
MILITARY-CORPORATE-CONGRESSIONAL-WHITE HOUSE-CORPORATE MEDIA COMPLEX NEWSLETTER #1, APRIL 7, 2012. Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace.

This first OMNI newsletter on what Eisenhower called the Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) reminds us that most of OMNI’s topical newsletters bring searchlights and microscopes to the understanding of US militarism and empire.

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters: http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for change.

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NEW BOOKS

David Swanson. *The Military Industrial Complex at 50.*

“New Book Surveys State of the Military Industrial Complex”
Published on MLK Day 2012, a new book called *The Military Industrial Complex at 50* is the most comprehensive collection on the subject available. Edited by activist David Swanson, the book explains what the military industrial complex (MIC) is, where it comes from, what damage it does, what further destruction it threatens, and what can be done and is being done to chart a different course.

Authors (from within and without the MIC) contributing chapters to this collection include: Ellen Brown • Paul Chappell • Helena Cobban • Ben Davis • Jeff Fogel • Bunny Greenhouse • Bruce Gagnon • Clare Hanrahan • John Heuer • Steve Horn • Robert Jensen • Karen Kwiatkowski • Judith Le Blanc • Bruce Levine • Ray McGovern • Wally Myers • Robert Naiman • Gareth Porter • Chris
The MIC, this book expertly argues, kills large numbers of people, endangers us, hollows out our economy, transfers our wealth to a tiny elite, devastates the natural environment, and threatens civil liberties, the rule of law, and representative government.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower found the nerve in his farewell speech in 1961 to articulate one of the most prescient, potentially valuable, and tragically as yet unheeded warnings of human history:

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. “We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.”

This collection shows that the “total influence” of the MIC has increased, the disastrous rise of misplaced power is no longer merely a potential event, our liberties and democratic processes are in a state of collapse, and that Ike himself disastrously misinformed the citizenry when he claimed that the very monster he warned of had been “compelled” by the need for “defense.”
The book can be ordered at [http://MIC 50.org](http://MIC 50.org)

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**The Complex by Nick Turse**

Review by Victoria Segal, *The Guardian*, Friday 26 June 2009

Conspiracy theorists still hung up on the military-industrial complex need to update their cold war-era vocabulary: according to national security writer Nick Turse, the war machine's ever-extending reach now stretches beyond petroleum and telecoms to include a "military-doughnut complex" where confectionery chains supply soldiers with glazed buns. In this acronym-heavy book, Turse describes a range of "microcomplexes" connecting the US military to some surprising areas of civilian life.

The fact you might share fish-finger suppliers with the US navy is one thing; details of the Guantánamo Bay Starbucks are something else. Much of Turse's research holds the Pentagon up to ridicule: their golf courses, the fast-food-addicted army that waddles rather than marches on its stomach. Yet the book turns sinister when it exposes desperate recruiters who allow white supremacists to join up, or defence department plans to develop "weaponised" moths and sharks. References to *The Matrix* could make Turse seem a paranoid geek. Unfortunately, this is no sci-fi

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**“Eisenhower's Worst Fears Came True”** By Simon Jenkins, *Guardian UK* 17 June, 2011

_Eisenhower's worst fears came true. We invent enemies to buy the bombs. Britain faces no serious threat, yet keeps waging war. While big defence exists, glory-hungry politicians will use it._

Why do we still go to war? We seem unable to stop. We find any excuse for this post-imperial fidget and yet we keep getting trapped. Germans do not do it, or Spanish or Swedes. Britain's borders and British people have not been under serious threat for a generation. Yet time and again our leaders crave battle. Why?

Last week we got a glimpse of an answer and it was not nice. The outgoing US defence secretary, Robert Gates, berated Europe's "failure of political will" in not maintaining defence spending. He said NATO had declined into a "two-tier alliance" between those willing to wage war and those "who specialise in 'soft' humanitarian, development, peacekeeping and talking tasks." Peace, he implied, is for wimps. Real men buy bombs, and drop them.

This call was echoed by NATO's chief, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who pointed out how unfair it was that US defence investment represented 75% of the NATO defence expenditure, where once it was only half. Having been forced to extend his war on Libya by another three months, Rasmussen wanted to see Europe's governments come up with more money, and no nonsense about recession. Defence to him is measured not in security but in spending.
The call was repeated back home by the navy chief, Sir Mark Stanhope. He had to be "dressed down" by the prime minister, David Cameron, for warning that an extended war in Libya would mean "challenging decisions about priorities." Sailors never talk straight: he meant more ships. The navy has used so many of its £500,000 Tomahawk missiles trying to hit Colonel Gaddafi (and missing) over the past month that it needs money for more. In a clearly co-ordinated lobby, the head of the RAF also demanded "a significant uplift in spending after 2015, if the service is to meet its commitments." It, of course, defines its commitments itself.

