

## **From The San Francisco Chronicle**

### **Washington, D.C.: Big throng marches past White House**

Edward Epstein, Chronicle Washington Bureau

**Sunday, September 25, 2005**

**Washington** -- Tens of thousands of anti-Iraq war protesters trudged Saturday past the White House in a parade that organizers hope will pressure President Bush and Congress to reverse course and withdraw all U.S. forces from Iraq.

Bush, the object of the protest's animosity, was out of town, in Colorado and Texas dealing with Hurricane Rita. But that didn't distract from the force of the vast march -- the first in a decade that federal officials have allowed to go past the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue -- and the biggest anti-Iraq war march yet in the capital.

With polls showing that a majority of Americans favor a partial or total withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, protesters said national sentiment is moving their way, especially now that Hurricanes Katrina and Rita could cost the federal government hundreds of billions of dollars. But whether the enormous march will influence the Bush administration or Congress, where the Republican majority remains almost entirely united behind the war in public, is an open question.

Under gloomy skies and occasional drizzle, the protest snaked from the ellipse south of the White House, on packed streets past the presidential mansion and then in a long loop back to the Washington Monument where 11 hours of rock, rap and folk music and speeches lasted until early this morning. Organizers said they expected a crowd of at least 100,000 people, and Washington Police Chief Charles Ramsey told the Associated Press it appeared they had met their expectations. Similar rallies were held in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and other cities in the United States and abroad.

Today in Washington the focus will switch to those who support Bush's Iraq policy. Organizers expect 10,000 people for the main event of "Support the Troops and Their Mission Weekend." A few hundred counterprotesters stood outside FBI headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue as the anti-war march passed by Saturday, but no incidents were reported.

The star of Saturday's march and rally was Vacaville's Cindy Sheehan, the mother of Army Spc. Casey Sheehan, who was killed in Iraq in April 2004. Her decision to stubbornly station herself outside Bush's Texas ranch last month to demand a face-to-face meeting with the president provided a human face for the anti-war movement.

"We need a people's movement," Sheehan told the crowd before the march. "My friends in the media aren't doing their job. Most of our friends in Congress aren't doing their job. President Bush certainly isn't doing his job. So we have to do our job as Americans."

Sheehan arrived in Washington on Wednesday after spearheading a bus tour of families of Iraq casualties opposed to the war, which has killed more than 1,900 American military personnel and left almost 15,000 wounded.

Even though dozens of Democrats in Congress are demanding at least a timetable for withdrawal, only a handful was on hand for the protest. Scheduled speakers included House members Lynn Woolsey of Petaluma and Barbara Lee of Oakland while Rep. Pete Stark of Fremont planned to march with the protesters.

Most lawmakers stayed away, perhaps because of the political positions of the event's organizers, International ANSWER and United for Peace and Justice. In addition to calling for withdrawal from Iraq, the groups are also highly critical of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and embrace a laundry list of other causes.

But Iraq was the main issue for most people in the crowd.

Among them was John Majeski of San Francisco, who traveled cross-country to sell the protest buttons he makes .

"I want a storm of public opinion to show that this is an unnecessary war," said Majeski, whose best-selling \$1 and \$2 buttons include one showing Sheehan with the words "Thank You Cindy."

Majeski spoke near Camp Casey III, named for Sheehan's son. It featured a field of crosses and a few Stars of David, one for each American killed in Iraq. Nearby was an installation of military-style boots interspersed with American flags.

Another Californian who attended the protest was Dr. Bill Durston, a Sacramento emergency room doctor who is active in Physicians for Social Responsibility. "This administration's policies are just outrageous. ... They increase the risk of further terrorist attacks and waste the resources we need for our country," Durston said. He was joined by his wife and daughter, he said, while his son marched in San Francisco.

Megan Bronson, a Katrina evacuee from New Orleans, said she wouldn't let her personal troubles stop her from protesting the war. "I'm very much blessed," said Bronson, whose car was hit by the storm but whose apartment didn't suffer major damage.

"I pray for the others who are still there, but I've been planning to come here for a few months. ... I don't want to tell my children in 20 years that I just sat at home and watched this on TV and did nothing," she added.

The protesters said they are showing concern for U.S. forces in Iraq, who, they believe, have been placed in an unwinnable war. But Bush supporters say they are misguided.

