# Veterans Ask Barbara Lee to Speak Out for Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange

*Worried constituents in Oakland are wondering, "Does Barbara Lee still speak for me?"*

*"Lee recently voted to approve a $17 billion increase in military spending."*

Veterans for Peace has issued a press release in support of both Wikileaks founder Julian Assange and former US army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, and East Bay Veterans for Peace, Chapter 162, want to talk to Congresswoman Barbara Lee about it. Opponents of US wars have idealized Lee, California's District 13 Congresswoman, for her antiwar record, and might therefore expect her to defend Manning and Assange for exposing US war crimes.

"Barbara Lee speaks for me" became a popular slogan both in and outside California's District 13 after she voted against the Patriot Act and the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) in the "War on Terror," right after 9/11. She has demanded a new AUMF every time the US has started a new war since, and she usually votes against military spending bills, as her constituents demand. However, she recently cast a deciding vote in the House Budget Committee to approve a bill with a $17 billion increase in military spending for next year and another such increase for 2021.

"Military and civilian leaders were lying to the US people."

I spoke to Daniel Borgstrom, a member of East Bay Veterans for Peace, Chapter 162.

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Ann Garrison: Daniel, I understand that you are requesting a meeting with Barbara Lee to talk about the federal indictment and extradition request for Wikileaks founder Julian Assange.

Daniel Borgstrom: Yes, we are.

AG: And what has her East Bay office said in response?

DB: We submitted our request in writing this week. Then we called her Oakland office to ask how long we might expect to wait for a response, but they couldn't give us an estimate.

AG: Could you summarize the Veterans for Peace statement in support of Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange?

DB: It says,

"What Chelsea Manning released through WikiLeaks was evidence of the routine killing of civilians by US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the routine cover-up of these war crimes. The Iraq War Logs and the Afghan War Diaries also revealed that military and civilian leaders were lying to the US people when they presented rosy assessments of the progress of those wars. If more people had paid attention to these revelations, many thousands of lives could have been saved."

We also include one of Chelsea Manning's statements at her court martial:

"I believed if the public, particularly the American public, could see this it could spark a debate on the military and our foreign policy in general as it applied to Iraq and Afghanistan. It might cause society to reconsider the need to engage in counter terrorism while ignoring the human situation of the people we engaged with every day....I felt I accomplished something that would allow me to have a clear conscience."

AG: And what else do East Bay Vets for Peace plan to do about this besides talk to Barbara Lee?

DB: Talking to Barbara Lee is our top priority right now, but we also plan to join emergency protests, initiate our own protests, contact our other elected representatives, talk to our friends, and write op-eds and letters to the editor. Defending Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange is as essential to the antiwar movement as opposing US wars in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and whichever country the US and NATO bomb, invade, or economically strangle next.

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*Daniel Borgström is a member of East Bay Veterans for Peace, Chapter 162, and a member of the KPFA Radio-Berkeley Local Station Board. He spent 4 years in the US Marine Corp, from 1959 to 1963. In 1971, four years before the end of the Vietnam War,he was arrested occupying the South Vietnamese consulate in San Francisco. He and 12 other ex-GIs were acquitted of all charges at the end of a 4-week trial. He can be reached at danielfortyone@gmail.com.*

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