

My name is Phil Gilmore, and I am a navy veteran. I served from 1975 to 1979 on the USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier. These were the years directly after the Vietnam War. The United States fought no wars from 1975 to 1979. Since I served in peace time, I think my perspective is different from most military veterans.

During the Vietnam war and even after the war, some Americans were confronting soldiers who participated in the My Lai massacre, or just any veteran who fought in the war. Some blamed vets for following their military orders. Others were upset that America had not gone far enough to win this war. In their eyes, vets had let the country down. In 1975, most everyone was just relieved that it was over, no matter what the outcome. Being a proud veteran in this era was not a given. Vets were sometimes subjected to ridicule, rotten eggs, or worse, and most just kept their heads down and suffered. Many got little or no support and took their own lives. The VA service cuts now taking place are a sure-fire way to isolate vulnerable vets once again.

A large part of "keeping your head down" for me meant figuring out what was required to keep a clear conscience. The question of the day, "What is a legal order, and what is an illegal order?" I naively thought I had sorted this out, but it is not really an easy answer. Military personnel are required to follow orders, even if the orders conflict with their personal and religious beliefs. Questioning an order nearly always results in hazing, court martial, brig time, and, or dishonorable discharge. Even a successful defense of refusing an illegal order virtually guarantees the end of any possible military career. The uniform code of military justice (UCMJ) provides the framework to promote discipline within the ranks. Offering an avenue that allows questioning your superior's orders is not really a top UCMJ priority, but more of an afterthought.

Being in the military means you are putting your very life in the hands of your superiors. Based on Trump's record, anything short of blind obedience to the commander in chief will be dealt with in the most severe manner.

Trump is mobilizing marines and the national guard, spending millions of our tax dollars on a birthday parade while cutting many government services that benefit both vets and all Americans. He is militarizing his war on immigrants and the American rule of law. The military is designed to ensure orders are followed without question. Today, with Trump at the helm, I especially worry for the men and women in the ranks. The protection of the UCMJ has always been thin but seems nonexistent now with Trump making up the rules as he goes. Please respect and support the members of our military. They are literally in harm's way, with virtually no recourse but to follow their orders into the line of fire if necessary. I am proud of my service, and especially respect today's military personnel more than ever.

## BIO

Phil Gilmore grew up in western Montana, served in the US Navy, and graduated from MSU Bozeman with a degree in Construction Engineering Technology. He and his wife, Janelle Gray along with his brother in law Wayne Gray owned and operated Landon's Greenhouse for over 25 years.