

## Veterans and the Dakota Access Pipeline

Last Saturday at the MSUM Dragons basketball, I talked with two North Dakota Vietnam Veterans of America members. Both are members of VVA chapter 941 located in Fargo with members in MN and ND. Bill, who lived in Fargo, moved back to Belcourt, ND a couple years ago, is a Native American and strongly supports the protest movement. Bill told me that about 1,600 Veterans from western ND are part of the protest movement and asks other Veterans to support the cause. Bill encouraged the Veterans Standing for Standing Rock who vowed to form a human shield to protect protesters. Bill claimed that the protests are peaceful. I respect Bill for standing up for what he believes is right and representing his heritage. If you want to make a difference, become involved.

Russ, another VVA member and chairman of the North Dakota Veterans Coordinating Council, a council representing all of the state's leading veterans groups read a statement calling on the state's Veterans to stay away from the protest. Russ claimed that the protests are not peaceful and cited examples of desecrating the US flag, spray painting protests on the WWII monument in D.C., setting fires, and destroying property. Russ also stated that the Veterans Standing for Standing Rock identified the Morton County Sheriff's Office and state police as their enemy. I respect Russ for standing up for what he believes is right and for representing his organization. If you want to make a difference, become involved.

I've attempted to determine which is the accurate story, but as usual the truth is difficult to determine and appears to be somewhere between the two opinions. I've read stories on the protest from many sources ranging from Snopes.com to the New Times plus various partisan 'news' sources. Most recently, the Army Corps of Engineers has denied a permit for the pipeline construction in the disputed area. I expect that to be reversed after 20 January.

The issue with the pipeline is that it crosses a river and may pollute drinking water. Both Moorhead and Fargo get their drinking water from the Red River. My question is, are there any pipelines crossing the Red River between Moorhead and Fargo?

Attempting to find reliable information on this issue was difficult. To reinforce this issue I was listening to Minnesota Public Radio which aired a report from the BBC about a small city of Veles in Macedonia where many fake news websites are producing sensationalist stories that are false. College age students apparently are hired to create fake news stories and promote them on Twitter, Facebook and other social media. One student interviewed said "The Americans loved our stories and we make money from them. Who cares if they are true or false?" As I used to tell people when I was IT director at MSUM, just because it is on the web doesn't mean it is true. That statement is more true now than it ever was. Reader, beware!