“IT’S THE WAR DEPARTMENT”: How the War Department became the “Defense” Department AND Homeland Security by Dick Bennett

The U.S. War Department was established at our beginning and lasted over 200 years. During those years its purpose was clear and consistent with its behavior: the WAR DEPARTMENT. Some 500 Native American nations were conquered and many exterminated. The great westward expansion demanded by “Manifest Destiny” continued with the expropriation of Hawaii, and the acquisition of Midway and Guam. Spain was defeated and Cuba and the Philippines occupied. And by the end of WWII the westward expansion had reached to Japan and S. Korea.

But soon after WWII warrior wizards changed its name from offense to DEFENSE. In 1947 the War Department, the Pentagon, became the DEFENSE DEPARTMENT. Offense became defense. Orwell’s War is Peace. And in the name of defense, the US invaded or intervened in some 50 nations illegally and often lethally. The quick history: William Blum’s Killing Hope and Rogue State. And now we have HOMELAND SECURITY, a second Pentagon, and following 9-11 more and more layers of a trillion dollars of TOP SECRET bureaucracies too many and too expensive for Congressional oversight.

Contents of #1 6-21-11
Pentagon War Budget, Cold War to Today
Pentagon Budget Today
Congress Will Trim the Budget?
Arming Mid-Eastern Despots
Nuclear Weapons
Pentagon Marketing Itself and Propaganda to Children
Counter-Recruiting Resistance
Book Censorship
Books: James Carroll, Arthur Ekirch, Sebastian Junger

Contents of #2  10-29-11
Lockheed Supports War Budget
Criminal Contractors
[War] Secretary Panetta and War Profiteers.
Military Fuel
Military Budget, Empire, China
Reducing Budget and the Fine Print
Empire/War Budget Increased 7-11
No-Bid Contracts
Clandestine War: Special Forces, Drones, Assassinations
War Industry, GOP, Debt
Military Sex Crimes
War Crimes and WikiLeaks
NBC Reports Pentagon
Cyber Security New War
Research on Militarism

Contents of #3

Think Tanks: Heritage Foundation
Weapons Costs
Colonial Roots
Experiments with Soldiers: Yes Support These Troops
Support These Troops Not
Non-Lethal Weapons?
NDAA vs. Due Process
More Generals and Admirals
Covert Ops: Books by Trevor Paglen
Myth of Military Job Creation
Alternatives
Economic Conversion: Seymour Melman (Celebrate!)

WAR-PROMOTING, PENTAGON/HOMELAND-SUPPORTING “THINK” TANKS: HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The US empire (waste of resources, killing our troops and civilians, instilling hatred for the US globally) is no accident; it was not inevitable, but the result of assiduous effort. During the 1970s the Republicans geared up increasingly to reject and prevent Democratic social programs, to gain control of the three branches of government, and to expand the US Empire. Well-funded “think” tanks were one agency by which they sought power, and the Heritage Foundation was one of the first and continues powerfully today. Here’s a sample of their pro-military position, repeated in thousands of ways during the past three decades.
Washington is about to hand America's enemies — at least, the ones who want to do us harm — a gift. It comes in the form of deep, reckless cuts to the military budget.

“Pentagon Misreports or Ignores Long-Term Weapons Costs”
R. Jeffrey Smith, News Report, NationofChange, Feb. 14, 2012: The Obama administration’s 2013 defense spending plan, detailed as part of its overall new federal budget, includes $178.8 billion to buy new weapons, ranging from jet fighters and artillery to naval cruisers and satellite systems. But the real costs of these programs to the federal budget are unlikely to be disclosed in its budget documents or dozens of detailed weapons program reports due on Capitol Hill in March, according to a recent federal audit report. READ | DISCUSS | SHARE
http://www.nationofchange.org/pentagon-misreports-or-ignores-long-term-weapons-costs-1329236990

THE COLONIAL MEDIA ROOTS OF US EMPIRE AND MILITARISM

The books by David Copeland, Colonial American Newspapers: Character and Content (1997) and by Juan Gonzalez and Joseph Torres, News For All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media (2011) remind us of the original bond between the European settlers, their bigoted stereotyping, their westward movement, their military power, their eventual empire, and their fear-mongering media. Quickly the English invaders and their newspapers were recounting anti-Indian captivity, rape, infanticide, torture, dismemberment, and cannibal tales of the Indians, engendering high levels of fear and hysteria. All along the Eastern seaboard during the eighteenth century, newspapers aroused settler hysteria and outrage with these tales and by reporting government bounties for the killing of Indians.

