

## Mini-Topic

### Chuck Overby 2007 Japan Trip

#### **VFP Constitutional Amendment Proposal**

I bring with me, my Japanese friends -- a small bit of hope that I now share with you -- a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution, modeled after your Article 9.

After several years of effort, I have finally been successful in getting a US veterans group to which I belong, Veterans for Peace (VFP) -- to adopt a resolution at their August 2006 National Convention in Seattle that now enables me to send this proposed US constitutional amendment to all members of the US Congress -- 100 in the US Senate and 435 in the US House of Representatives.

Veterans for Peace is a relatively small US veterans group -- perhaps 5,000 to 6,000 members in the entire USA -- but growing as a result of increasing disillusionment in America with the Iraq disaster with which President Bush and his neo "con-men" (and women) have afflicted us. Some veteran's groups in America have a million or more members, and are what I would characterize as somewhat chauvinistic. VFP is a quite a different kind of veterans organization. At the end of these comments I have included a copy of VFP's "Statement of Purpose." You will note that in the last of these five statements, VFP seeks to do what your Article 9 does for Japan, namely -- "To abolish war as an instrument of national policy."

For many years I have been dreaming of somehow reaching our United States Congress with a proposal for a US Constitutional Amendment, modeled after beautiful Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution.

Over the years I have sent proposals to individual congress persons asking that they at least read my proposal into the Congressional Record, the official journal of Congressional actions. My mailings have mostly been sent to those "Members of Congress" (MOC) who have been critics of US war policies and acts. Sadly, I have never received a response from a single MOC.

Thus I am exuberantly delighted that my VFP "buddies" have at last authorized me to send this proposed US constitutional amendment to all members of Congress. By the time I arrive in Japan for this visit in support of your Article 9 -- 535 letters will be in the US mail headed for Washington. At the end of this note I give you a copy of this package consisting of two pages -- [1] VFP's letter, signed by VFP President Elliott Adams, and [2] the proposed constitutional amendment itself.

You should also know that enclosed in each of these 535 letters is one of my "signature" Sadako-Article 9 origami peace cranes. I am bringing many of these cranes with me to Japan -- a few of which I hope to hang on Sadako's statue in Hiroshima Peace Park.

I am indebted to several of my Athens Ohio Unitarian Fellowship friends, and to two young neighbor boys, Jonathan and Christopher, who helped to get more than 1,000 of these cranes folded for Japan. I am also indebted to additional Unitarian people who along with a few Ohio University students became my "Congressional letter addressing crew." On the evening of May 17<sup>th</sup> we hand addressed all 535 letters to Congress. May 17<sup>th</sup> is Norwegian Independence Day -- that day in 1905 when Norway and Sweden non-violently (I think) became two separate nations. My parents, Matilda and Martin, were Norwegian immigrants to America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Your Article 9 is so commandingly wonderful in its ability over these past 60 years to keep Japan from killing people in wars<sup>1</sup> – that even my friends in VFP were a little concerned that a war-renouncing amendment for America, exactly like Article 9, would be too rich for our first try in the USA. Thus VFP slightly modified my original constitutional amendment proposal. Using aphorist words, “half a loaf” and “full loaf” -- I speak of having received a “half a loaf” rather than a “full loaf” from VFP. I am most grateful to have received at this time, a “half a loaf.” A full loaf of bread is better than a half a loaf of bread. Let me explain.

If you will look at the second line of the third paragraph of the “amendment proposal” you will see the following words – “...except for use in direct defense of its domestic territory against clear and imminent threat or aggression.” These 17 words are ones that I see as basically meaningless – in that governments can easily circumvent them with sufficient propaganda and lies so as to enable the “war-game” to continue unabated with ample citizen support. We saw a prime example of Bushian lies and propaganda working their magic in 2002 and early 2003 on USA citizens so as to gain their support for Bush’s “Shock and Awe” Iraq debacle. My original amendment proposal to VFP did not contain these weasel words. You will also not find these 17 words in Article 9.

It is ironically interesting that the absence of these “17 words” in Japan’s Article 9 – helps to makes it difficult for Japan to creatively “circumvent” something that is not presently there. Thus making it difficult for Japan to join its SDF in wars of US choosing. Emasculation of your Article 9 would take care of this problem for Abe and US promoters of A9 emasculation.

In order to get this significant process (a US Article 9 type constitutional amendment) started I accepted VFP’s editing that added these 17 words. I see the amendment proposal with these words as a “half a loaf” as contrasted to the proposal without these 17 words – a “full loaf.” But – I also see this “VFP Constitutional Amendment Proposal” as a beginning of a very long process. Obviously, I am no so naïve as to think that I will see an Article 9 amendment in our US constitution in my or my children’s lifetime – but I am persuaded, that unless all nations on Planet Earth do this and soon – we are doomed to become as lifeless as Planet Mars.

### **VFP’s STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

We, having dutifully served our nation, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work with others:

- [a] Toward increasing public awareness of the costs of war
- [b] To restrain our government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations
- [c] To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons
- [d] To seek justice for veterans and victims of war
- [e] To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans for Peace pledge to use non-violent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.

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<sup>1</sup> As my friend and colleague, Doug Lummis, has said – since the end of World War – II, “...no person has been killed or injured under the authority of the right of belligerency of the Japanese state.”