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http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

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CONTENTS OF NOS. 1-3

Contents of #4, May 17, 2012
Cutting the Military Budget (3)
Lethal Consequences of Patriotic “Defense”
Homeland Security Campus
Pentagon Reporters Targeted

Contents #5
Chomsky, Atrocities
DRONES:
Killing and Propaganda
Engelhardt, Obama Admin.
Sojourner: GOP, Bombs Not Food
Rape in the Military: Essay, Film
Rachel Maddow, Drift
Juan Cole, Pentagon Propaganda, Creeping Fascism
Smith, Pentagon-President-Congress: Justifying Vietnam War

Contents #6
TomDispatch, Kramer: Spending Waste and Corruption
Tomgram, Militarism
Cappaccio, Pentagon Budget
Update: Budget Passes House
VFP, Bloated Pentagon
Wheeler, F-35 Costs Still Rising
People’s Guide to Budget
Pentagon Dissent/ Crowd Control

Pentagon Reading Our Email

TomDispatch.com
Tomgram: Mattea Kramer, Spinning Ourselves Into a Deficit Panic
Posted by Mattea Kramer at 9:40am, July 17, 2012.
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You couldn’t make this stuff up: thanks to Harold Rogers, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and the power of “earmarks,” the Army has bought $6.5 million worth of “leakproof” drip pans “to catch transmission fluid on Black Hawk helicopters,” reports the New York Times. Those pans were purchased from a company called Phoenix Products, whose owners, coincidentally, are contributors to the congressman’s political committee (and other Republican causes). Oh, and according to the Times, “the company has paid at least $600,000 since 2005 to a Washington lobbying firm, Martin Fisher Thompson & Associates, to represent its interests on federal contracting issues.” Anyway, do the math and you end up with a $17,000 Army drip pan -- and there’s one tiny catch: another company sells a comparable drip pan for about $2,500.

Is anybody shocked? This, after all, is the world of the U.S. military, which has been right up there with the 1% this last decade when it comes to garnering and squandering riches. It’s been ever more flush, while the taxpayers whose dollars it’s been raking in have done ever less well. And symbolic as those drip pans may be, they aren’t even a drip in the bucket of Pentagon expenses when you start looking at the big-ticket items.

Take the already notorious F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Once billed as a low-cost solution to maintaining control of the global skies, it's now in competition for first place in any most-expensive-jet-fighter-in-history contest. (The present title-holder is the F-22, a $400 million plane whose pilots fear an oxygen malfunction every time they take off, and which “sat out” all Washington’s recent wars.)

The F-35’s price tag went up yet again recently, though only by a piddling $289 million, even as its production schedule continues to fall ever further behind. As of now, the total cost for 2,457 of the aircraft is officially pegged at $395.7 billion, a jump of 75% over the original 2001 estimated price tag of $226.5 billion (for 2,866 planes). That’s one heck of a lot of drip-pan equivalents -- and no one believes that’s the final price, either. Of the total cost of the plane to produce and operate, expert Winslow Wheeler writes, “The current appraisal for operations and support is $1.1 trillion -- making for a grand total of $1.5 trillion, or more than the annual GDP of Spain. And that estimate is wildly optimistic.”

This is the sort of boondoggle that can’t be cut in Washington lest our safety be endangered, even as the country’s infrastructure decays, the jobs of police and teachers are cut, and the urge to savage the funds that go to the poor rises precipitously. Consider that just a little background for the world of spending misinformation that TomDispatch regular Mattea Kramer, senior research analyst at the National...
Priorities Project and lead author of the new book, A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget, reminds us has wall-papered our world these last years. **Tom**

**Four Spending Myths That Could Wreck Our World**

*How Not to Solve an American Crisis*

By Mattea Kramer

We’re at the edge of the cliff of deficit disaster! National security spending is being, or will soon be, slashed to the bone! Obamacare will sink the ship of state!

Each of these claims has grabbed national attention in a big way, sucking up years’ worth of precious airtime. That’s a serious bummer, since each of them is a spending myth of the first order. Let’s pop them, one by one, and move on to the truly urgent business of a nation that is indeed on the edge.

**Spending Myth 1: Today’s deficits have taken us to a historically unprecedented, economically catastrophic place.**

This myth has had the effect of binding the hands of elected officials and policymakers at every level of government. It has also emboldened those who claim that we must cut government spending as quickly, as radically, as deeply as possible.

