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Caught in the Web: War Stories

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CAUGHT IN THE WEB

War Stories

MANY WEBSITES ABOUT THE WARS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ TAKE THE FORM OF news digests or compendiums, gathering articles that are hidden in plain sight within the back pages of newspapers. The stories are there, they're just overlooked. Perhaps the most thorough of these online "wire services" for news about the wars—and about the resistance to them—is *Antiwar.com*, a site run by people motivated by libertarian principles and "non-interventionism," in the spirit of the Old Right.

Read by "libertarians, pacifists, leftists, 'greens,' and independents alike" (according to the site), it is a rich source of news both about the empire and about the antiwar movement. It reveals a sharply different vision of world affairs; for example, readers could find stories about the Senate Appropriations Committee agreeing to hundreds of billions of dollars more for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the pressure on the United States to get involved in a civil war in Yemen. The site also contains links to an archive of resources dealing with abuses at Abu Ghraib (including photographs and a video of prisoner abuse), as well as photographs of American flag-draped coffins that are likely returning from Iraq. The spirit of skepticism toward both political parties on display at *Antiwar.com* is especially helpful. Check it out at <http://www.antiwar.com>.

Another strong website is *Just Foreign Policy.org*, which goes beyond many others in its activist bent. Instead of simply posting articles about Afghanistan, the site contains a link to a petition that readers can sign to oppose the expansion of the war and adopt a timetable for withdrawal. A piece about British politicians who want to withdraw troops from Afghanistan includes a letter that readers can send to support the resolution. The tone is optimistic and positive, giving readers an alternative to the all-too-normal mood of anxiety and malaise. Visit the site at <http://www.justforeignpolicy.org>. For activists, there's a critical website—belonging to the organization *Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW)*—that describes the activities of one of the most important parts of the antiwar movement. The site contains links to videos of *IVAW's* *Winter Soldier* testimonials; panel

discussions at which veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan testified about their experiences on the ground and the realities of the wars; and materials from IVAW about counter-recruitment and—especially moving—the writing and art of veterans. Check out IVAW at <http://www.ivaw.org>.

The National Priorities Project—whose work on the costs of war has been covered in this column before—has an excellent special website featuring tickers that show the staggering, ever-rising costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001. There's a feature that permits the viewer to break down the total costs by state. I'd report the numbers, which are depressingly high, but they'll surely have gone up dramatically by the time this column goes to press, so just visit the site at <http://costofwar.com>.

For reporting on the activities of the United States in Latin America, one excellent website is that of Upside Down World, which provides original reporting on the region. Although it has sections on political developments and economic conflicts throughout Latin America—for example, the movement against the privatization of water in Ecuador—one major focus in recent months has been on the coup in Honduras. Check it out at <http://www.upsidedownworld.org>.

Another good site is that of the School of the Americas (SOA) Watch, an organization that monitors the notorious academy at which many right-wing Latin American military leaders have been trained, and also reports on Latin American politics. Most recently, it has devoted large parts of the site to covering the coup in Honduras and the subsequent violence there. There are also action alerts letting visitors know about events such as protests against the SOA, and there is a section containing links to other sites with news and reportage on Latin America. Visit the site at <http://www.soaw.org>. Both Upside Down World and the School of

the Americas Watch provide links to other websites covering Latin America.

IN THE FIELDS

The push to provide healthier school lunches, that are filled with fresh fruits and vegetables rather than French fries and ketchup, has often been in the news this past year. But the farms of America are themselves filled with children, many of them immigrants whose families have come to the United States and who end up in the fields. Children working in the fields are likely to drop out of school, since they work an average of thirty hours a week, often when school is in session. They face serious health risks—20 percent of all deaths on farms are of young people, and 42 percent of all work-related deaths of minors are on farms. And yet farms are exempted from child labor laws—the legal age for most farm work is twelve, if a parent grants permission or works alongside the child. Children as young as ten are permitted to work in the fields, harvesting crops by hand for eight weeks a year. The Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs provides excellent research on the problem of underage farm labor, yet another area of our economy that is outside the reach of regulation. Check out the organization's reports and analyses at <http://www.afop.org>.

Another website of interest on farmworker issues is the National Center for Farmworker Health, a thirty-four-year-old organization that focuses on providing migrant workers with access to medical care. It includes a free and downloadable newsletter aimed at migrant workers, printed in English and Spanish, with descriptions of common health problems and information about how to get treatment for them. There are also sections of the site devoted to the broader plight of farmworkers and the history of this vulnerable community. Visit the site at <http://www.ncfh.org>.

OUT OF WORK

As the unemployment rate rises (as of this writing, it's at 9.5 percent), it's more important than ever for workers who have been laid off to have access to good information about the resources available to them and about the broader economic and political situation. The National Employment Law Project operates a website called [Unemployedworkers.org](http://www.unemployedworkers.org), which provides up-to-date information about unemployment insurance and the broader economic malaise. All around the country, workers are facing the exhaustion of their unemployment benefits—even after a special extension by Congress—as the economy fails to recover. The site focuses on this quiet crisis, and gives regular updates about the status of

the law governing unemployment insurance. Being unemployed for a long period of time means that skills atrophy, making it harder to get a new job in the future. The site includes relevant news articles about unemployment benefits—and the debate over how and whether to extend them—and a guide to the programs available to help people who have lost their jobs. It also features a forum where workers can tell their stories, as well as action guides to help people participate in the debate over unemployment benefits and the broader economic crisis. There are links to other websites that address the issue, but <http://www.unemployedworkers.org> is the best—informative while, at the same time, offering a space for people to tell their personal stories.