"Duty, honor, country is everything. That's how we stay free," said M.J. Kesterson of Independence, Ore. Her son, Army Warrant Officer Erik Kesterson, was killed in Mosul, Iraq, in November 2003. She and her husband Clay flew to Washington for today's rally in support of the administration's policy. At home, they are raising money for an Iraq war memorial on the Oregon state Capitol grounds.

"It's time to speak up and say something on behalf of the troops. We believe it's a mistake to stop this war, which is being waged to obtain freedom for Iraq. It's important to stay the course," Kesterson said.

Bush, in a speech Thursday, referred to the protesters.

"Some Americans want us to withdraw our troops so that we can escape the violence. I recognize their good intentions, but their position is wrong," Bush said. "Withdrawing our troops would make the world more dangerous, and make America less safe. To leave Iraq now would be to repeat the costly mistakes of the past that led to the attacks of September the 11th, 2001."

The impact of the anti-war movement depends on the course of public opinion, said Jack Pitney, political science professor at Claremont McKenna College and a former research director for the Republican National Committee. That will be especially true in 2006, a congressional election year.

"Members of Congress keep an eye on public opinion, which is less favorable to the war," he said.

What will it take for Republicans in Congress to call openly for a change in Iraq policy?

"A perception that their political survival is at stake," Pitney said. "Members of Congress put their political survival ahead of (party) loyalty."

## From the New York Times

### Antiwar Rallies in Washington and Other Cities

By **MICHAEL JANOFSKY**

Published: September 25, 2005

WASHINGTON, Sept. 24 - Vast numbers of protesters from around the country poured onto the lawns behind the White House on Saturday to demonstrate their opposition to the war in [Iraq](#), pointedly directing their anger at President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney.

A sea of anti-administration signs and banners flashed back at a long succession of speakers, who sharply rebuked the administration for continuing a war that has cost the lives of nearly 2,000 Americans and many more Iraqis. Many of the speakers also charged Mr. Bush with squandering resources that could have been used to aid people affected by the two hurricanes that slammed into the Gulf Coast.

As protesters moved from the rally to a march around the White House, they packed city streets, and in some areas, came face to face with groups of pro-administration demonstrators, who held up signs expressing support for the war.

Organizers of the rally and march had a permit for 100,000 people, but the National Park Service no longer provides official estimates for large gatherings in Washington.

Rallies held on Saturday in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and other cities drew considerably smaller crowds, but unlike the more varied themes of recent protests against administration policies, antiwar sentiment on Saturday was consistent throughout. In Washington, it was evident from the start, as an organizer screamed over the microphone, "Let Bush and Cheney and the White House hear our message: Bring the troops home now."

Mr. Bush was in [Colorado](#) and [Texas](#) monitoring hurricane developments, and Mr. Cheney was undergoing surgery at George Washington University hospital.

"It's significant that Bush is out of town," said William Dobbs, an organizer of the march. "It shows that he's turned his back on the peace movement, which represents a majority of the American public right now."

Dana Perino, a spokeswoman for the administration, said: "The White House is certainly aware of the protest. The president believes that one of the most treasured rights of Americans is to peacefully express yourself, and there are differences of opinion about the way forward. He understands that."

Speakers at the rally included a newcomer to the modern antiwar movement, Cindy Sheehan, the [California](#) mother whose son was killed last year fighting in Iraq. Ms. Sheehan has become the face of the movement because of her efforts over the summer, camping near Mr. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Tex. Her appearance and brief remarks drew a thunderous response.

"I really haven't had a chance to digest all this," she said in an interview after her speech, referring to the attention she has received. "I hope I'm a catalyst for change, but I don't want to be the focus of change."

But the crowd also heard from old lions of the antiwar movement, like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the actress Jessica Lange, Ralph Nader and former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who has endorsed impeaching Mr. Bush.

Mr. Jackson reminded the crowd that the war proceeded without proof that Iraq had unconventional weapons or a connection to Al Qaeda, saying, "We deserve another way and better leadership."

The protests here and elsewhere were largely sponsored by two groups, the Answer Coalition, which embodies a wide range of progressive political objectives, and United for Peace and Justice, which has a more narrow, antiwar focus.

For months in planning, the theme was Iraq. But as Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, followed by Hurricane Rita, the rally quickly embraced domestic themes as well. One sign held high said, "Make levees, not war."