In fact, we’ve been here before. In 2009, the federal budget deficit was a whopping 10.1% of the American economy and back in 1943, in the midst of World War II, it was three times that -- 30.3%. This fiscal year the deficit will total around 7.6%. Yes, that is big. But in the Congressional Budget Office’s *grimmet projections*, that figure will fall to 6.3% next year, and 5.8% in fiscal 2014. In 1983, under President Reagan, the deficit hit 6% of the economy, and by 1998, that had turned into a surplus. So, while projected deficits remain large, they’re neither historically unprecedented, nor insurmountable.

More important still, the size of the deficit is no sign that lawmakers should make immediate deep cuts in spending. In fact, history tells us that such reductions are guaranteed to harm, if not cripple, an economy still teetering at the edge of recession.

A number of leading economists are now busy explaining why the deficit this year actually ought to be a lot larger, not smaller; why there should be more government spending, including aid to state and local governments, which would create new jobs and prevent layoffs in areas like education and law enforcement. Such efforts, working in tandem with slow but positive job growth in the private sector, might indeed mean genuine recovery. Government budget cuts, on the other hand, offset private-sector gains with the huge and depressing effect of public-sector layoffs, and have damaging ripple effects on the rest of the economy as well.
When the economy is healthier, a host of promising options are at hand for lawmakers who want to narrow the gap between spending and tax revenue. For example, loopholes and deductions in the tax code that hand enormous subsidies to wealthy Americans and corporations will cost the Treasury around $1.3 trillion in lost revenue this year alone -- more, that is, than the entire budget deficit. Closing some of them would make great strides toward significant deficit reductions.

Alarmingly, the deficit-reduction fever that’s resulted from this first spending myth has led many Americans to throw their support behind de-investment in domestic priorities like education, research, and infrastructure -- cuts that threaten to undo generations of progress. This is in part the result of myth number two.

**Spending Myth 2: Military and other national security spending have already taken their lumps and future budget-cutting efforts will have to take aim at domestic programs instead.**

The very idea that military spending has already been deeply cut in service to deficit reduction is not only false, but in the realm of fantasy. The real story: despite headlines about “slashed” Pentagon spending and “doomsday” plans for more, no actual cuts to the defense budget have yet taken place. In fact, since 2001, to quote former Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, defense spending has grown like a “gusher.” The Department of Defense base budget nearly doubled in the space of a decade. Now, the Pentagon is likely to face an exceedingly modest 2.5% budget cut in fiscal 2013, “paring” its budget down to a mere $525 billion -- with possible additional cuts shaving off another $55 billion next year if Congress allows the Budget Control Act, a.k.a. “sequestration,” to take effect.

But don’t hold your breath waiting for that to happen. It’s likely that lawmakers will, at the last moment, come to an agreement to cancel those extra cuts. In other words, the notion that our military, which has been experiencing financial boom times even in tough times, has felt significant deficit-slashing pain -- or has even been cut at all -- is the Pentagon equivalent of a unicorn.

What this does mean, however, is that lawmakers heading down the budget-cutting path can find plenty of savings in the enormous defense and national security budgets. Moreover, cuts there would be less harmful to the economy than reductions in domestic spending.

A group of military budget experts, for example, found that cutting many costly and obsolete weapons programs could save billions of dollars each year, and investing that money in domestic priorities like education and health care would spur the economy. That’s because those sectors create more jobs per dollar than military programs do. And that leads us to myth three.

**Spending Myth 3: Government health-insurance programs are more costly than private insurance.**

False claims about the higher cost of government health programs have led many people to demand
that health-care solutions come from the private sector. Advocates of this have been much aided by the complexity of sorting out health costs, which has provided the necessary smoke and mirrors to camouflage this whopping lie.

Health spending is indeed growing faster than any other part of the federal budget. It’s gone from a measly 7% in 1976 to nearly a quarter today -- and that’s truly a cause for concern. But health care costs, public and private, have been on the rise across the developed world for decades. And cost growth in government programs like Medicare has actually been slower than in private health insurance. That’s because the federal government has important advantages over private health insurance companies when it comes to health care. For example, as a huge player in the health-care market, the federal government has been successful at negotiating lower prices than small private insurers can. And that helps us de-bunk myth number four.

