunteers:*

Dan Brown, Helen Jaskoski,  
Christine Weingold

### **PSR-LA Board of Directors:**

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# 655,000 Iraq War Deaths

## Watch Ideologues Slander Good Science

By Curren Warf, M.D.

*The Huffington Post published this article on October 16, 2006*

On October 10, 2006 the esteemed medical journal *The Lancet* released an epidemiological study concluding that 655,000 Iraqis died from war-related injury and disease from March 2003 to July 2006. This shockingly high figure has drawn attacks from the Bush administration and right-wing pundits.

Speaking as a medical doctor, I wish to set the record straight. The *Lancet* study is sound science. The study followed a strict, widely accepted methodology to arrive at its sobering conclusion. The study is being attacked not on scientific grounds, but for ideological reasons.

People may not realize that *The Lancet* is the world's most prestigious medical journal. Prior to publication, the Iraq study was subjected to a thorough peer-review by specialists in the field of epidemiology.

Three of the study's authors, Gil Burnham, Shannon Doocy, and Les Roberts, are doctors at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. The fourth author, Riyadh Lafta, is on the faculty of Al Mustansiriya University in Baghdad. Under dangerous conditions, researchers conducted a cross-sectional cluster sample survey involving a total of 1849 Iraqi households, in 47 different neighborhoods, in 18 regions across Iraq. The survey documented a four-fold increase in the crude mortality rate from the pre-invasion to the post-invasion periods and, in addition, characterized the causes of death.

The investigators followed the same methodology in Iraq that has been used in estimating death and disease in other conflicts such as Darfur and the Congo—where the Bush administration uncritically accepted their results. The public health tool they employed—cluster surveys—has been demonstrated time and again to be the best method of estimating rates of death in areas where vital statistics are not scrupulously maintained. Such bureau-

cratic vigilance is not the case in present day Iraq.

In a war-ravaged country, merely counting bodies will radically underestimate the number of people who have died. In Iraq today, there have been numerous reports of mass graves and of bodies dumped in fields, beside roads, or in the Tigris River. These deaths are, by and large, not reported to authorities, as some of these deaths may be linked to police forces. One must also consider the Muslim practice of burial where internment is swift -- often on the same day. Therefore, relying on media reports of the number killed, morgue logs, or Iraq Ministry or US military counts will not provide an accurate estimate of the death toll. Further, we must not discount the possibility of bias by government officials; the US and Iraq have much to gain by minimizing civilian deaths.

Since the media has been unable to find a scientist critical of the study, they've turned to policy wonks with literally no expertise in the health sciences. Danielle Pletka of the American Enterprise Foundation derides the study, but her advanced degree is in international stud-

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## Iran and the Bomb

### War is not the answer

In a region decimated by war and conflict, a U.S. led bombing campaign against Iran would make matters worse—especially for U.S. soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Congress must oppose U.S. bombing and instead work for a peaceful resolution to the nuclear issue by urging the administration to engage in talks with the Iranian government.

### Talking Points

There is time to work for a diplomatic resolution. The CIA estimates that if Iran decided to build a nuclear weapon it would take 5 to 10 years.

A military attack would inevitably kill large numbers of innocent people, foster

ies. Neither does Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies nor Michael E. O'Hanlon of Brookings have a health background. At his October 11 press conference President Bush asserted "No, I don't call it a credible report." He said he asked the generals and the generals told him it was wrong. When asked to give a precise number of Iraqi war-related deaths the President demurred, saying "I do know that a lot of innocent people have died."

In this age where fact shares equal time with conjecture, critics have attempted to discredit the Hopkins' study without specifically addressing the science whatsoever. If the administration believes the Hopkins' study to be flawed, the federal government should fund its own study of Iraqi mortality, and submit the methodology and results to a medical journal subject to independent peer review. After all, the Hopkins' study was funded in large part by a \$50,000 grant from MIT; surely the federal government could afford such a study. •

*Curren W. Warf M.D. is a pediatrician at Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. Dr. Warf sits on the National Board of Physicians for Social Responsibility.*

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even more hatred and condemnation of the U.S., and dramatically increase the instability of the Middle East.

Attack scenarios have shown that military strikes on Iran would not achieve the stated goal of stopping their nuclear program.

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# Lobbying Against the War

by Curren Warf, M.D.

