A statement presented the night before she headed for Crawford, Texas.

Address to Veterans For Peace Convention
Cindy Sheehan
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It's so great to be here.

Last year when you guys had your convention in Boston, my son had only been dead a few months, and we were really honored because the Santa Barbara chapter took my daughter's poem "A Nation Rocked to Sleep" (and they did it again this year), and I remember Michael Cervantes, he brought the booklet over to our house and showed it to us, and I never dreamed in a year I'd be standing here in front of you as one of the speakers at your convention. I never dreamed I'd be doing this at all, but isn't it weird what life hands you.

I never heard about Veterans For Peace until, I can tell you the exact day I heard about VFP, it was May 4th, 2004, and my son had been dead exactly a month, and I was watching CNN, and something came on - it was a report on Arlington West in Santa Barbara, and we lived about 6 hours north of Santa Barbara, and it was the May 4th before Mother's Day, which was May 8th, and VFP was going to put it up on Sunday, every Sunday - so I called my husband and I said, "There's only one place I want to be on Mother's Day this year, I want to be at Santa Barbara. I want to go and see Arlington West."

When we went, the first time we went, there were a little over 700 crosses. Now there are over 1,800 crosses.

And I'm glad to hear everybody else's words, because somebody's gotta stop those lying bastards. Somebody has to stop them.

I got an email yesterday - if you guys heard, I just had a story published called "Where Do I Live?" - it talks about an Iranian-American who got the shaft because a recruiter liked him, and the recruiter falsified his paperwork, so he ended up in prison.

He's been in prison since November without due process.

Another mother whose son was found dead in Iraq, they told her that he died from a drug overdose. Three months later, they got the toxicology report: no drugs. She was devastated. She said, "I know my son, he did not do drugs." She was told that her son's wife and his battle buddies said in a report that yes, her son abused drugs in Iraq. But when she got that report it said categorically that no, he did not abuse drugs. So how did her son die?

And then there's Kevin and Monica Benderman. Kevin did exactly the right thing and got 15 months in prison. Whereas, like Dahr [Jamail] said, the war criminals in Washington DC, they don't even lose a
Then we have this lying bastard, George Bush, taking a 5-week vacation in a time of war. You know what? I'm never going to get to enjoy another vacation, because of him.

My vacation probably ... this is really sad because I have a really cute dress I was going to wear to the banquet tomorrow night, but I'm either gonna be in jail or in a tent in Crawford, waiting until that jerk comes out and tells me why my son died.

Anyway, I got an email, I kinda got off track, a man emailed me yesterday, I get contacted by all kinds of people with their stories, and he said Cindy, I read everything you write, I read it on LewRockwell.com, he said, "I get tears in my eyes, but today I cried real tears, and I screamed, because my dear sweet nineteen ear-old cousin was killed in Iraq."

And he said, "Cindy, why didn't I save him? Why didn't I knock him out, why didn't I take him to Canada?" and I wrote him back and I said, "You know what? We all think that."

I said to my son not to go. I said, you know it's wrong, you know you're going over there. You know your unit might have to kill innocent people, you know you might die. And he says, "My buddies are going, I have to go." He said, "If I don't go, someone's going to have to do my job, and my buddies will be in danger."

So what really gets me is these chicken-hawks who sent our kids to die, without ever serving in a war themselves. They don't know what it's all about.

Thirty of our bravest young men have already died this month, and it's only the 5th of August. And the tragedy of the marines in Ohio is awful.

But do you guys remember back in March when we were having our 2nd year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, which was pre-empted by Terry Schiavo, so that's all that was on the news, not 5,000 of us in Fayetteville. Wolf Blitzer said it was insignificant, but they put Terry Schiavo on, and I wrote something then called "The Amazing Hypocrites" and I asked, why does she deserve life more than my son, and the Iraqi people? And more than the other people that this war has killed.