**Spending Myth 4: The Affordable Care Act -- Obamacare -- will bankrupt the federal government while levying the biggest tax in U.S. history.**

Wrong again. According to the Congressional Budget Office, this health-reform legislation will reduce budget deficits by $119 billion between now and 2019. And only around 1% of American households will end up paying a penalty for lacking health insurance.

While the Affordable Care Act is hardly a panacea for the many problems in U.S. health care, it does at least start to address the pressing issue of rising costs -- and it incorporates some of the best wisdom on how to do so. Health-policy experts have explored phasing out the fee-for-service payment system -- in which doctors are paid for each test and procedure they perform -- in favor of something akin to pay-for-performance. This transition would reward medical professionals for delivering more effective, coordinated, and efficient care -- and save a lot of money by reducing waste.

The Affordable Care Act begins implementing such changes in the Medicare program, and it explores other important cost-containment measures. In other words, it lays the groundwork for potentially far deeper budgetary savings down the road.

Having cleared the landscape of four stubborn spending myths, it should be easier to see straight to the stuff that really matters. Financial hardship facing millions of Americans ought to be our top concern. Between 2007 and 2010, the median family lost nearly 40% of its net worth. Neither steep deficits, nor disagreement over military spending and health reform should eclipse this as our most pressing challenge.

If lawmakers skipped the myth-making and began putting America’s resources into a series of domestic investments that would spur the economy now, their acts would yield dividends for years to come. That means pushing education and job training, plus a host of job-creation measures, to the top of the
priority list, and setting aside initiatives based on fear and fantasy.

Mattea Kramer, a TomDispatch regular, is senior research analyst at the National Priorities Project and lead author of the new book A People’s Guide to the Federal Budget.

Follow TomDispatch on Twitter @TomDispatch and join us on Facebook, and check out the latest TD book, Terminator Planet: The First History of Drone Warfare, 2001-2050.

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July 5, 2012

Tomgram: Engelhardt, Washington's Militarized Mindset
[Note for TomDispatch Readers: After a July 4th break, we’re back and wanted to thank all of you who urged your friends, neighbors, relatives, and associates to sign up for TomDispatch over the last two weeks. If you meant to, but haven’t done so yet, one final reminder: urge them to go to the "subscribe" window at the upper right of TD's main screen, put in their email addresses, hit “submit,” answer the “opt-in” email that instantly arrives in your email box (or spam folder), and receive notices whenever a new post goes up. Your willingness to spread the word about this website makes such a difference to us! And while you’re at it, don’t forget to pick up your copy of the first volume in a new series from Dispatch Books that Nick Turse and I just published: Terminator Planet: The First History of Drone Warfare, 2001-2050. Pepe Escobar calls it “essential reading for contextualizing the lineaments of an already de facto surveillance state, where everyone is a suspect by definition, and the only 'winner' is the military-industrial complex.”]

The Military Solution

The Lessons Washington Can't Draw From the Failure of the Military Option

By Tom Engelhardt

Americans may feel more distant from war than at any time since World War II began. Certainly, a smaller percentage of us -- less than 1% -- serves in the military in this all-volunteer era of ours and, on the face of it, Washington’s constant warring in distant lands seems barely to touch the lives of most Americans.

And yet the militarization of the United States and the strengthening of the National Security Complex continues to accelerate. The Pentagon is, by now, a world unto itself, with a staggering budget at a moment when no other power or combination of powers comes near to challenging this country’s might.