The sun was shining in Washington D.C. as PSR-LA staffers, Jonathan Parfrey and Sharmeen Premjee, and I traveled by cab past the city's monuments, museums and stately marble buildings. It was impossible not to think of Rome. But this was America's Capital, fat with prosperity, blessed with peace and untouched by war since 1864.

Other capitals have not been so fortunate. In the past century America has brought war to the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam, Nicaragua, Panama, Grenada, Afghanistan, and Iraq—to name a few. And after these interventions—at times decades later—people struggle with the war's residual impacts on the economy, social infrastructure, environment and public health.

On May 21-22 this year, Peace Action, United for Peace and Justice and Physicians for Social Responsibility sent representatives to Washington D.C. to lobby against the continued U.S. occupation of Iraq and the administration's threat to bomb Iran.

We were provided a day of training on how to speak to representatives and best

frame our argument—that the medical consequences of the war in Iraq have been far more devastating to Iraqi civilians and American service personnel than the administration has led the public to believe. At the time of our lobbying efforts, the Lancet had published an epidemiological study estimating 98,000 deaths over the first eighteen months of the Iraq war—a far greater number than what the President had been telling America. The most recent Lancet study, however, estimates 655,000 deaths have resulted from this war.

Our delegation met with security advisors in the offices of Henry Waxman, Diane Watson, Dianne Feinstein and Nancy Pelosi. Before these representatives, we forcefully communicated the impact of the war on returning young veterans and the real burden of the war on the Iraqi people. Our health-based messages were very well-received—especially in House Leader (soon to be Speaker of the House) Pelosi's office.

As we lobbied from the downtown United Methodist Church, mere steps from the Senate office buildings, we shared news of a JAMA study which showed that Iraq war

soldiers are being diagnosed for mental disease in alarmingly numbers—portending great need for improving VA services. We also distributed PSR's superb study *Medical Consequences of a Nuclear Attack on Iran* (available at [www.psrla.org](http://www.psrla.org)) which describes the fallout from dropping nuclear weapons on Iranian uranium enrichment facilities. The study estimates 2.6 million deaths within 48 hours, and 10.5 million exposed to significant radiation fallout, if the U.S. drops nuclear bombs on the Isfahan and Natanz nuclear enrichment facilities.

It was sobering to travel to Washington D.C. to witness the aligned forces of the arms industry, Pentagon, Congress, White House, Supreme Court and their Republican base. Though our small gathering may have seemed like tilting at windmills, I nonetheless thought our effort very worthwhile. Each of us has a voice if we choose to use it.

Though the brutal war and occupation continue, in many ways the political landscape is slowly but surely being transformed. The mid-term election results confirm that a majority of Americans now agree the invasion of Iraq was a mistake.

I am proud to have been able to participate in this effort as a representative of PSR-LA and I encourage every PSR member to participate in future meetings with our elected representatives. •

## YOU'RE INVITED!

### PSR Travels To Washington in 2007

Physicians for Social Responsibility will again travel to Washington DC in Spring 2007 and you're invited. Teaming up with chapters across the nation, PSR-LA is organizing medical and scientific professionals in a national movement to restore scientific integrity to the process of forming public policy.

When physicians and scientists speak on the dire health effects of war and global climate change, the medical voice is especially persuasive to policymakers.

Please plan ahead. We're looking to be in Washington from **April 25-26, 2007**. Lets walk the halls of Congress together. Note: dates subject to change.

## Legislative Wrap-up (cont.)

chemicals.

**AB 1632:** Requires the state to assess the vulnerabilities of nuclear power plants in the event of a major earthquake as well as problems associated with the aging and decrepitude of the state's nuclear plants. This bill also looks at the costs associated with radioactive waste accumulating at nuclear power plants.

**AB 1953:** Reduces the maximum allowable levels of lead in pipes and plumbing fixtures from 8% to 0.25% in order to prevent lead poisoning in children. This bill does not require any plumbing fixtures to be replaced before normal change-out is needed. Beginning in January 2010, however, all faucets and plumbing fittings sold in California must be "lead-free" (containing no more than 0.25% lead).

**AB 2823:** Requires that local governments, schools, and residents within 1,000 feet of a polluter be notified when

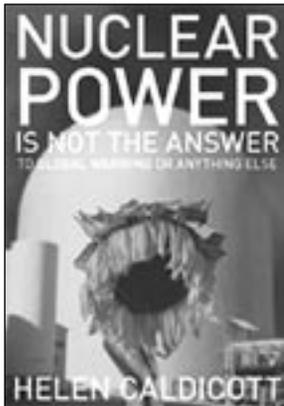
a violation of an air emission permit occurs that could contribute to unhealthy air quality.

