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Life nearing end, Iraq veteran speaks out

Thomas C. Fox | Mar. 21, 2013 NCR Today

Tomas Young has been fighting for the last nine years, fighting his government, fighting the Department of Veterans Affairs and fighting his own deteriorating body. But soon the struggle will be over. The Kansas City man who was paralyzed from the chest down by a sniper?s bullet during the Iraq war is now in hospice care and preparing to die. Sometime in the next few weeks, after he has said all his goodbyes, he intends to refuse nourishment, water and life-extending medication. He expects his 33-year life to be over a few days after that. ?Because I?m tired,? Young explained this week from his bed. ?I?m sick and tired of being sick and tired.?

So writes Matt Campbell in the Kansas City Star [1]today. (Tomas was also interviewed today [2] on Democracy Now.)

Campbell goes on in his front page report:

Young is mostly confined to his bed. His colon was removed in November and he doesn?t eat solid food. A pump that he controls provides anti-pain drugs through a tube into his chest. He gets nauseated and tires easily.

Those closest to Young, including his wife and his mother, support his decision. They want Young?s story to draw attention to America?s attitudes toward death and dying as well as to the continuing price being paid for the Iraq war, which began 10 years ago this week. American troops left in 2011.

In what may be Young?s final political gesture, the activist this week issued an open letter [3] to former president George W. Bush and former vice president Dick Cheney on behalf of ?the human detritus your war has left behind, those who will spend their lives in unending pain and grief.?

The letter accuses Bush and Cheney of ?egregious war crimes, of plunder and finally of murder.?

The letter, in part, reads:

I write this letter on the 10th anniversary of the Iraq War on behalf of my fellow Iraq War veterans. I write this letter on behalf of the 4,488 soldiers and Marines who died in Iraq. I write this letter on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of veterans who have been wounded and on behalf of those whose wounds, physical and psychological, have destroyed their lives. I am one of those gravely wounded. I was paralyzed in an insurgent ambush in 2004 in Sadr City. My life is coming to an end. I am living under hospice care.

I write this letter on behalf of husbands and wives who have lost spouses, on behalf of children who have lost a parent, on behalf of the fathers and mothers who have lost sons and daughters and on behalf of those who care for the many thousands of my fellow veterans who have brain injuries. I write this letter on behalf of those veterans whose trauma and self-revulsion for what they have witnessed, endured and done in Iraq have led to suicide and on behalf of the active-duty soldiers and Marines who commit, on average, a suicide a day. I write this letter on behalf of the some 1 million Iraqi dead and on behalf of the countless Iraqi wounded. I write this

letter on behalf of us all?the human detritus your war has left behind, those who will spend their lives in unending pain and grief.

You may evade justice but in our eyes you are each guilty of egregious war crimes, of plunder and, finally, of murder, including the murder of thousands of young Americans?my fellow veterans?whose future you stole.

I write this letter, my last letter, to you, Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney. I write not because I think you grasp the terrible human and moral consequences of your lies, manipulation and thirst for wealth and power. I write this letter because, before my own death, I want to make it clear that I, and hundreds of thousands of my fellow veterans, along with millions of my fellow citizens, along with hundreds of millions more in Iraq and the Middle East, know fully who you are and what you have done. You may evade justice but in our eyes you are each guilty of egregious war crimes, of plunder and, finally, of murder, including the murder of thousands of young Americans?my fellow veterans?whose future you stole.

Your positions of authority, your millions of dollars of personal wealth, your public relations consultants, your privilege and your power cannot mask the hollowness of your character. You sent us to fight and die in Iraq after you, Mr. Cheney, dodged the draft in Vietnam, and you, Mr. Bush, went AWOL from your National Guard unit. Your cowardice and selfishness were established decades ago. You were not willing to risk yourselves for our nation but you sent hundreds of thousands of young men and women to be sacrificed in a senseless war with no more thought than it takes to put out the garbage.

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[1] http://www.kansascity.com/2013/03/20/4132153/wounded-kansas-city-iraq-veteran.html
[2] http://www.democracynow.org/2013/3/21/exclusive_dying_iraq_war_veteran_tomas
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