

## Five Years Later, Direct Action to Stop the War Reemerges

Posted by

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**Pej News - Scott Campbell** - After more than a decade of military aggression and genocidal sanctions, on March 19, 2003, the United States launched it's most recent attack against the people of Iraq. The following day, the people of the world took to the streets in protest. More than 20,000 turned out in San Francisco to take part in coordinated, nonviolent direct actions which shut down the Financial District of the city. Additional targets included military recruitment centers, the Bay Bridge and the Federal Building. Actions continued on March 21 and in the end more than 2,200 people were arrested with virtually all charges being dropped.

These tactically successful actions were organized by Direct Action to Stop the War (DASW), a grouping of activists and affinity groups who functioned and made decisions in a decentralized, non-hierarchical, consensus-based manner. First coming together in late 2002, DASW organized in the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq planning actions for "Day X" when the war started. DASW lasted until 2004 and mobilized for direct actions locally against war profiteers such as Bechtel, Chevron and Lockheed Martin, and nationally, such as at the Miami meeting of the Free Trade Area of the Americas in 2003 and the 2004 Republican National Convention in New York City.

[www.actagainstwar.net](http://www.actagainstwar.net) With the fifth anniversary of the war and occupation of Iraq looming, several Bay Area activists began having informal conversations about creating an action that was something more than what much of anti-war activism in the U.S. has been reduced to - a police-facilitated march and rally. These conversations quickly turned into a packed, 50+ person meeting at AK Press in Oakland on January 6, where the group decided to take on the name Direct Action to Stop the War. Many present were heavily involved in the first DASW, and given the orientation of the new formation - being decentralized, non-hierarchical, and consensus-based - it seemed an appropriate continuity to establish. Since then, those involved have been working hard on all the facets that go into organizing a series of actions, as well as looking to lay groundwork for the future.

Early on, it was consensed that DASW would organize an initial series of three direct actions - one on February 5, the day of the presidential primaries in California, the second on March 15 at the Chevron refinery in Richmond in the East Bay, and the third on the fifth anniversary of the war, March 19, with multiple actions at multiple locations in downtown San Francisco.

Refusing to get caught up in the charade that is the electoral process and with the perspective that popular mobilization, not politicians, will end this war, DASW's first action will be held in both San Francisco and Oakland at 5 PM on "Super" Tuesday, February 5. In Oakland, people will meet at Frank Ogawa Plaza and head toward Barack Obama's nearby campaign headquarters. The meeting point in San Francisco is UN Plaza, with Hillary Clinton's offices nearby. The actions are not targeted at Clinton and Obama specifically, they just happen to be the only candidates with offices in the Bay Area. With the media and campaigns placing such importance on this day, these direct actions offer a prime opportunity to assert that the world, the U.S. and the Bay Area demand the unconditional and immediate end to the war and occupation of Iraq and reject the repackaged version of the same old U.S. imperialism currently on offer from the major candidates.

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Saturday, March 15, will feature a rally and direct action in Richmond at Chevron's refinery. Not only has Chevron profited massively off the war on Iraq by refining stolen Iraqi oil and pushing Iraq to privatize its oil fields, but it daily spews cancer and asthma-causing pollution into the adjacent working class communities of color. In a time when the world is in peril due to global warming, Chevron is seeking to expand its Richmond refinery over the objections of the residents but with the blessing of the local government. DASW is teaming up with the West County Toxics Coalition, Greenaction and others to demand an end to Chevron's war profiteering abroad and poisoning of people at home. An 11 AM rally will be held at Judge G. Carroll Park (W. Cutting Blvd & S. Garrard Blvd) and at 1 PM there will be a nonviolent direct action at the Chevron refinery (841 Chevron Way). Periodic shuttles from the local Richmond BART station will carry people to and from the sites.

These two actions will increase momentum for Wednesday, March 19, the fifth anniversary of the beginning of the war on Iraq. On that day, Direct Action to Stop the War will be coordinating a series of direct actions, in which we will blockade the offices of government agencies and war-profiteering corporations in downtown San Francisco. We believe that taking direct action is central to the success of the anti-war movement. These past five years have proven the anti-war movement unequivocally correct in opposing an imperial war of aggression with a cost astronomical both in lives and resources. Five years have left more than 600,000 Iraqis dead, according to a Johns Hopkins study, along with more than 3,900 U.S. soldiers. U.S. Office of Management and Budget data states that \$2.8 trillion has been spent on the military since 2003. Rather than spend this money on the priorities of the people - universal health care, rebuilding the Gulf Coast or fully funding schools in working class communities - this immense amount of resources has been spent destroying the country of Iraq, and paying well-connected U.S. corporations to make a pretense of building it back up again. We believe that it is time for us to take direct action against the organizations responsible for this war, and make it absolutely clear to them that they can continue to expect this kind of popular resistance until the war is brought to an end.

The past five years have also shown that the ruling elite, whether Democrat or Republican, have no interest in ending a war that has made their corporate backers rich. And it has shown that relying on permitted marches alone as the main expression of anti-war opposition will not effect change. Thus DASW is organizing a framework for multiple direct actions at multiple locations in downtown San Francisco on March 19. People are urged to take the day off work or school and hit the streets at 7:30 AM. Talk to your friends, form affinity groups, pick a target and plan an action. Or show up at Market and Sansome to plug into an action or for frequent "war machine tours of shame." There will be actions for all risk levels and DASW will be conducting direct action trainings in the lead up to March 19 as well as legal support afterwards.

These series of actions are just the beginning. DASW is organizing with an eye toward helping build a broad, radical anti-war movement. Those who make up DASW also recognize that the war on Iraq is an extension of the war at home against working people, communities of color, women, the queer and gender non-conforming communities. Conscious of the privilege many of us have, we are working intently to see not only how the framework DASW has set up, can be of use to these communities, but more importantly how DASW can support their struggles, in addition to its own organizing efforts.

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As momentum builds towards Feb. 5, March 15, March 19 and beyond, DASW welcomes the involvement of likeminded groups and individuals, in planning these actions and encourages those outside of the San Francisco Bay Area, to step it up as well.

*For more information on Direct Action to Stop the War visit [www.actagainstwar.net](http://www.actagainstwar.net) , email [takedirectaction \[at\] riseup.net](mailto:takedirectaction@riseup.net) , or call (510) 984-2566.*

*Scott Campbell is one of the many involved in Direct Action to Stop the War. He speaks only for himself and not for, or on behalf of, DASW.*