

# Military Families Speak Out

September 2020

## Troops Home Now!

### Editorials from MFSO members:

Laurie Loving

Davis, CA

### How Do You Oppose a War While Supporting Your Soldier?

That is the impossible dilemma facing every MFSO member with a loved one in the Iraq or Afghanistan wars. My name is Laurie Loving. I am the mother of an Iraq war veteran and the co-leader of Northern California chapter of Military Families Speak Out. When my 19 year old son called me to say he had joined the Army just a couple of months after the “shock and awe” US invasion into Iraq, I panicked. I was a life-long peace activist who had taken him to many anti-war rallies; what did he, who barely finished high school, know about war? We tried to talk him out of it but the recruiter offered a better package; he could marry his sweetheart and provide her with an income, housing, health insurance, a commissary and a community of other Army wives.



Two years later he deployed to Mosul and my panic changed to overwhelming dread and terror for the next 365 days he was there. My weight increased 50 pounds in 8 months, and my blood pressure rose to 210/118, requiring 3 medications to keep me from a stroke. I have had a chronic illness since 1990 that worsened to the point that I had to retire on disability. I did not know how I would get through it.

A friend told me about MFSO and I grabbed that lifeline. MFSO understands two things every well: 1) War impacts not just the troops but every member of their families, and 2) Family members are the best advocates to speak out for our loved ones in service who cannot speak for themselves.

Why should you become a member of MFSO?

As a member of MFSO we have the status and authority of a national organization who, working alongside our vital allies such as Gold Star Families Speak Out, Veterans For Peace, About Face and others, to speak to the entire country through the media. Respected by government, we get meetings on Capitol Hill with senators and representatives. I have personally spoken on the Capitol Mall, surrounded by thousands of combat boots and civilian shoes, tiny children’s shoes, worn by the casualties of unending war. I, along with other MFSO members have been arrested in San Francisco, Sacramento and Los Angeles protesting to end the fighting and improve conditions for the troops, such as rampant PTSD and now the dismal circumstances of the lack of Covid-19 treatment on the bases.

I did all this while trying to be supportive of my son at the same time. His father and I flew to Georgia for his boot camp graduation where they put on a mock war right in front of us, tanks, guns, grenades, constant explosions. I didn’t cry. I organized a Valentines and Chocolates campaign to send to my son and the eight other men in his unit. I sent socks, blister packs, wipes and even a second pair of combat boots as he had only one pair in 125 degree heat that never gave his boots a chance to dry out. We emailed and he called as often as he could.

MFSO was there for me on a personal level as I careened through the insanity. I often woke up a 3:00am, heart pounding because I hadn’t heard from him for two weeks and I knew there was going to be that knock on the

door any minute. I knew I could pick up the phone and call Pat, or Cindy or anyone else on the MFSO phone list, and they would be available to help me calm down.

My son came home alive, though his wife left him while he was deployed, as so many do. He was exposed to TB, has a combat-related hearing loss and mild PTSD. It was a few years before I felt I could stop worrying. Now he has a management job, a loving wife, a house and infant twins. It's been ten years.

MFSO is here for you if you have a loved one who is deployed to Iraq and/or Afghanistan, has been or will be. We welcome you with open arms to join us in our mission to Support the Troops by Bringing Them Home Now and Taking Care of Them When They Get Here!

## **In the News:**

**19 years after 9/11 –Dare we get our hopes up?** The troop withdrawal, which is supposed to be completed by next summer. Troops have mixed feelings, but they did their job. Most veterans say the time is long past for the U.S. to be out of its longest war. [Link to Article](#)

**Biden says US must maintain a small force in Middle East** with 70% of the military and their families saying we should leave, why do the politicians want to stay? [Link to Article](#)

**Will the next Afghanistan Ambassador actually work to get the U.S. military out of the country?** Trump's Pick for Afghanistan Ambassador Wants to Withdraw US Troops Immediately [Link to Article](#)

**Military forced to hide their heads in the sand on diversity issues.** President Donald Trump issued a sweeping executive order Tuesday banning the military's use of diversity training programs [Link to Article](#)

**It's Official: Pentagon has started planning for full Afghanistan withdrawal** Defense Secretary Mark Esper has not issued orders to reduce military personnel below 4,000 to 5,000 level in Afghanistan, although DOD has started prudent planning to withdraw to zero service members by May 2021. [Link to Article](#)

**Automatic citizenship has been restored for some troops' children born abroad.** Last year, Homeland Security policy update put citizenship in jeopardy for a handful of military children born abroad every year. Lawmakers decried the move and worked up legislation to fix the issue, and as of September, part of the policy has been rescinded. [Link to Article](#)

## **MFSO Fundraiser**

Lately, due to the COVID crisis and shutdown, some of us have been finding a little diversion playing Scattergories online, and so we are hoping you might want to join us sometime soon and play a game or two to benefit MFSO and help continue the important work MFSO members do every day. Playing Scattergories with friends and other MFSO members is simple and fun and you will not need to add any apps to your phone or computer. Please join us for this year's MFSO fundraiser event and meet friends while doing your part to help put an end to these wars.

To help out, just send some dates and times when you are free to play for about an hour to Pat Alviso at [mfsooc@earthlink.net](mailto:mfsooc@earthlink.net) or text 562-833-8035. For your part, after you have played, we will ask you to send a donation of \$10. [PayPal](#) Donations may be sent to [PayPal](#). Join the fun and camaraderie.

## **From Jeff's desk**

Yes, Donald Trump is withdrawing some troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. His recent announcement would bring U.S. troop levels all the way down to where they were five years ago in Iraq. Afghanistan has the lowest US troop levels, but hardly an end to endless war.

**Note:** The opinions reflected above and in future editorials are not a reflection of any official stance approved by the MFSO board, which meets monthly and posts official positions decided by the board on our website. Your responses and opinions are welcome. If you would like to send your own editorial on any MFSO related issue, please send to [mfsooc@earthlink.net](mailto:mfsooc@earthlink.net)

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**4,584 American Troops killed in Iraq; 2,451 American Troops killed in Afghanistan**