In the post-9/11 era, the military-industrial complex has been thoroughly mobilized under the rubric of “privatization” and now goes to war with the Pentagon. With its $80 billion-plus budget, the intelligence bureaucracy has simply exploded. There are so many competing agencies and outfits, surrounded by a universe of private intelligence contractors, all enswathed in a penumbra of secrecy, and they have grown so large, mainly under the Pentagon’s aegis, that you could say intelligence is now a ruling way of life in Washington -- and it, too, is being thoroughly militarized. Even the once-civilian CIA has undergone a process of para-militarization and now runs its own “covert” drone wars in Pakistan and elsewhere. Its director, a widely hailed retired four-star general, was previously the U.S. war commander in Iraq and then Afghanistan, just as the National Intelligence Director who
oversees the whole intelligence labyrinth is a retired Air Force lieutenant general. In a sense, even the military has been “militarized.” In these last years, a secret army of special operations forces, 60,000 or more strong and still expanding, has grown like an incubus inside the regular armed forces. As the CIA’s drones have become the president’s private air force, so the special ops troops are his private army, and are now given free rein to go about the business of war in their own cocoon of secrecy in areas far removed from what are normally considered America’s war zones. Diplomacy, too, has been militarized. Diplomats work ever more closely with the military, while the State Department is transforming itself into an unofficial arm of the Pentagon -- as the secretary of state is happy to admit -- as well as of the weapons industry. And keep in mind that we now have two Pentagons, thanks to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which is focused, among other things, on militarizing our southern border. Meanwhile, with the help of the DHS, local police forces nationwide have, over the last decade, been significantly up-armored and have, in the name of fighting terrorism, gained a distinctly military patina. They have ever more access to elaborate weaponry and gadgets, including billions of dollars of surplus military equipment of every sort, often being funneled to once peaceable small town police departments.

Pentagon Would Keep 2006 Spending Power Under Cuts, CBO Finds


The Pentagon's basic budget for next year will be larger than in 2006 when adjusted for inflation even if automatic budget cuts take effect, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

The Department of Defense's $526 billion request for fiscal 2013, not including war spending, reflects a reduction of $45 billion from previous plans. If automatic cuts known as sequestration take effect in January, the funding would be further reduced to $469 billion, the nonpartisan CBO said in a report released yesterday.

"Accommodating those automatic reductions could be difficult for the department to manage because it would need to be achieved in only nine months -- between the cuts taking effect and the end of the fiscal year," the congressional budget analysts wrote. "Even with that cut, however, DoD's base budget in 2013 would still be larger than it was in 2006," when calculated in 2013 dollars.

The CBO report buttresses the view of some independent budget analysts, such as Gordon Adams of the Stimson Center in Washington and Todd Harrison of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, that sequestration wouldn't be the short-term budget disaster described by Pentagon and defense industry officials.

The independent analysts said the automatic cuts would essentially reverse the buildup after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and the wars that followed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[...]

The Congressional Budget Office said defense spending in fiscal 2013 also would remain "larger than
the average base budget during the 1980s" in the Reagan-era defense buildup if the automatic cuts take effect.

[...]

[haw-info] **Update: 2013 Defense Appropriations Bill**
**Hiscze@aol.com** via uark.edu

Thanks to folks who made the calls!

There were a long list of amendments to this bill, most of which were brought to a vote. Perhaps the most important was an amendment by Barbara Lee, which would have limited expenditures for Afghanistan to the safe and orderly withdrawal of all US troops. This amendment was defeated with 107 Ayes, 312 Noes and 12 not voting. One bright spot is that by a small margin, the majority of Democrats supported the Lee amendment, putting themselves in direct opposition to the White House on this crucial issue.

For roll-call on the Lee Amendment see:
http://www.opencongress.org/vote/2012/h/485

The overall defense bill was whittled down by $1 billion as the result of a bipartisan amendment co-sponsored by Reps. Frank and Mulvaney. This still left a Pentagon budget of $606 billion for the next fiscal year. (In case anyone thinks this is a small amount of money to keep us all safe and sound, bear in mind that nuclear weapons, military construction and some other items are not included. They are in other appropriations bills.) The not so inspiring total for the overall Defense Appropriations bill, which includes $88 billion to continue the war in Afghanistan was 326 Ayes, 90 Noes and 15 Not voting. For the roll-call on the overall Defense Appropriations see:
http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2012/roll498.xml

Is this the end of the process? No. This will still have to go to the Senate and will ultimately become part of a big budget fight, perhaps as late as the "lame duck" session in November. This is not more of the usual. Because of the Budget Control Act, passed last August, appropriations for the military, which exceed a cap (as this bill does) will come directly out of discretionary domestic spending.

Carolyn Eisenberg for the HAW Steering Committee

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**Urgent Action Alert: Congress Set to Waste 57 Percent of Our Taxes**
Veterans For Peace via uark.edu, 7-17-12  to jbennet
Exposing the true costs of war since 1985.