Libya has cost Britain £100m so far, and rising. But Iraq and the Afghan war are costing America $3bn a week, and there is scarcely an industry, or a state, in the country that does not see some of this money. These wars show no signs of being ended, let alone won. But to the defence lobby what matters is the money. It sustains combat by constantly promising success and inducing politicians and journalists to see "more enemy dead", "a glimmer of hope" and "a corner about to be turned."

Victory will come, but only if politicians spend more money on "a surge." Soldiers are like firefighters, demanding extra to fight fires. They will fight all right, but if you want victory that is overtime.

On Wednesday the Russian ambassador to NATO warned that Britain and France were "being dragged more and more into the eventuality of a land-based operation in Libya." This is what the defence lobby wants institutionally, even if it may appal the generals. In the 1980s Russia watched the same process in Afghanistan, where it took a dictator, Mikhail Gorbachev, to face down the Red Army and demand withdrawal. The west has no Gorbachev in Afghanistan at the moment. NATO's Rasmussen says he "could not envisage" a land war in Libya, since the UN would take over if Gaddafi was toppled. He must know this is nonsense. But then he said NATO would only enforce a no-fly zone in Libya. He achieved that weeks ago, but is still bombing.

It is not democracy that keeps western nations at war, but armies and the interests now massed behind them. The greatest speech about modern defence was made in 1961 by the US president Eisenhower. He was no leftwinger, but a former general and conservative Republican. Looking back over his time in office, his farewell message to America was a simple warning against the "disastrous rise of misplaced power" of a military-industrial complex with "unwarranted influence on government." A burgeoning defence establishment, backed by large corporate interests, would one day employ so many people as to corrupt the political system. (His original draft even referred to a "military-industrial-congressional complex.") This lobby, said Eisenhower, could become so huge as to "endanger our liberties and democratic processes."

I wonder what Eisenhower would make of today's US, with a military grown from 3.5 million people to 5 million. The western nations face less of a threat to their integrity and security than ever in history, yet their defence industries cry for ever more money and ever more things to do. The cold war strategist, George Kennan, wrote prophetically: "Were the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial complex would have to remain, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented."

The devil makes work for idle hands, especially if they are well financed. Britain's former special envoy to Kabul, Sherard Cowper-Coles, echoed Kennan last week in claiming that the army's keenness
to fight in Helmand was self-interested. "It's use them or lose them, Sherard," he was told by the then chief of the general staff, Sir Richard Dannatt. Cowper-Coles has now gone off to work for an arms manufacturer.

There is no strategic defence justification for the US spending 5.5% of its gross domestic product on defence or Britain 2.5%, or for the NATO "target" of 2%.

These figures merely formalise existing commitments and interests. At the end of the cold war soldiers assiduously invented new conflicts for themselves and their suppliers, variously wars on terror, drugs, piracy, internet espionage and man's general inhumanity to man. None yields victory, but all need equipment. The war on terror fulfilled all Eisenhower's fears, as America sank into a swamp of kidnapping, torture and imprisonment without trial.

The belligerent posture of the US and Britain towards the Muslim world has fostered antagonism and moderate threats in response. The bombing of extremist targets in Pakistan is an invitation for terrorists to attack us, and then a need for defence against such attack. Meanwhile, the opportunity cost of appeasing the complex is astronomical. Eisenhower remarked that "every gun that is made is a theft from those who hunger" – a bomber is two power stations and a hospital not built. Likewise, each Tomahawk Cameron drops on Tripoli destroys not just a Gaddafi bunker (are there any left?), but a hospital ward and a classroom in Britain.

As long as "big defence" exists it will entice glory-hungry politicians to use it. It is a return to the hundred years war, when militaristic barons and knights had a stranglehold on the monarch, and no other purpose in life than to fight. To deliver victory they demanded ever more taxes for weapons, and when they had ever more weapons they promised ever grander victories. This is exactly how Britain's defence ministry ran out of budgetary control under Labour.

There is one piece of good news. NATO has long outlived its purpose, now justifying its existence only by how much it induces its members to spend, and how many wars irrelevant to its purpose it finds to fight. Yet still it does not spend enough for the US defence secretary. In his anger, Gates threatened that "future US leaders ... may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost." Is that a threat or a promise

**MILITARISM USA (11 REPORTS)**

The Militarization of the U.S. Civilian Firearms Market

[www.vpc.org/studies/militarization.pdf](http://www.vpc.org/studies/militarization.pdf)

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**MILITARY CONTRACTORS**

“**Blackwater Shouldn't Lobby WIth Our Dime**”

By Robert Reich, Robert Reich's Blog 20 May 11


*Why we need to rein in government contractors that use taxpayer money for political advantage.*

resident Obama is mulling an executive order to force big government contractors to disclose details of their political spending. Big businesses are already telling their political patrons in Congress to oppose it - and the pressure is building.