**AB 2861:** Increases the penalties for a person who fails to abate a lead hazard after receiving an order from an enforcement agency. Provides failure to abate a lead hazard, after receiving a second order of violation from the Department of Health Services (DHS) or a local enforcement agency, is considered a misdemeanor and punishable by a fine up to \$1,000 or by imprisonment up to six months in a county jail.

**SB 162:** Establishes a new Department of Public Health (CDPH) within the existing Health and Human Services Agency and statutorily transfers some responsibilities from the Department of Health Services (CDHS) to the new CDPH, effective July 1, 2007. At the same time, DHS is being renamed as the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS). The Governor will appoint a State Public Health Officer,

(Continued on Page 6)

# Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer



## **Nuclear Power is Not the Answer**

by Helen Caldicott

The New Press, 2006, 221 pp., \$23.95

## **Insurmountable Risks:**

### **The Dangers of Using Nuclear Power to Combat Global Climate Change**

by Brice Smith

IEER Press and RDR Books, 2006, 448 pp., \$23.90

### **Nuclear Power: Competitive Economics and Climate Protection Potential**

by Amory Lovins

Rocky Mountain Institute slide presentation, via [www.rmi.org](http://www.rmi.org)

*For the benefit of a few brief decades of electricity we are creating materials that will remain deadly for hundreds of thousands of years.*

- Daniel Hirsch, October 2006

The United States' one hundred-plus nuclear reactors have created in excess of 50,000 tons of high-level radioactive trash. This material is so deadly it can deliver a lethal dose to a person standing three feet away in just seconds. Even after decades of radioactive decay, a few minutes of exposure is enough to kill.

No American utility has ordered a power reactor for over twenty-five years. Nonetheless, the nuclear industry is attempting a revival, and most astonishingly, by asserting that nuclear technology is good for the environment by saving the planet from global warming.

Helen Caldicott's new book, "Nuclear Power is Not the Answer," buries the notion that nuclear power is salvific in any way whatsoever. Relying on analysis provided by scientists, Jan Willem Storm van Leeuwen and Philip Smith, Caldicott takes the reader step by step through the nuclear fuel cycle and quantifies the carbon emissions generated in each step of the process.

The first step in producing nuclear power is mining uranium – a process requiring heavy machinery, and loads of energy, to dig, crush and mill the radioactive rock. The key uranium-mining areas in North America are on the Colorado Plateau, in central Wyoming and on the Athabasca Basin of Saskatchewan. It takes an aver-

age of 162 tons of uranium ore to fuel a standard power reactor for a year.

The next step in the fuel cycle, refining the uranium, similarly uses loads of energy. Then, enriching the uranium – increasing the proportion of U235 – entails the costly and energy-rich endeavor of converting uranium into a gas, uranium hexafluoride. Enrichment facilities also vent vast amounts of chlorofluorocarbons, a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. The next step, fabricating fuel elements and placing them in the rods, gobbles up still more energy.

The story does not stop here. The massive thick-walled containment vessel that houses the reactor entails years of work. And when the plant is finally open, reactors require an outside energy source to operate the cooling system. In California, the reactors at San Onofre and Diablo Canyon are subsidized by electricity made from coal, gas, and wind power. That's right, we send renewable energy to operate nuclear plants.

Once nuclear power plants run their course, energy will be needed to decommission, dismantle, cleanup, store, transport and dispose of reactors and their deadly detritus. How much energy will be expended in shuttering a major power plant? Nobody knows for certain—as these cleanup activities have yet to be performed.

Van Leeuwen and Smith estimate that per kilowatt nuclear energy emits about one-third as much carbon dioxide as a gas-fired plant.

Caldicott correctly argues that nuclear's carbon emissions are higher still.

Van Leeuwen and Smith fail to factor the energy used in cleaning-up uranium mill tailings. One massive cleanup project directly affects California. The Atlas mine in Moab, Utah is currently leaching thousands of pounds of radiation directly into the Colorado River—a source of drinking water for Southern California. The Metropolitan Water District recently convinced the federal government to haul ten million tons of uranium tailings away from the river and haul it thirty miles into the desert. When it comes to factoring nuclear power's carbon footprint, we need to include the carbon output of Atlas' diesel-belching bulldozers, trucks, and trains.

