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4,000 march in Hollywood to protest war

From Times Staff Writers
2:37 PM PDT, March 17, 2007



Several thousand anti-war demonstrators began a march through Hollywood early Saturday afternoon, singing and hoisting anti-war signs to protest U.S. involvement in Iraq.

College students joined with gray-haired activists to chant "Stop the War" as the march started shortly before 1 p.m. at Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street. Police estimated that about 4,000 marchers took part.

Veterans

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The march, marking the fourth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, was organized by the Act Now to Stop War and End Racism Coalition. It coincided with a similar march at the Pentagon and more than 200 other cities nationwide.

"People always see the anniversary of the war as something that causes emotions and anger," said Ian Thompson, the coalition's L.A. organization coordinator.

Speaking out

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Robin Dominguez, 50, of Los Angeles, a volunteer with Veterans for Peace, kept watch over 40 imitation coffins draped with United States flags that marchers planned to carry along the parade route. She strongly opposes the war, she said.

"My heart hurts. It's crying. Every day, I feel like it's never going to end," she said. But along with some other marchers, she said she feels more hopeful than she did a year ago.

Actor and activist

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Christopher Armen, 51, a Los Angeles native, said he was heartened by the protest. He had two imitation caskets that he and several friends intended to carry on the 1.2-mile route to represent those killed in the war. "It's the visual that hits people in their guts," Armen said.

The protest — displaying a mix of straw hats, flags, dogs, signs and strollers — gave him hope, he said. "We were in the minority and now we are in the majority," he said.

PHOTO GALLERY
Anti-war protest in D.C.



Emery Martin, 22, a graduate student at New York University on his spring break, wore shorts, a T-shirt and a large black hood, an imitation of the those worn by Iraqi prisoners.

Martin, whose uncle served with the U.S. Army in Panama and the two Iraq wars, bucked family tradition to take a stand against the conflict that he sees as morally wrong.

"A lot of young people are apathetic, which perpetuates what's going on and indirectly helps the government further their agenda," Martin said as he walked beneath the marquee of the Pantages Theater with a group of students from UCLA and the California Institute of the Arts. "When you are apathetic, you actually become part of the problem."

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Some onlookers disagreed with the marchers' sentiments.

Dan Conkey, 58, a tourist from Columbus, Ohio, who calls himself a big supporter of President Bush, said he believes U.S. troops should leave Iraq "when the job is done."

The protesters have no solution to ending the war, he said. "How do they leave those people, and leave them to the insurgents?"

Even so, he found the march entertaining. "It's pretty typical Hollywood and Vine."

Thompson, the coalition's L.A. coordinator, said he expected many participants to be people who hadn't marched before, a reflection of the increase in public sentiment against the war.

Despite the Republicans' loss of control of Congress in November, Thompson said, Democratic leaders have not responded to the antiwar sentiment.

"They are not pulling the troops out immediately. They're not de-funding the war, and I think people are fed up with that," he said.

"It's time for an independent voice that isn't tailing either of these two parties in Congress but is speaking for the majority of people in this country."

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