"To me, there is an ideological connection," said Sheri Leafgren, a professor of education at Kent State University in Ohio who held a sign that said, "From New Orleans to Iraq: Stop the war on the poor." "If you care about people losing lives and being devastated by grief, it's all human suffering."

In San Francisco, as protesters marched toward downtown, David Miles, 49, pumped up the volume on his iPod, attached to a 12-volt battery and large speakers on wheels. "War," the Vietnam-era protest song by Edwin Starr, suddenly filled the air.

The lyrics, "War, what is it good for?" blared from the speakers, and protesters joined in, shouting back: "Absolutely nothing."

*Reporting for this article was contributed by Holli Chmela and Lakiesha Carr in Washington, Carolyn Marshall in San Francisco and Chris Dixon in Los Angeles.*

Organisers said they were expecting 100,000 to turn out for the 11-hour rally, march and concert near the White House and Washington Monument.

Opinion polls show a majority in the US believe the war in Iraq is going badly and US troops should be brought home.

A few hundred supporters of President Bush's policy in Iraq also gathered in Washington for a counter protest.

Anti-war rallies were also being held in other cities across the US as well as in London, Paris and Rome but in many cases the numbers were down on protests in previous years.

Demonstrators travelled from far and wide for what organisers said was the largest rally in Washington since the start of the war.

They carried banners reading "Bring the Troops Home Now" and "Bush Lied, Thousands Died."

"We have to get involved," said Erika McCroskey, 27, who travelled from Des Moines in Iowa with her mother and sister, to take part in her first demonstration.

Another demonstrator, 60-year-old Paul Rutherford, said he was a Republican who still supported President Bush, except over the war.

"President Bush needs to admit he made a mistake in the war and bring the troops home, and let's move on," he was quoted by the Associated Press as saying.

### **Bush appeal**

Among those joining the protest was Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a fallen soldier in Iraq, whose protest outside President Bush's Texas ranch during the summer mobilised many anti-war supporters.

"We need a people's movement to end this war," she told the crowd. "We'll be the checks and balances on this out-of-control criminal government."

President Bush appealed to Americans in a radio address last month to be patient.

"Our efforts in Iraq and the broader Middle East will require more time, more sacrifice and continued resolve," he said.

Meanwhile, anti-war rallies were also being held in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and in major cities across Europe.

British police said around 10,000 people took to the streets in London, although organisers put the figure at nearer 100,000.

A small rally was held in Paris, and in Rome dozens of demonstrators held up banners and peace flags outside the US Embassy.

### **Hundreds Rally in D.C. for U.S. Troops**

By *ELISABETH GOODRIDGE*

The Associated Press

Sunday, September 25, 2005; 5:20 PM

WASHINGTON -- Support for U.S. troops fighting abroad mixed with anger toward anti-war demonstrators at home as hundreds of people, far fewer than organizers had expected, rallied Sunday on the National Mall just a day after tens of thousands protested against the war in Iraq.

"No matter what your ideals are, our sons and daughters are fighting for our freedom," said Marilyn Faatz, who drove from New Jersey to attend the rally. "We are making a mockery out of this. And we need to stand united, but we are not."

About 400 people gathered near a stage on an eastern segment of the mall, a large patchwork American flag serving as a backdrop. Amid banners and signs proclaiming support for U.S. troops, several speakers hailed the effort to bring democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan and denounced those who protest it.

Many demonstrators focused their ire at Cindy Sheehan, the California woman whose protest near President Bush's Texas home last summer galvanized the anti-war movement. Sheehan was among the speakers at Saturday's rally near the Washington Monument on the western part of the mall, an event that attracted an estimated 100,000 people.

"The group who spoke here the other day did not represent the American ideals of freedom, liberty and spreading that around the world," Sen. Jeff Sessions, an Alabama Republican, told the crowd. "I frankly don't know what they represent, other than to blame America first."

One sign on the mall read "Cindy Sheehan doesn't speak for me" and another "Arrest the traitors"; it listed Sheehan's name first among several people who have spoken against the war.

Melody Vigna, 44, of Linden, Calif., said she wants nothing to do with Sheehan and others at nearby Camp Casey, an anti-war site set up to honor her son, Casey, who was killed in Iraq.