Another strong argument against nuclear power's purported carbon-savings is economic. According to energy guru, Amory Lovins, "nuclear power buys less climate solution per dollar than renewable technologies."

Smaller power plants in general outperform large centralized plants which argues against large nuclear plants. Improving efficiency "generates" cheaper energy than any other source. For example, less than 1% of a car's fuel actually moves the driver of the automobile. And only 3% of the electricity used by an incandescent bulb is transformed into visible light.

Lovins sees that every dollar spent on nuclear power is a dollar not spent on renewables. If the U.S. were to build new nuclear plants, each plant would cost about \$4 billion apiece.

Energy efficiency improvements, for example, are seven times more effective at reducing greenhouse gases, per dollar spent, than nuclear power. Yearly costs per 1000 kg avoided CO2 emissions are \$68.90 for wind but \$132.50 for nuclear power.

Nuclear's other deficits make this energy unappealing. For nuclear waste can be turned into the material to make a nuclear bomb and nuclear plants are vulnerable to attack and accident. A ruptured reactor or storage pool would be catastrophic to human health and the environment – a mistake that would be felt for millennia. Last, nuclear's greatest defect is the waste problem. Just as physicians are hesitant to needlessly expose patients to a chest x-ray at 10 millirems, so too must physicians advise against technology where waste products release 240,000 rem per day. •

# Help Us Push this Bus!

## PSR-LA Coordinates the West Coast Leg of the Environmental Justice for All Tour

The 1961 Civil Rights Freedom Ride inspired the 2006 Environmental Justice for All Tour which called for changes in public policies and practices that expose people to toxic pollution and damage our environment. During the last week in September, three caravans carried activists, health researchers, scientists, and policy-makers through communities in the Northeast, South, and West Coast, where people are suffering serious health effects associated with toxic pollution.

Physicians for Social Responsibility—Los Angeles (PSR-LA) was among the more than 70 environmental justice, social justice, public health, human rights, and workers' rights groups that came together to make this unprecedented national tour a reality. PSR-LA's Martha Dina Arguello coordinated the West Coast leg, which included tours of communities from West Oakland south to Calexico.

"Visiting all these communities, you see a direct correlation between lack of access to adequate healthcare and communities that have been put in harm's way by exposure to industrial land use pollution," noted Arguello.

Midway Village, for instance, is a small community in Daly City, California built on top of a contaminated site and lying on the fence line of a PG&E plant. Cracks in the cement that has been poured to cap contaminated soil and deformed frogs discovered by children in the neighborhood belie what the agencies contend—that there is little health risk to the Midway residents. With no long-term health studies executed in this community, the residents have no scientific backing to support their concerns that the various health problems they experience are due to toxic exposure.

"It was clear from the stories that the lack of access to health care and the lack of knowledge of environmental health have been deeply damaging to the psyche of the residents," said Arguello.

"There is a critical need for doctors to get more involved with environmental justice issues," noted Arguello. "A number of communities are facing illness directly related to industrial pollution. But without the voice of doctors speaking out about the relation between symptoms and their environmental causes, resident complaints are

discredited by government regulators."

The stories in these communities are many and oftentimes wrenching. A young man from the City of Maywood, whose daughter died of an asthma attack, has also seen cancer claim the lives of three of his coworkers who worked in close proximity to a polluting factory.

Without doctors posing questions and sharing observations about the link between environmental toxicity and increased rates of asthma, cancer and other diseases, residents in contaminated communities are left to fend for themselves.

Communities in the San Joaquin Valley were eloquent in their call for unity and more organizing efforts. As one speaker said, "Two of us cannot push this bus, but a lot more of us can push this bus all the way to Sacramento."

We ask that you join us in pushing this bus so that we may one day eliminate the need for a national "toxic" tour.

For more detailed information on the history and logistics of the tour, visit [www.ej4all.org](http://www.ej4all.org).

## Legislative Wrap-up (cont.)

who must be a licensed physician or surgeon, to head the new DPH as well as two chief deputy directors. This bill further strengthens California's ability to respond to and prevent any man-made or natural disaster.

**SB 849:** Establishes the Interagency Office of Environmental Health within the Department of Health Services to track and evaluate a variety of chronic diseases in relation to environmental exposures.

**SB 1368:** Requires the California Energy Commission (CEC) to set a global warming emissions standard for electricity used in California—regardless of whether it's generated in-state or purchased from plants in other states. This law could help prevent new dirty coal plants from being built to serve California's growing electricity demand and will instead encourage development of clean electricity generation technologies including renewables.

