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War Protesters Target Clinton Demonstrators Against Iraq Conflict and U.S. Prisoner Abuse Interrupt Hillary's Appearance at StonyBrookUniversity

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Anti-war protesters yesterday disrupted a panel discussion led by Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton at StonyBrookUniversity, demanding that she do more to halt torture and the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Approximately 30 protesters in the audience wore black T-shirts with white letters on their backs that spelled "Troops out now." A few shouted those words during the discussion supporting equal pay for women.

Clinton initially ignored the demonstrators but after a second interruption, the university's president, Shirley Strum Kenny, alongside Clinton onstage, stood and told the demonstrators that everyone was entitled to hear the lawmaker.

For the duration of the discussion inside the Staller Center for the Arts, the protesters stood silently, their backs to Clinton, while she continued on and then fielded questions from some members of the audience.

Asked about the interruption at a later stop at the Huntington Hilton, where she spoke before a Realtors' group, Clinton said: "I have no reaction."

Afterward, one of the protesters explained his actions.

"I wanted her to know that Iraq is a very important issue. We want our family home," said Jacob Wicks, 26, a senior from Massapequa.

Another demonstrator, Carmen Trotta, 43, who traveled from Manhattan, said he is upset with the Democratic senator from New York for not doing enough to end the war in Iraq or to stop the use of torture by U.S. forces or allies.

"She has not called for the closing of GuantanamoBay nor has she called for the termination of U.S. occupation in Iraq," said Trotta, who was the most vocal of the protesters.

The issue of troop withdrawal surfaced again at her second stop, during a question-and-answer period.

One man asked Clinton if she would consider joining Rep. John Murtha's (D-Penn.) call for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

Clinton, who voted in 2002 for the resolution to authorize President George W. Bush to use force in Iraq, said she disagreed with Murtha.

"It is a debate that we have to have," she said.

Earlier, in a separate protest on the campus, students staged a "Die-In." To dramatize soldier deaths in Iraq, they wore black plastic garbage bags over their bodies and lay on the grass next to coffins draped with American flags.

A few students carried placards, "Say no to USA Empire" and "Hypocrite! Pander to the Right."