But do you think George Bush will interrupt his vacation and go visit the families of those 20 marines who have died in Ohio this week? No, because he doesn't care, he doesn't have a heart. That's not enough to stop his little "playing cowboy" game in Crawford for 5 weeks.
So, as you can imagine, the grieving parents who lost - lost, I don't like to use that word - whose child was murdered, it's extremely difficult, you can't even get a small scab on our wound, because every day it rips open. Every day, I don't know why I do it because I already know that war is ugly, I already know that war is hard. But I open up the DOD site to see who became an angel while I was sleeping. And that rips my heart open, because I know there is another mother whose life is going to be ruined that day. So we can't even begin to heal.

So anyway that filth-spewer and warmonger George Bush was speaking after the tragedy of the marines in Ohio, he said a couple things that outraged me. Seriously outraged me. And I know I don't look like I'm outraged, I'm always so calm and everything, that's because if I started hitting something, I wouldn't stop 'til it was dead. So I can't even start, cause I know how dangerous that would be, but George Bush was talking, and he never mentioned the terrible incident of those marines, but he did say that the families of the ones who have been killed can rest assured that their loved ones died for a noble cause.

And he also said, he says this often, and this really drives me crazy, he said that we have to stay in Iraq and complete the mission, to honor the sacrifices of the ones who have fallen.

And I say, why should I want one more mother to go through what I've gone through, because my son is dead. You know what, the only way he can honor my son's sacrifice is to bring the rest of the troops home. To make my son's death count for peace and love, and not war and hatred like he stands for.

I don't want him using my son's death or my family's sacrifice to continue the killing. I don't want him to exploit the honor of my son and others to continue the killing. They sent these honorable people to die, and are so dishonorable themselves.

So, as many of you have heard, and I didn't mean to cause any problems with the convention, but I was writing an email to everybody, and I was so mad, like I said, and I just had this brainstorm, I'm going to Dallas, I don't know where Crawford is. I've been in Texas, Casey was stationed at Fort Hood. I drove from northern California to Fort Hood one time - it took, like, 30 hours. And I thought, I could be driving for days to get from Dallas to Crawford!

But I don't care, I'm goin'. And I'm gonna tell them, "You get
that evil maniac out here, cuz a Gold Star Mother, somebody whose blood is on his hands, has some questions for him."

And I'm gonna say, "OK, listen here, George. #1, you quit, and I demand - every time you get out there and say you're going to continue the killing in Iraq to honor the fallen heroes by continuing the mission - you say, except Casey Sheehan."

"And you say, except for all the members of 'Gold Star Families for Peace' cuz we think not one drop of blood should be spilled in our families' names. You quit doing that. You don't have my permission."

And I'm gonna say, "And you tell me what the noble cause is that my son died for." And if he even starts to say "freedom and democracy," I'm gonna say "bullshit."

You tell me the truth. You tell me that my son died for oil. You tell me that my son died to make your friends rich. You tell me my son died to spread the cancer of Pax Americana, imperialism in the Middle East. You tell me that, you don't tell me my son died for freedom and democracy.

Cuz, we're not freer. You're taking away our freedoms. The Iraqi people aren't freer, they're much worse off than before you meddled in their country.

You get America out of Iraq, you get Israel out of Palestine.

(massive round of applause)

And if you think I won't say "bullshit" to the President, I say move on, cuz I'll say what's on my mind.

So, what's gonna happen? I started this, I thought it was gonna be just me and my sister driving to Crawford, but it kind of mushroomed and people from as far away as Dayton, Ohio are coming, to help us, to stand behind us, because I travel all over the country, I speak, I write, I get feedback on my writing, and just in the little over a year that I've been doing this, I've seen a major turnaround in this country.

People don't just want to hear it - they want to know, what can we do?