"Our troops are over there fighting for our rights, and if she was in one of those countries she would not be able to do that," Vigna said.

The husband of Sherri Francescon, 24, of Camp Lejeune, N.C., serves in the Marine Corps in Iraq. One of the many military wives who spoke during the rally, Francescon said that the anti-war demonstration had left her frustrated.

"I know how much my husband does and how hard he works, and I feel like they don't even recognize that and give him the respect he deserves," Francescon said. "I want him to know and I want his unit to know that America is behind them, Cindy doesn't speak for us, and that we believe in what they are doing."

Organizers of Sunday's demonstration acknowledged that their rally would be much smaller than the anti-war protest but had hoped that as many as 20,000 people would turn out.

On Saturday, demonstrators opposed to the war in Iraq surged past the White House in the largest anti-war protest in the nation's capital since the U.S. invasion. The rally stretched through the night, a marathon of music, speechmaking and dissent on the mall.

National polls have found steadily declining support for the war in Iraq, with a majority of Americans now believing the war was a mistake.

In an AP-Ipsos poll this month, only 37 percent approved or leaned toward approval of how Bush has handled the situation in Iraq; strong disapproval outweighed strong approval by 2-1, 46 percent to 22 percent.

On the Net:

ANSWER Coalition: <http://www.answercoalition.org>

Gold Star Families for Peace: <http://www.gsf.org>

Families United for our Troops: <http://www.unitedforourtroops.com>

### **From The Washington Post**

*By Miranda S. Spivack and Petula Dvorak*

Washington Post Staff Writers

Saturday, September 24, 2005; 6:18 PM

Thousands of protesters against the war in Iraq rallied today in Washington and other U.S. and European cities to demand the return of U.S. troops in what organizers hope will be the largest gathering since the war began more than two years ago.

Protest organizers estimated a crowd of about 200,000 rallied at the Ellipse, then marched around the White House and along Pennsylvania Avenue. Police downgraded the count to about 150,000. The crowd thinned when a misty drizzle began before the afternoon concert on the Washington Monument grounds.

D.C. police and U.S. Park Police said there were no significant problems during the demonstrations and reported three arrests -- one for destruction of property, one for attempted theft, and one for disorderly conduct. Police said all three incidents stemmed from the tearing-down of a construction fence and the destruction of a newspaper box in the 1000 block of 11th Street NW. Police said that some windows were broken at 13th Street, just south of L Street.

The antiwar activities occurred on the same weekend as the fall meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which drew several hundred activists who criticized the organization's policies as detrimental to the world's poor.

Protesters came from around the country to the nation's capital, arriving on buses, planes and in cars, carrying signs that read "Bush Lied, Thousands Died," and "End the Occupation," among other messages.

"We believe we are at a tipping point whereby the anti-war sentiment has now become the majority sentiment," said Brian Becker, national coordinator for ANSWER, one of the main antiwar groups coordinating today's events.

Cindy Sheehan, the California mother who drew thousands of demonstrators to her 26-day vigil outside Bush's Texas ranch last month, won a roar of approval when she took the stage before the march. Her 24-year-old son, Casey, was killed in Iraq last year.

"Shame on you," Sheehan admonished, directing that portion of her remarks to members of Congress who backed Bush on the war. "How many more of other people's children are you willing to sacrifice?"

She led the crowd in chanting, "Not one more."

President Bush was not around to hear the protesters, assembled just blocks from the White House, although his wife, Laura, was at home hosting authors for a long-planned literary festival on the Mall. Bush had flown out of town on Friday to assess Hurricane Rita recovery efforts. Vice President Cheney was undergoing surgery at George Washington University Hospital to repair aneurysms on the back of his knees.

The protest march, which launched from the Ellipse south of the White House, began shortly after 1 p.m. Protesters planned to cross in front of the White House, a few blocks north, and then traverse the city, finally ending where they began at the Ellipse.

Nearby, at the Washington Monument, an 11-hour concert, featuring folk singer Joan Baez, began in late afternoon.

In a hitch for some coming to the protest, 13 Amtrak trains running between New York and Washington were delayed for up to three hours Saturday morning for repair of overhead electrical lines. Protest organizers said that held up thousands coming to the rally.