From the beginning of the European invasion, armed white Europeans spread westward, conquering and killing the inhabitants of the land, and from the beginning of New World media, the killing was justified and stimulated by most of the newspapers (not by Ben Franklin’s among others). The first newspaper, Publick Occurrences, in its first edition of September 25, 1690, in one article denounced the apparent “kidnapping” of two white children by “barbarous Indians” who were “lurking about” the town of Chelmsford, and in another article described the murder of French prisoners by Mohawks “in a manner too barbarous for any English to approve.” Here are displayed chief features of media reporting that justified the expansion and militarism ahead: one-sided, savage, dehumanizing especially of colored others as cunning, barbaric, evil, and deserving the plunder and slaughter exerted against them.

(The use of stereotypes for domination of the Indians similarly applied to the control of the black slaves. In 1706 a Boston paper smeared Boston blacks as “much Addicted to Stealing, Lying and Purloining.” Fear of violence by blacks was never allowed to be forgotten, nor were individual black crimes. Colonial newspapers at first spread fear and loathing in their reporting of slave revolts actual or imagined, until revolts or suspicion of rebellion had become frequent, when papers turned to quashing news about black uprisings. Violence against slaves, as with Indians, intensified. South Carolina for example enacted a slave code that permitted any white person to stop and search a slave
and kill him if he resisted.)

The militarized westward movement in the continental US continued until the Indians were vanquished and at one point seemed near extermination.

And the Westward movement never ended: Philippines, Hawaii, Midway, Guam, Okinawa, S. Korea, Jeju Island, Australia.....

PENTAGON SACROSANCT
“No Savings Without Cuts.” Editorial in Northwest Arkansas Times (1-14-12).
“Federal spending cannot be brought under control without cutting services.” But, asks the writer, should the 16 Arkansas offices of the Farm Service Agency be closed? No mention of the $600 billion Pentagon/wars budget 2012, the illegality of the wars, the 1000 military bases around the world, the depredations and wastes of empire.

“Vets Feel Abandoned After Secret Drug Experiments”
David S. Martin, CNN, RSN, March 3, 2012
Martin reports: "From 1955 to 1975, military researchers at Edgewood were using not only animals but human subjects to test a witches' brew of drugs and chemicals. They ranged from potentially lethal nerve gases like VX and sarin to incapacitating agents like BZ. The military also tested tear gas, barbiturates, tranquilizers, narcotics and hallucinogens like LSD."
READ MORE http://www.readerssupportednews.org/news-section2/323-95/10260-vets-feel-abandoned-after-secret-drug-experiments

SUPPORT THE TROOPS?
Yes, support the troops.
But not those who pissed on dead Taliban fighters.
Yes, support the troops.
But not those who killed all in the Afghan wedding party.
Yes, support the troops.
But not those who tortured captives in Gitmo and Bahgram.
Yes, support the troops.
FIND WORDS TO ECHO PISSED

The Military's Freakiest 'Non-Lethal' Weapon Ideas
Katie Drummond, Wired Magazine, RSN, January 3, 2012

Intro: "Tasers that elicit excruciating spasms in one person at a time? Foam pellets that send an entire crowd fleeing in agony? Pfft. So 2011. Where non-lethal weapons are concerned, the future's all about sonic microwaves that can make swimmers puke mid-stroke, and aircraft with laser beams that can redirect an entire enemy plane mid-flight."


Naomi Wolf, “NDAA: Congress Signed Its Own Arrest Warrants”
Naomi Wolf, Naomi Wolf's Blog, January 2, 2012

"Perhaps Congress assumes that it will always only be 'they' who are targeted for arrest and military detention: but sadly, Parliamentary leaders are the first to face pressure, threats, arrest and even violence when the military obtains the power to make civilian arrests and hold civilians in military facilities without due process. There is no exception to this rule."