What can we do to get him out of power? And I'm gonna say the "I" word. Impeach. And we have to have everybody impeached that lied to the American public, and that's the executive branch, and any people in congress, and we gotta go all the way down and we might have to go all the way down to the person who picks up the dog shit in Washington because ...
We can't let somebody rise to the top who will pardon these war criminals. Because they need to go to prison for what they've done in this world. We can't have a pardon. They need to pay for what they've done.

So anyway, I'm gonna go to Crawford tomorrow, and I'm gonna say I want to talk to him, and they say he's not coming out, I'm gonna set up my tent there until he comes out to talk to me.

And I have the whole month of August off, just like him. It's just the way it worked out, I was supposed to go to England tomorrow to do some Downing Street things, but Conyers cancelled, so hey, I have a lot of free time on my hands, and I'm gonna stay until he comes out and talks to me. And if he quits his vacation and goes to DC, I'll pull my tent up, I'll go to DC and put it on the White House lawn, and I'll be waiting for you guys when you get there September 24th.

Another thing that I'm doing is - my son was killed in 2004, so I'm not paying my taxes for 2004. If I get a letter from the IRS, I'm gonna say, you know what, this war is illegal; this is why this war is illegal. This war is immoral; this is why this war is immoral. You killed my son for this. I don't owe you anything. And if I live to be a million, I won't owe you a penny.

And I want them to come after me, because unlike what you've been doing with the war resistance, I want to put this frickin' war on trial. And I want to say, "You give me my son, and I'll pay your taxes."

I live in Vacaville, come and get me if you can find me there and put me on trial, because like Camilo (Mejia) - Camilo knew what was right. And he went to prison for that. And Henry David Thoreau, he went to prison, he refused to pay his poll tax, and Emerson - I call them HT and RW - and RW came to visit HT and said, what are you doing here, buddy? And HT said, why aren't you here? This is the only place for a moral person in an immoral world.

It's up to us, the people, to break immoral laws and resist. As soon as the leaders of a country lie to you, they have no authority over you. These maniacs have no authority over us. And they might be able to put our bodies in prison, but they can't put our spirits in prison. And I know that Camilo came out a much stronger person, he's one of my heroes, it's great a row of heroes in front of me here.

And everyone gave such great testimony this evening, I have to wonder, why do we keep doing this to each other? Why do we let this continue time and time again, why do we let it happen? And it's because our country is so good at demonizing people. I still have relatives from WWII that still call Japanese people "Japs." And we demonize the Iraqi people, where most of this country doesn't even think we're killing innocent people.

Because, "Oh Cindy, don't you remember what happened on September
11th?"
> "Yeah, but, were any of those people in Iraq? And the people who
> flew those planes into the Trade Center, where they from Iraq?"
> When I was growing up, it was "Communists." Now it's
"Terrorists."
> So you always have to have somebody to fight and be afraid of, so the
> war machine can build more bombs, guns, and bullets and everything.
> But I do see hope. I see hope in this country. 58% of the
American
> public are with us. We're preaching to the choir, but the choir's not
> singing. If all of the 58% started singing, this war would end.
> I got an email the other day and it said, "Cindy, if you didn't
> use so much profanity ... there's people 'on the fence' that get
> offended."
> And you know what I said? "You know what? You know what, god damn
> it? How, in the world is anybody still sitting on that fence'?"
> "If you fall on the side that is pro-George and pro-war, you get
> your ass over to Iraq, and take the place of somebody who wants to
> come home. And if you fall on the side that is against this war and
> against George Bush, stand up and speak out."
> But whatever side you fall on, quit being on the fence.
> The opposite of good is not evil, it's apathy. And we have to get
> this country off their butts, and we have to get the choir singing.
> We need to say, bring our troops home now.
> We can't depend on the people in charge bringing our troops home.
> Because you don't plan on bringing the troops home when you drop
> so much of the reconstruction money into building permanent bases.
> I was hoping to come to the banquet tomorrow night, but unless
> George comes out and talks to me, I'll be camping at Crawford.
> Thank you.