Organizers delayed the start of the march, originally planned to begin at 12:30 p.m., to wait for protesters arriving on the Amtrak trains. There were other reports of Metro delays in northern Virginia on the Blue and Yellow lines.

Elsewhere, rallies were planned in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Florence, London, Rome, Paris and Madrid.

A crowd in London, estimated by police at 10,000, marched in support of withdrawing British troops from Iraq. Violent clashes between insurgents and British troops in the southern Iraq city of Basra in recent days highlighted the need to get out, protesters said.

"Enough is enough," said Lindsey German, an official of the Stop the War Coalition, which organized the London march. "It is now time, once again, for the British people to step forward into the streets and insist that this time we will not be ignored."

Counter demonstrations also were planned.

Gary Qualls, 48, of Temple, Tex., whose Marine reservist son, Louis, died last year in the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, spoke at a rally near the U.S. Navy Memorial in support of continued U.S. involvement.

"If you bring them home now, who's going to be responsible for all the atrocities that are fixing to happen over there?" he asked. "Cindy Sheehan?"

Also at the rally, put on by Protest Warrior and other groups supporting Bush's policy, demonstrators denounced Sheehan as a mother exploiting her son's death.

"If I were to die in Iraq, I wouldn't want my parents to be like Cindy Sheehan," said Army National Guard Spc. Julie McManus, 20, of Drexel Hill, Pa., who was among more than 100 people holding signs. "I'd be ashamed of them."

McManus said she drove to Washington with her boyfriend; she wore a white tank top with the words "American Soldier" in black marker.

Protesters were not the only visitors to the city this weekend. As fate would have it, organizers of the National Book Festival found themselves sharing the Mall with antiwar protesters. They stationed

volunteers in green t-shirts at the top of the escalators at the Smithsonian metro station so that the thousands arriving would know which event was which. Book lovers were told to go to the nearby white tent; antiwar demonstrators were told to head to the Washington Monument grounds.

That posed a problem for Martin Freed and his wife, Ruta Vaskys, from Fairbanks, Alaska, who are book lovers and antiwar protesters. In route to the rally, they stopped at the "Pavilion of States" tent to check out authors at the Alaska table.

Freed carried a protest sign. On one side it read, "Alaskans Against War." On the other side, it read "The War is 100 percent Bush-[expletive]."

He was immediately surrounded by the book lovers group, including a security guard.

"I object to your sign," said one. "You can't have a sign here," said another. "Why don't you go outside?"

A woman announced, "You're crashing the wrong party."

Vaskys resisted leaving. "The war is a lot more offensive than the sign," she said. But the couple eventually left, with Freed calling over his shoulder: "This is the state the country has come to -- you can't even have free speech at a book festival. In the early afternoon, a convoy of about 200 motorcyclists made a full lap around the outer loop of the Beltway to show support for troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The ride, first organized in April by John "Big John" Oppido of Marbury, Md., was not politically motivated or planned to coincide with the protest. The event raised more than \$17,000 dollars in donations, registration fees, and t-shirt sales to purchase care packages filled with international phone cards, disposable cameras and other supplies through Operation USO Care Package. Some 12 motorcycle clubs took part, some traveling from as far as Florida and Texas, Oppido said.

Earlier, at Freedom Plaza, near 13th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue in downtown Washington, dozens of charter buses were disgorging protests, among them Sister Maureen Metty, 66.

Metty stepped off a bus from Kalamazoo, Mich., at 8 a.m., arriving for what she said was her first-ever political rally. She carried a sitting stool, a backpack loaded with snacks, a toothbrush and toothpaste and a message from her fellow nuns -- a sign that said "Sisters of St. Joseph's for Peace."

"There were 250 sisters who wanted to be here today, but I'm the one they chose to send," she said. "I believe I'm supposed to be here today. This war is not right."

A bus from Lancaster, Pa., brought an eclectic crowd -- gray-haired men in shorts and black socks, grannies with needle-point purses and a young man with facial piercings and aqua hair. Ginny Dillio, who is in her late 50s, wore a red-white-and-blue shirt that said "Patriots for Peace."

"I was marching in '68, and I'm back today," she said.

Dillio was with her husband, George, who said he was new to the protest scene. "She corrupted me," he said.

*Washington Post Staff Writers Karlyn Barker, Jo Becker, David Nakamura and Michael Tunison and the Associated Press contributed to this report.*