Today's Military: The Most Top-Heavy Force in U.S. History
Ben Freeman, Project on Government Oversight, Nov 29, 2011


After Thanksgiving, waistlines aren't the only things that are bloated--the Pentagon's top ranks are fattening at an alarming rate.

Despite a plan set forth by former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to rein in the Department of Defense's (DoD) increasingly top-heavy force and assurances from Pentagon personnel that these plans were being enacted, the U.S. military is still adding top brass faster than you can say tryptophan.

In September, I testified before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel about the military becoming increasingly top-heavy as a result of growth in the proportion of general and flag officers at the Pentagon. This trend, which we at POGO dubbed Star Creep, is costly to taxpayers who have to foot the large bill for every new general and admiral. It also hinders military effectiveness by leading to what Gates referred to as a "bureaucracy which has the fine motor skills of a dinosaur."

My fellow witnesses at the hearing—several generals and admirals as well as former Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Clifford Stanley—assured the concerned Committee that they had everything under control. They cited Gates' Efficiency Initiatives, which purportedly eliminate 102 general and flag officer positions, as evidence of the DoD's commitment to combating Star Creep.
Stanley confirmed to Chairman Jim Webb (D-VA) that Gates' successor-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta-supported these efforts and, "has accepted the policies and the things put in place by his predecessor." (Stanley tendered his notice of resignation in late October.)

What Senator Webb and I did not know at the time-and perhaps Stanley did-was that Gates' initiative to cut general and flag officers had already come to a screeching halt. Data that were released recently on the DoD personnel office's website tell the tale.

New personnel data

When POGO began its analysis of Star Creep, the most recent data available to the public were from April 2011. Thus, when I presented Chairman Webb our recommendation that Secretary Panetta work to fully enact Gates' Efficiency Initiatives to combat Star Creep and heard the other witnesses declare their support for the initiatives, I had no way of knowing that the DoD had already completely reversed course on Gates' efforts.

Seventeen general and flag officers were scheduled to be eliminated between May and September through Gates' Efficiency Initiatives. But the DoD didn't reduce its top brass at all. Instead, six generals were added from May to September, increasing the number of general and flag officers from 964 to 970. Moreover, from July 1, 2011-Panetta's first day as Secretary of Defense-to September 30, the Pentagon added three four-star officers. Coincidentally, this is precisely the number of four-star officers Gates cut during his final year as SecDef, from June 2010 to the end of June 2011. Thus, in just three months, Panetta undid a year's worth of Gates' attempts to cut the Pentagon's very top brass. It's doubtful that Gates would consider Panetta's current rate of adding a new four-star officer every month conducive to efficiency.

One of these new four-star officers is Admiral Mark Ferguson, who became vice chief of naval operations and consequently a four-star admiral less than a month before he testified at Senator Webb's hearing. Ironically, this beneficiary of Star Creep wrote in his prepared statement that the "Navy supports these efficiency actions and anticipates additional review to reduce or merge flag officer positions." At the hearing he expanded upon this, stating that "We [the Navy] remain absolutely committed to create a more agile, flexible, and effective flag officer staff structure." Apparently, this support and commitment to flag officer efficiencies includes adding admirals.

Comparing bloat across branches and over time

The most top-heavy branch of the military, the Air Force, led the most recent surge in increasing top brass, adding six officers in the two-, three-, and four-star ranks, while cutting one brigadier general. The Marines and Army each netted two additional generals. The Navy was the only branch of the military that actually did cut its top ranks during this time period, even though they added a four-star admiral.
While the Pentagon was adding these officers it was cutting enlisted personnel (a phenomenon known as "officer inflation" or "brass creep"). Between May and September, more than 10,000 enlisted personnel were cut by the DoD, possibly in preparation for the end of military operations in Iraq, while more than 2,500 officers were added. Consequently, for the first time in the more than 200 years that the U.S. has had a standing military, there are fewer than five enlisted personnel for every officer. In other words, today's military is the most top-heavy force in U.S. history.

The Costs of Star Creep

The cost to taxpayers of uniformed military personnel increases markedly with their rank. In just basic compensation, these six new generals will cost taxpayers more than $1.25 million per year. Over the next ten years, they'll cost taxpayers more than $14 million (methodology).