### Vetoed

**AB 1012:** Would have required the Air

## Villaraigosa and the Environment

PSR-LA staffers, Jonathan Parfrey and Martha Arguello, are part of an extraordinary effort to transform Los Angeles, in the words of Mayor Villaraigosa, into the "greenest big city in the world."

A remarkable new coalition named GreenLA has been meeting for a year. Composed of over fifty environmental organizations, PSR-LA serves on the steering committee and has developed policy recommendations to transform the city's environmental activities. On July 18, at a City Hall meeting, the mayor warmly greeted the group and welcomed GreenLA's key recommendations. During the meeting, Martha explained the foundation of environmental health principles; the Mayor immediately grasped the idea. "First, do no harm—I get it," he said.

Next steps involve the city council and department managers. If you wish to read GreenLA's recommendations to the mayor, please contact Emily at (213) 689-9170 x108. We'll be happy to send you a copy.

Resources Board to increase the use of clean alternative fuels.

**SB 840:** Would have provided comprehensive health insurance coverage to all California residents along with the ability to choose your own physician.

**SB 927:** Would have required the owners of container cargo to pay \$30 for each shipping container moving through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to help fund security, transportation, and air quality improvements at the ports.

**SB 999:** Sought to create accountability by adding more representatives to the district board from the urban centers most impacted by air pollution in California's Central Valley, as well as representatives with expertise in public health and air pollution science.

SB 999 passed through the Senate and all policy committees in both houses. Unfortunately, some Assembly members in the Valley were not supportive, so the bill was left hanging until next year. The good news is that because SB 999 was transformed into a two-year bill, next January it will not have to go through the entire process all over again.



*Dan Hirsch speaks to tour participants at Sage Ranch overlooking the Santa Susana Field Laboratory in the hills between the Simi and San Fernando valleys.*

## Military Tour of Los Angeles

On June 10, PSR-LA conducted the first-ever military tour of Los Angeles.

Over one hundred PSR-LA supporters boarded air-conditioned buses at UCLA and traveled to the polluted grounds of the Rocketdyne Laboratory in the Simi Hills above Chatsworth. Daniel Hirsch gave a powerful history of the lab's environmental problems including a detailed retelling of the partial meltdown of a sodium reactor in 1959.

The tour next traveled to Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Prior to working on space activities for NASA, JPL built military rockets. In fact, JPL pioneered formulas for fabricating solid rocket fuel. Military activities so polluted the groundwater, that JPL has been deemed an EPA Superfund site. A guided tour was provided by JPL staff. It was good to learn, in

contrast to Santa Susana, NASA is responsibly cleaning-up its toxic mess.

Our tour buses then traveled to the recently shuttered aerospace facility in Downey. Dr. Nancy Gibbs organized a lovely lunch for the group at a Kaiser Permanente clinic near the old factory grounds.

Last stop, at Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station, we heard from environmental activist, Lyle Talbot, who described his efforts to cleanup Edwards AFB and other military sites.

PSR-LA developed an extensive guide to the local military history and facilities visited on this tour. The guide is available on the PSR-LA website: [www.psr-la.org](http://www.psr-la.org).

An April 2007 tour is now being organized. To sign-up please call: (213) 689-9170 x107 •

## Experts Assess Iraq (con't)

since 1992, VA health care has treated primarily active-duty veterans, rather than retirees.

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and landmines account for 65% of combat injuries in Iraq, Zeiner said; many of the remaining injuries, she estimated, are the result of vehicle accidents caused when military drivers resort to evasive driving techniques to avoid IEDs and other threats.

IEDs inflict polytrauma — obvious injuries that combine multiple trauma wounds and brain injury as well as undiagnosed or hidden mild traumatic brain injuries. Both types of brain injuries can result in problems ranging from reduced attention span and problem-solving skills to memory failure and fatigue.

Zeiner estimated that as of March, more than 6,600 service members with undiag-

nosed mild traumatic brain injuries have been discharged without proper follow-up medical treatment.

While the health problems facing American service members are dire, Iraqi citizens are experiencing far worse effects, the experts said. Even before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, Iraq was in the throes of a health-care crisis due to the 1991 Gulf War and subsequent U.N. sanctions. The nation's infant mortality rate increased 600% after the 1991 Gulf War, said Dahlia Wasfi, a physician and activist with Global Exchange.

