

*Iraq war 3rd anniversary spurs protests nationwide  
Two demonstrators arrested in Lakewood*

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Thousands of war protesters around the world marked the third anniversary of the start of the U.S.-led war in Iraq Sunday with chants of "Stop the War" and calls for the withdrawal of troops.

The majority of protests were peaceful, including one in Chicago where, in one of the largest rallies nationwide, some 7,000 protesters expressed discontent over the war, according to the Associated Press.

In Greater Cleveland, about 200 people gathered for a Northeast Ohio Anti-war Coalition program at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Cleveland's Tremont neighborhood.

And in Lakewood, police arrested two protesters for failure to leave the lobby of the Armed Forces Recruit Center at 15608 Detroit Avenue, where a few dozen demonstrators had gathered.

The arrests came after Clevelanders Joe Mueller and Chris Knestrick, both 25, walked into the unlocked recruitment center. There, they awaited the return of staff members, who had left a note saying they would be back shortly.

As other protesters outside took turns reading the names of Iraqi and U.S. war casualties, Mueller and Knestrick sat awaiting the recruiters.

Instead, three Lakewood police officers arrived and arrested the men on trespassing charges. The men argued that the door was unlocked and that the recruiters were en route to the center.

"There was no reasoning with them," Lakewood police Sgt. Steve Spaetzel said after the men were put into a police car.

Police collected their two stuffed plastic bags and delivered them to the protesters, but the officers swiftly recovered the bags after learning that they contained hundreds of military enlistment pamphlets taken from the recruitment center.

Knestrick and Mueller were released after they each posted a \$124 cash bond. They are to appear Tuesday in Lakewood Municipal Court.

The protest continued. Anti-war activists took turns standing barefoot on a plastic crate, garbed from head to toe in black - a reminder of the notorious photos of mistreated Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison.

Paula Miller, speaking for the protesters, said they were draped in black to represent the "whole cost of war and what we are willing to do to other people."

Other protesters gathered signatures on a big postcard for Ohio Sens. Mike DeWine and George Voinovich, asking them to bring the American troops home.

Huge anti-war banners rippled in the stiff wind during the two-hour demonstration. Periodically, passing motorists honked their horns, apparently in support of the peace activists.

In New Orleans, war veterans and survivors of Hurricane Katrina marched past gutted houses and piles of rotting wood and debris, saying the slow pace of rebuilding the hurricane-ravaged city shows the price the country is paying for continuing to wage war in Iraq, the Associated Press reported.

"A lot of people don't have a grasp of what this war is costing us," said Vern Hall, a Vietnam War veteran from Minnesota. "Here's the actual cost of this. . . . Things are not getting done."

In Portland, Ore., police estimated that 10,000 people turned out for a march through downtown.

"It is time now for you to take back your country," said Steven DeFord at a pre-march rally. His son, Oregon National Guard Sgt. David Johnson, 37, was killed in Iraq by a roadside bomb in September 2004.

Rallies in Japan drew about 800 people chanting "No war! Stop the war!" and banging drums as they marched peacefully through downtown Tokyo toward the U.S. Embassy.

Protesters also gathered outside the U.S. Embassy in Malaysia, and at least 1,000 people turned out in Seoul, South Korea, which has the third-largest contingent of foreign troops in Iraq after the United States and Britain.

The war began on March 19, 2003, U.S. time, and early on the morning of March 20 in Baghdad.

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