The President should issue the executive order immediately. And he should go even further - banning all political activity by companies receiving more than half their revenues from the US government.

Lockheed Martin, the nation's largest contractor, has already got more than $19 billion in federal contracts so far this year. But we know very little about Lockheed Martin's political spending other than its Political Action Committee contributions. We don't know how much money it gives to the Aerospace Industries Association to lobby for a bigger defense budget.

We don't even know how much Lockheed is giving the US Chamber of Commerce to lobby against Obama's proposed executive order requiring disclosure of its political activities.

Don't we have a right to know? After all, you and I and other taxpayers are Lockheed's biggest customer. As such, we're financing some of its lobbying and political activities.

Lockheed's lobbying and political activities are built into its cost structure. So when Lockheed
contracts with the federal government for a piece of military equipment, you and I end up paying for a portion of its political costs.

It's one of the most insidious conflicts of interest in American politics.

Now, in the wake of the grotesque Supreme Court decision, *Citizens United vs. the Federal Election Commission*, there's no limit on what Lockheed can spend on politics.

That's why the President should go the next step and ban Lockheed and all other government contractors that get more than half their revenues from government from engaging in any political activities at all.

Otherwise, you and I and other taxpayers indirectly pay for Lockheed and Northrop Grumman to lobby for a larger military budget and support politicians who will vote for it.

We indirectly pay for Blackwater to lobby for - and support politicians who will demand - more use of contract workers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We indirectly pay for Raytheon and General Dynamics to lobby for, and support politicians who will push for, more high-tech weapons systems.

And so on.

Disclosure is a start. But in this post-*Citizens United* world, it's only a beginning of what's needed.

*Robert Reich is Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. He has served in three national administrations, most recently as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. He has written thirteen books, including "The Work of Nations," "Locked in the Cabinet," "Supercapitalism" and his latest book, "AFTERSHOCK: The Next Economy and America's Future." His 'Marketplace' commentaries can be found on publicradio.com and iTunes.*

**TWO ARTICLES ON ECONOMIC CONVERSION**  
“Moving from a War to a Peace Economy” (on Seymour Melman)

*By Mary Beth Sullivan Space Alert!* 9 Winter 2012

Behind every question about how to get the US 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 US 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. Melman was a professor emeritus of industrial engineering at Columbia University. He joined the Columbia faculty in 1949 and, by all reports, was a popular instructor for over five decades until he retired from teaching in 2003. (He died a year later.)

Melman was also an active member of the peace movement. He was the co-chair of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), and the creator and chair of the National Commission for Economic Conversion and Disarmament. It is reported that Melman was under surveillance by the FBI for much of his career because of his work criticizing the military-industrial complex—a sure sign that there must be something worth hearing in his work.

The economic conversion movement in past decades played a valuable role in bringing together the peace movement and union leadership to do the heady work of imaging how this country could sustain industrial jobs when, as it was envisioned, the US would cease production of the weapons of the Cold War. It is a history that should not be forgotten. In one of Melman’s last articles, published in the political newsletter Counterpunch in March of 2003, his frustration was palpable. He noted that New York City put out a request for a proposal to spend between $3 and $4 billion to replace subway cars. Not a single US company bid on the proposal—in part because the nation no longer had the tools it needed to build its subway trains. In the article, titled “In the Grip of a Permanent War Economy,” Melman calculated that if
this manufacturing work were done in the US, it would have generated, directly and indirectly, about 32,000 jobs. “The production facilities and labor force that could deliver six new subway cars each week could produce 300 cars per year, and thereby provide new replacement cars for the New York subway system in a twenty-year cycle,” Melman wrote, noting that such an endeavor would depend on well-trained engineers but that “it is almost twenty-five years since the last book was published in the US on [urban public transportation].”

Three principal functions would be served by economic conversion: First, the planning stage would offer assurance to the working people of the war economy that they could have an economic future in a society where war-making was a diminished institution. Second, reversing the process of economic decay in the US economy, particularly in manufacturing, the national commission would be empowered to facilitate planning for capital investments in all aspects of infrastructure by governments of cities, counties, states, and the federal government, which would comprise a massive program of new jobs and new markets. (Melman frequently referred to the annual “report card” published by the American Society of Civil Engineers to highlight the declining US infrastructure—deteriorating roads, bridges, schools, and so on—a situation that continues to worsen.) And third, the national network of alternativeuse committees would constitute a gain in decision-making power by all the working people involved.