"I don’t vote for funding for war. I vote against preparation for the military. I will never again go down that road." --Rep. John Lewis

Email Us
Share this action on FB
Dear Dick,

This week Congress will debate and vote on a bill -- the so-called "Defense Appropriations Act" -- that will make us less safe by dumping over $600 billion into preparations for war. Combined with military spending in other departments, this is 57% of all federal discretionary spending.

Let Congress know we oppose this bloated spending. [link]

Included in the bill is $88 billion for continued war right now in Iraq and Afghanistan. Pretending those wars are over doesn't stop the flow of funds -- which are needed for such domestic human needs as education, healthcare, and clean energy.

Tell Congress to make its priorities match ours, not Lockheed Martin's. [link]

Moving our representatives toward decent spending priorities is a long-term project. But should they pass this bill, we can at least force them to begin some military cuts. We can insist that they keep the bipartisan ban on military sponsorships of NASCAR and other sporting events -- and vote for amendments being proposed by Rep. Barbara Lee to:

- cut military spending on Afghanistan except to fund withdrawal;
- cut military spending to that of the next 14 nations combined (from our current level which equals that of all nations combined);
- cut military spending to 2008 level, unless the Pentagon produces auditable books;
- cut military spending to comply with last year's Budget Control Act.

Tell your Representative to support these amendments, and that you'll be watching.

You'll remember that Barbara Lee was the only member of Congress who voted against the Sept 14, 2001, blank check to George Bush for endless military adventure known as the "2001 Authorization to Use Military Force."

Please forward to everyone you know this recent comment from Rep. John Lewis, the legendary civil rights activist:

"War is obsolete. It cannot be used as a tool of our foreign policy. It's barbaric. ... If I had to do it all over again, I would have voted with Barbara Lee. It was raw courage on her part. So, because of that, I don’t vote for funding for war. I vote against preparation for the military. I will never again go down that road."

P.P.S. RootsAction is an independent online force endorsed by Jim Hightower, Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornel West, Daniel Ellsberg, Glenn Greenwald, Naomi Klein, Bill Fletcher Jr., Laura Flanders, former U.S. Senator James Abourezk, Coleen Rowley, and many others.

Background:
Democracy Now: Rep. John Lewis, Civil Rights Icon
Linda Bilmes (Boston Globe): Afghanistan Is Missing From the Campaign
How the F-35 Nearly Doubled In Price (And Why You Didn't Know)
Winslow Wheeler, Time Magazine, July 9, 2012

On June 14 - Flag Day, of all days - the Government Accountability Office released a new oversight report on the F-35: Joint Strike Fighter: DOD Actions Needed to Further Enhance Restructuring and Address Affordability Risks. As usual, it contained some important information on growing costs and other problems. Also as usual, the press covered the new report, albeit a bit sparsely.

Fresh bad news on the F-35 has apparently become so routine that the fundamental problems in the program are plowed right over. One gets the impression, especially from GAO's own title to its report, that we should expect the bad news, make some minor adjustments, and then move on. But a deeper dive into the report offers more profound, and disturbing, bottom line.

[...]
As F-35 observers know and as the table shows, the cost documentation of the F-35 program started in 2001, not 2007. There has been a lot more cost growth than the "$117.2 billion (42 percent)" stated.

Set in 2001, the total acquisition cost of the F-35 was to be $233.0 billion. Compare that to the current estimate of $395.7 billion: cost growth has been $162.7 billion, or 70%; a lot more than what GAO stated in its summary.

However, the original $233 billion was supposed to buy 2,866 aircraft, not the 2,457 currently planned: making it $162 billion, or 70%, more for 409, or 14%, fewer aircraft. Adjusting for the shrinkage in the fleet, I calculate the cost growth for a fleet of 2,457 aircraft to be $190.8 billion, or 93%.

The cost of the program has almost doubled over the original baseline; it is not an increase of 42%.

Now, you know why DOD loves the rubber baseline. Reset the baseline, and you can pretend a catastrophe is half its actual size.

[...]
GAO is also correct to point out DOD management's declaration that the current F-35 operating cost estimate, "$1.1 Trillion for all three variants based on a 30-year service life," (page 10) is "unaffordable and simply unacceptable in the current fiscal environment" (page 11).

[...]
The F-35 should now be officially called "unaffordable and simply unacceptable." All that is lacking is a management that will accept - and act - on that finding.

