

Stop Militarizing Police!

by Newsletter Staff

The *Morrison County Record*, the newspaper of record for the county that hosts the Camp Ripley National Guard facility, included within its pages an end-of-the-year 18-page supplement, *The Ripley Reporter Recap*, featuring a masthead with its logo of the gates and tagline, “The Warrior’s Choice.” This supplement provides an idea of how law enforcement personnel train at the military base:

Camp Ripley had over 338,600 DoD and 62,500 civilian man-days of training at the installation. The increase in man hours is attributed to out of state organizations, law enforcement agencies and state partners utilizing the resources of the 53,000-acre state-owned regional training facility to complete their annual training tasks.

And this:

Camp Ripley features numerous ranges and state-of-the-art training facilities to support military, law enforcement, first responder and inter-agency partner training requirements. The installation is structured to have a full complement of automatic small arms and large caliber weapons ranges as well as several specialized training facilities.

This kind of training is why peace/antiwar activists are concerned not only about ever increasing U.S. militarism abroad but also with increasing militarization of law enforcement within the U.S. To counter the benign image of expanding militarism, groups of activists from the Brainerd Area Coalition for Peace, joined by Women Against Military Madness and Veterans for Peace, maintained a presence at the camp entrance last September (2017) on Open House Day at Camp Ripley, the National Guard facility in central Minnesota. The activists held banners and signs and watched as vehicles belonging to local law enforcement from throughout the state entered the gates.

Among the clearly identifiable vehicles were those from the sheriffs’ departments of Anoka, Stearns, and Morrison County, as well as a Morrison County SWAT Team; police departments from Minnetonka, Brooklyn Park, Little Falls, and St. Cloud, and the Minnesota State Highway Patrol. It was not known why so many different local law enforcement agency vehicles were there that particular day, but law enforcement training in militarized tactics such as how to conduct “crowd control” of the civilian population not only takes place at times at this facility, but also others like it throughout the United States.

The people should not be regarded as enemies and do not need the overkill of military tactics applied.

Activists with the Brainerd Area Coalition for Peace and Women Against Military Madness who participated in the vigil contributed to this report.