It behooves the peace movement to create a vision that the populace can get excited about—a vision that will capture people’s imagination. A vision that sees the skills and talents of our engineers and scientists creating the renewable energy infrastructure critical to surviving the twenty-first century; a vision that engages
peace activists, environmentalists, labor, students, artists, and food security folks in creating plans for how we will warm, Laurie Kirby (Woodstock, N.Y.) and Dave Webb (Leeds, England) march through Bath, Maine calling for the conversion of Bath Iron Works during the Global Network’s 2004 annual conference held in Portland.

feed, and transport people in the year 2040. This is the true security need for the US, and the world. The vision is clear, it is obvious, and it is mainstream. An important next step for us is to determine what we can do in our home communities to empower local unions and workers, environmentalists, healthcare workers, social workers, secular and spiritual leaders alike, and the neighbors next door to engage—to look around, determine the needs, create the collaborations, and wrestle the funds away to start building a survivable future.

This was printed in part from a larger article that ran in the Jan/Feb 2012 edition of The Humanist: A Magazine of Critical Inquiry and Social Concern. Mary Beth Sullivan is a social worker and Global Network member who lives in Bath, Maine.

FROM MILITARY KEYNESIANISM AND A GREEN NEW DEAL
“Conversion of MIC Requires New Coalitions” By Jonathan Feldman

Space Alert! Winter 2012
In a panel discussion at New York University last December, Immanuel Wallerstein, Michael Mann, Craig Calhoun and other noted speakers addressed the question, “Does Capitalism Have a Future?” There wasn’t a consensus on the panel. At one extreme, Wallerstein described a capitalist system unable to sustain itself because of underconsumption and a growing international labor force of competing workers. In contrast, Michael Mann suggested that a Keynesian reflation attached to green jobs might sustain the capitalist economy through a Schumpeterian boom.
Mann’s arguments seem plausible, leaving open alternatives to a kind of deterministic zero-hope agenda for the future. Yet, many states underinvest
in green markets and products. Moreover, the green jobs argument has taken a lot of hits lately. In Ontario, Canada, the US transnational Caterpillar recently locked out its workers making locomotives, perhaps as part of an effort to shift production to another rail plant in the US. In Detroit, Michigan, a plan that would have expanded the market for green products through establishment of a new light rail line was scuttled by the City of Detroit and the US Department of Transportation. The two parties supported using buses instead, but this decision (if permanent) shrinks the market for Oregon Iron Works, a new US entrant into the passenger rail business. Detroit’s mayor is in danger of losing his authority to an outside manager, given the city’s serious fiscal difficulties. It becomes hard to talk about green job reflation when some cities in the US, like national governments in Europe, are apparently running out of money.

A Green New Deal offers an opportunity to expand locally-based manufacturing; manufacturing growth is necessary to promote the tax base that funds mass transit. Mass transit is a key bridge to reindustrialization because the state procures the product and helps create the market. Tax dollars can be recycled to support domestic employment if rail products are made locally. Yet, if the state can’t afford to buy green products like trains, the would-be virtuous circles become a dead end. Protectionism in the US saves assembly jobs at the lower end of the economic food chain, but can’t by itself generate high-end engineering and design jobs that could form the nucleus of new industries as transit makers diversify into related products and markets. Keynesianism becomes just wishful thinking unless we explain how a political process could be launched to realize needed investments.

Marxian determinism and Keynesian voluntarism do not immediately address the question of social, political and economic design. In other words, how do people become freer by extending their choices through economic reconstruction of institutions? At a micro level, cooperatives and alternative banking systems become means for recycling the consumptive power of individuals and triggering alternatives to transnational companies and banks that sit on cash and fail to organize work at home. The guild socialist, G. D. H. Cole recognized the
power of consumption as a key means of triggering and implementing an alternative economic architecture.
In other words, green banks and alternative financial institutions patronized by citizens at large could finance new and emerging networks of green producers and suppliers. This patronage system itself can be tied to the dynamic new social movements like UK Uncut or Occupy Wall Street. In fact, activists in Occupy Wall Street have supported a new US-campaign, “Move Your Money,” in which millions of dollars have been moved out of established banks into alternative, community or smaller scale banks. Political capital was transferred into economic capital and potentially a funding base for green reflation. Similarly, political action to cut military budgets can create such new green investment funds. In September, the Obama Administration announced a jobs creation plan worth $450 billion. In December, the Administration proposed future military budget cuts in an equivalent amount. Conversion of defense firms could bridge these two proposals by making such firms green wealth generators. Expanding an alternative economics from below, requires the creation of new coalitions. A new kind of dialogue is needed where environmental, labor, peace and social economy constituencies come together and exchange ideas. Only by bridging the intellectual divide can we overcome both economic determinism and voluntarism.

— Jonathan Michael Feldman is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economic History at Stockholm University. He is presently organizing a Global Teach-In on these themes (www.globalteachin.com).

END