The total cost to taxpayers of Star Creep is not trivial, even in the Pentagon's bloated budget. Since the war in Afghanistan began, the Pentagon has added 99 general and flag officers, a rate of growth that's tops among all DoD uniformed personnel groups, as can be seen in the above graph. In 2012, these general and flag officers will cost taxpayers more than $22 million in just direct financial compensation. Between 2012 and 2021, they'll cost nearly $250 million.

But the cost of Star Creep only begins with direct compensation. Other costs that surround generals and admirals—such as staff, contractors, and travel—increase with higher ranks. For example, Bloomberg recently reported that taxpayers in Huntsville, Alabama, footed a $3.8-million bill to build luxurious homes for generals in a successful effort to keep Pentagon pork flowing into the area. One such home, built for a major general, was a sprawling 4,200-square-foot mansion that included granite countertops, hardwood floors, and stainless steel appliances.

Luxurious homes are just the beginning of the extravagances available to top military commanders. According to Raymond Dubois, former DoD director of administration and management from 2002 to 2005, there are other perks:

"A four-star has an airplane. A three-star often doesn't…Can a three-star get an airplane when he needs it? Not always. Does a four-star get an airplane when he needs it? Always. Many times he'll already have a G5 sitting on the runway, gassed up. There are the kinds of costs that are fairly significant when you add them all up."

In his August 2010 speech on Efficiency Initiatives, Gates referred to these perks as "the overhead and accoutrements that go with" senior positions, be they military or civilian, within DoD. In an interview with Newsweek, Gates bemoaned these accoutrements and entourages that surround generals and admirals, which he believes are indicative of a military leadership that is "suffering from an inflated sense of entitlement and a distorted sense of priorities."

[...]

Two Thirds of U.S. Foreign Aid is Really Military Aid
When some Americans complain that foreign aid is wasting taxpayer money abroad that could be put to better use at home, they may not realize that today's version of foreign aid isn't what it used to be. Call it the Pentagon-ization of U.S. foreign assistance.

Until a few years ago, the State Department was the leading U.S. government agency when it came to doling out foreign aid. But beginning in the second term of George W. Bush's presidency, and continuing through the Obama administration, the Department of Defense has surpassed the State Department in supporting foreign initiatives, most of which have been military oriented.

For the past two years, the Pentagon has been given $10 billion more than the State Department for foreign aid projects. With $17 billion, Defense officials plan for the coming year to invest in foreign military and police training, counter-drug assistance, counterterrorism activities and infrastructure projects, among other programs.

Among the expenditures included in the recently passed 2012 National Defense Authorization Act are $1.1 billion to the government of Pakistan for alleged counterinsurgency efforts and $415 million for two programs known euphemistically as the Combatant Commander Initiative Fund and the Commander Emergency Response Fund. Translated into everyday English, this means cash that can be handed out by U.S. commanders.

Gordon Adams of the Stimson Center told iWatch News that by shifting foreign aid to military programs "you end up strengthening those instruments which are least democratic fundamentally."

**BOOKS BY TREVOR PAGLEN**

**Invisible: Covert Operations and Classified Landscapes is Trevor Paglen's long-awaited first photographic monograph.**

Social scientist, artist, writer and provocateur, Paglen has been exploring the secret activities of the U.S. military and intelligence agencies--the "black world"--for the last eight years, publishing, speaking and making astonishing photographs.

As an artist, Paglen is interested in the idea of photography as truth-telling, but his pictures often stop short of traditional ideas of documentation. In the series **Limit Telephotography**, for example, he employs high-end optical systems to photograph top-secret governmental sites; and in **The Other Night Sky**, he uses the data of amateur satellite watchers to track and photograph classified spacecraft in Earth's orbit. In other works Paglen transforms documents such as passports, flight data and aliases of CIA operatives into art objects.
Viewing Secrecy Through “Blank Spots on the Map”

“I think that trying to understand secrecy through geography helps make the subject more real,” writes Trevor Paglen in a new book about secret government. “Thinking about secrecy in terms of concrete spaces and practices helps us to see how secrecy happens and helps to explain how secrecy grows and expands.”

Paglen, a geographer, writes about secrecy at the Groom Lake facility in Nevada, secret prisons in Afghanistan, secret satellite constellations in orbit, secret contractor locations around Washington, DC, and elsewhere. He considers their enabling conditions, as well as their implications for American democracy and public policy.