[...]

A People's Guide to the Federal Budget
Mattea Kramer et al/National Priorities Project (Author), Foreword by Barbara Ehrenreich (Author), Afterword by Josh Silver (Author)
The US is at the forefront of an international arms development effort that includes a remarkable assortment of technologies, which look and sound like they belong in a Hollywood science fiction thriller. From microwave energy blasters and blinding laser beams, to chemical agents and deafening sonic blasters, these weapons are at the cutting edge of crowd control. The Pentagon's approved term for these weapons is "non-lethal" or "less-lethal" and they are intended for use against the unarmed. Designed to "control crowds, clear streets, subdue and restrain individuals and secure borders," they are the 21st century's version of the police baton, pepper spray and tear gas. As journalist Ando Arike puts it, "The result is what appears to be the first arms race in which the opponent is the general population."

The demand for non-lethal weapons (NLW) is rooted in the rise of television. In the 1960s and '70s the medium let everyday Americans witness the violent tactics used to suppress the civil rights and anti-war movements. Today's rapid advancements in media and telecommunications technologies allow people to
record and publicize images and video of undue force more than ever before. Authorities are well aware of how images of violence play out publicly. In 1997, a joint report from the Pentagon and the Justice Department warned:
"A further consideration that affects how the military and law enforcement apply force is the greater presence of members of the media or other civilians who are observing, if not recording, the situation. Even the lawful application of force can be misrepresented to or misunderstood by the public. More than ever, the police and the military must be highly discreet when applying force."

The global economic collapse coupled with the unpredictable and increasingly catastrophic consequences of climate change and resource scarcity, along with a new era of austerity defined by rising unemployment and glaring inequality have already led to massive protests in Spain, Greece, Egypt, and even Madison, Wisconsin. From the progressive era to the Great Depression to the civil rights movement, Americans have a rich history of taking to the streets to demand greater equality.

Meanwhile, tens of millions of dollars have been invested in the research and development of more "media-friendly" weapons for everyday policing and crowd control. This has lead to a trade-in of old school weapons for more exotic and controversial technologies. The following are six of the most outrageous "non-lethal" weapons that will define the future of crowd control.

1. The Invisible Pain Ray: The 'Holy Grail of Crowd Control'

It sounds like a weapon out of Star Wars. The Active Denial System, or ADS, works like an open-air microwave oven, projecting a focused beam of electromagnetic radiation to heat the skin of its targets to 130 degrees. This creates an intolerable burning sensation forcing those in its path to instinctively flee (a response the Air Force dubs the "goodbye effect").

The Pentagon's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program (JNLWP) says, "This capability will add to the ability to stop, deter and turn back an advancing adversary, providing an alternative to lethal force." Although ADS is described as non-lethal, a 2008 report by physicist and less-lethal weapons expert Dr. Jürgen Altmann suggests otherwise:
"... the ADS provides the technical possibility to produce burns of second and third degree. Because the beam of diameter 2 m and above is wider than human size, such burns would occur over considerable parts of the body, up to 50% of its surface. Second- and third-degree burns covering more than 20% of the body surface are potentially life-threatening – due to toxic sensitivity to infection – and require intensive care in a specialized unit. Without a technical device that reliably prevents re-triggering on the same target subject, the ADS has a potential to produce permanent injury or death."

The weapon was initially tested in Afghanistan, but later recalled due to a combination of technical difficulties and political concerns, including the fear that ADS would be used as a torture tool making it "not politically tenable," according to a Defense Science Board report. The tens of millions of dollars spent to develop the ADS did not necessarily go to waste, however.

While the weapon may be too controversial for use on the battlefield, it appears that nothing is too sadistic for use on US prisoners, so the ADS has since been modified into a smaller version by Raytheon, for use in law enforcement. Last year, the renamed Assault Intervention System (AIS) was installed at the Pitchess Detention Center’s North County Correction Facility at the behest of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD). Former LASD Commander, Charles “Sid” Heal had been lobbying for the pain ray for years, calling it the "Holy Grail of Crowd Control," due to "its ability to make people scatter, almost instantly."
The device is operated by a jail officer with a joystick, and is intended to break up prison riots, inmate brawls and prevent assaults on officers. Sheriff Lee Baca added that it would allow officers to "quickly intervene" without having to physically enter the area to incapacitate prisoners.