Since 2003, tens of thousands of Iraqis — the count is closer to hundreds of thousands, according to some — have died as a result of the war. The contentious nature of the debate over the number of Iraqi deaths was highlighted last month in the controversy surrounding the release of a Johns Hopkins report on the Iraqi death toll.

David Rush, professor emeritus of

## Heaven in Helsinki The International Physicians Congress

The international convocation of our international affiliate, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) took place in Helsinki, September 7-10. PSR-LA physicians Bill Perkins M.D. and Curren Warf M.D. attended, as did UCLA medical student Tova Fuller and PSR-LA director Jonathan Parfrey. One highlight was Malaysian physician Ronald McCoy's plea for America to return to its former stature as a power for peace in the world.

The September 2008 Congress will be held in New Delhi, India.

For more information go to the website of Indian Doctors for Peace and Development, [www.idpd.org](http://www.idpd.org) •

## Join PSR-LA's Action Alert Network!



Make your voice heard. Participate in our democracy. Sign-up to PSR-LA's ACTION NETWORK. Go to the web-site: [http://actionnetwork.org/psr\\_la/home.html](http://actionnetwork.org/psr_la/home.html) or call the PSR-LA office for more information: (213) 689-9170.

nutrition, community health and pediatrics at Tufts University, who examined critics' arguments, found the report to be statistically and epidemiologically sound. Rush noted that while the media and critics focused on one of the report's findings — that a total of 654,965 Iraqis have died from direct and indirect consequences of the conflict — the more important finding is that 601,027 Iraqis have died as a direct result of war-related violence. •

*Conference planning committee members included Byron DeLear, Curren Warf, MD, Dan Brown, Don Broder, MD, Don Mellman, MD, Helen Jaskoski, Jose Quiroga, MD, Margaret Wacker, MD, Rebecca Tobias, and William Perkins, MD.*

*Volunteers included Christine Weingold, Dorothy Houston and Sharmeen Premjee.*

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# Calendar of Events: Winter 2006

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**Monday, December 4, 2006 •  
Noon – 1 PM**

Curren Warf, MD and Don Broder, MD will present the medical consequences of war to UCLA Student PSR members at UCLA's David Geffen School of Medicine campus. This event is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Emily Snider at (213) 689-9170 x108.

***UCLA Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH) – Special Seminar Series on the UCLA campus from 12 Noon to 1:00 PM***

**December 7, 2006:**

Jerry Markowitz, PhD is Distinguished Professor of History at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He will be speaking on "The Chemical Industry's Secret History: Plastics and Health in the 1970s and Today."

**December 14, 2006:**

Phil Landrigan, MD, MSc is a pediatrician and the Ethel H. Wise Professor and Chair of the Department of Community

and Preventive Medicine of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. He will be speaking on "Children's Health and the Environment—the problem and the solution."

The Seminar Series will be held on UCLA campus from 12:00 noon to 1:00 PM in 13-105 CHS lecture hall and from 1 to 2 P.M. at the Dean's Conference Room (CHS 16-059), 650 Charles E. Young Drive, South. The first hour is reserved for the talk and the second for a "Question and Answer" session followed by a reception. Individuals interested in attending should RSVP to Vi Huynh by phone at (310) 206-6920 or by email at [vthuynh@ucla.edu](mailto:vthuynh@ucla.edu). This event is free to the public.

**Monday, January 15, 2007 • 7 PM**

The Peace & Disarmament Committee will meet Monday, January 15 at the PSR-LA office, located at 617 S. Olive St., Suite 810 in Downtown LA. For more information, contact Jacob Brown at (213) 689-9170 x104.

***Western Regional Conference on Eliminating Childhood Lead Poisoning, Implementing Healthy Homes Programs, and Combating Indoor Environmental Hazards***

**January 31-February 2, 2007**

PSR-LA and the Healthy Homes Collaborative will be involved with this educational and networking conference geared towards public officials, lead industry practitioners, environmental consultants and contractors, facility operators, health educators and community advocates from the Western United States. To register, please visit:  
[www.leadmoldconferences.com](http://www.leadmoldconferences.com).

**SAVE THE DATE:**

***PSR LOBBY DAYS IN D.C.***

**April 25-26, 2007**

Travel to Washington, DC next Spring to lobby with PSR. For more information on how to get involved, contact Jacob Brown at (213) 689-9170 x104.

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**Physicians for Social Responsibility – Los Angeles  
617 South Olive St, Suite 810  
Los Angeles, CA 90014-1629**

[www.psrla.org](http://www.psrla.org)

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