“The United States has become dependent on spaces created through secrecy, spaces that lie outside the rule of law, outside the Constitution, outside the democratic ideals of equal rights, transparent government, and informed consent,” he concludes. Worse, “the black world’s historical geography shows that where black budgets manifest into a space, informal violence becomes the norm.”

“Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon’s Secret World” by Trevor Paglen has just been published by Dutton Books.

The book has won enthusiastic blurbs from Andrew Bacevich, Robert Baer, Rebecca Solnit, and other esteemed authors. But it has important limitations and defects.

Paglen is a fluid writer with an eye for paradox and incongruity. But he is not a perfectly reliable guide to secrecy policy and practice. There are probably closer to three million persons holding security clearances, not four million. The majority of them are not employees of “the black world” of covert or unacknowledged programs but are engaged in perfectly overt activities that happen to involve handling of classified information. It is absurd to suppose that “In terms of numbers of pages, more of our own recent history is classified than is not” (p. 279). It is not correct to say the term “DET 3” never appeared on official Groom Lake documents (p. 41); it appeared on a facility security guide. The TIARA and JMIP intelligence budget categories which Paglen says are classified (p. 204) have not
been in use for several years now.

Paglen’s point of departure is that there is a “lack of serious literature” about black sites and classified government operations (p. 13). But this premise cannot be sustained. If anything, there is an excess of largely repetitive material on the same themes. There are at least two books about Groom Lake alone, the subject of Paglen’s chapter 3. There are at least two other books about the 1953 Supreme Court decision in the Reynolds case on state secrets, which he summarizes in chapter 10. There are several other books about the black budget and classified spending, a topic he introduces in chapter 12, and so forth.

There are also some surprising “blank spots” in Paglen’s own narrative. In the 1990s, an independent researcher named Glenn Campbell spent years mapping the Groom Lake facility in Nevada, testing its perimeters and security procedures, scouting out the best public domain vantage points, and tracking the “Janet” airplanes in their daily flights to and from Groom Lake, fifteen years before Paglen did something similar. Without a credential or a book contract, he produced an astounding volume of genuine “black world” geography called the “Area 51 Viewer’s Guide.” But except for a misspelling of his name in an incidental footnote (p. 286), Campbell’s pioneering effort goes completely unacknowledged. Campbell himself would probably find his erasure from the record sublime, but to me it is dispiriting.

Finally, Paglen is so fascinated by the corruption of secrecy that he misses an opportunity to think more critically and more deeply about the subject. In his view, the National Reconnaissance Office, which builds and operates U.S. spy satellites, is an instrument of “domination” while those who work diligently to expose its secrets are servants of “the public good” (p. 119). But what if the opposite is true? What if by performing secret missions that are authorized and funded by the people’s elected representatives the NRO is actually an agent of liberty? And what if those who work to penetrate its secrecy are thereby undermining its democratically authorized mission? These are live issues for some of us, and there are various ways to respond to them. But in “Blank Spots on the Map” the questions themselves find no place.

Moving from a War Economy to a Peace Economy
BEHIND EVERY QUESTION about how to get the United States back on track and improve the lives of average Americans (the so-called 99 percent) lies the necessity for economic conversion—that is, planning, designing, and implementing a transformation from a war economy to a peace economy. Historically, this is an effort that would include a changeover from military to civilian work in industrial facilities, in laboratories, and at U.S. military bases.

To that end, I am compelled to share what I’ve learned from reading Seymour Melman, the most prolific writer on the topic. MORE http://thehumanist.org/january-february-2012/moving-from-a-war-economy-to-a-peace-economy/

The Myth of Military Job Creation

HEIDI GARRETT-PELTIER, hpeltier at econs.umass.edu
Assistant research professor at the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and co-author of the report “The U.S. Employment Effects of Military and Domestic Spending Priorities: An Updated Analysis,” Garrett-Peltier said today: “My calculations show that the arms industry’s claims about increased unemployment are vastly exaggerated. A billion dollars spent on military production created about 11,000 jobs, compared to about 17,000 from clean energy, 19,000 from health care, and 29,000 from education.”