The ACLU claims that use of such a device on American prisoners is "tantamount to torture." The organization even sent a letter to the sheriff in charge, demanding he never use the energy weapon against inmates. "The idea that a military weapon designed to cause intolerable pain should be used against county jail inmates is staggeringly wrongheaded," said Margaret Winter, associate director of the ACLU National Prison Project. "Unnecessarily inflicting severe pain and taking such unnecessary risks with people's lives is a clear violation of the Eighth Amendment and due process clause of the U.S. Constitution."

The pain ray's use in the Pitchess Detention Center is a pilot program. If successful, the weapon could find its way into other prisons around the country. The National Institute of Justice has also expressed interest in a hand-held, rifle-sized, short-range weapon "that could be effective at tens of feet for law enforcement officials."

### 2. The Laser Blinding 'Dazzler'

*Source: Air Force Fact Sheet*

The Personal Halting and Stimulation Response rifle, or PHaSR, is a massive laser shooter. PHaSR technology is being co-funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program (JNLWP), and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and is being developed by the Air Force Research Laboratory. While JNLWP is interested in the technology for military applications, NIJ is focusing on its law enforcement use.

So what is the purpose of this light-shooting toy? Well, it won't kill you, but it will temporarily blind you — or as the NIJ prefers to say, it will "dazzle" you into disorientation — by shooting you with two low-power diode-pumped lasers.

Protocol IV, the Blinding Laser Protocol of the United Nations Convention on Conventional Weapons, states that, "The use of laser weapons that are specifically designed, as their sole combat function or as one of their combat functions, to cause permanent blindness to unenhanced vision is prohibited."

After the US agreed to the Blinding Laser Protocol in 1995 under President Clinton, the Pentagon was forced to cancel several blinding laser weapon programs that were in the works.

According to a U.S. Air Force fact sheet, "The laser light from PHaSR temporarily impairs aggressors by dazzling them with one wavelength. The second wavelength causes a repel effect that discourages advancing aggressors." The JNLWP website says that "a significant amount of research and experimentation is still required to gain a full understanding of the safety, military effectiveness, and limitations of these future capabilities."

### 3. The Taser on Steroids

*Source: Taser website*

The Albuquerque Police Department now has Taser shotguns in its arsenal. Most of us are familiar with hand-held Tasers and understand that they only work if the police are standing pretty close to you (about 20 feet).

But Taser has developed the Taser X12, a 12-gauge shotgun that instead of firing lethal bullet rounds, is designed to fire Taser projectile rounds. Known as Extended Range Electronic Projectiles (XREP), the XREP cartridge, as defined by the Taser website, is a "self-contained, wireless projectile that delivers the same neuro-muscular incapacitation bio-effect [a fancy way of saying electric shock] as the handheld Taser, but up to 100 feet." According to a July 21 press release, Taser International has taken the XREP to the next level, teaming up with the Australian electronic gun company Metal Storm to enhance the 12-
The two companies will combine Metal Storm’s MAUL stacked projectile technology to "provide semi-automatic fire as fast as the operator can squeeze the trigger," which boasts a full weapon reload of up to five rounds in less than two seconds. Picture five rounds of Taser XREP cartridges flying out in less than two seconds up to 30 yards away -- that is the plan.

In September 2010 Raw Story reported that the rate of Taser-related deaths were on the rise. The story cited an Amnesty International report from 2008 that found "351 Taser-related deaths in the US between June 2001 and August 2008, a rate of just slightly above four deaths per month." About 90 percent of the victims were unarmed and did not appear to pose any serious threat, according to an article in the Boston Review. The Amnesty report points out that Tasers are "inherently open to abuse as they are easy to carry and easy to use and they can inflict severe pain at the push of a button without leaving substantial marks." In Amnesty’s US 2010 report, the Taser-related death toll had increased to 390. If the MAUL-Taser combined shooter find its way into police departments around the country, it may not bode well for the rate of Taser-related deaths.

Another project of Taser International described by Ando Arike is the Shockwave Area-Denial System, "which blankets a large area with electrified darts, and a wireless Taser projectile with a 100-meter range, helpful for picking off “ringleaders” in unruly crowds," In 2007, Taser's French distributor announced plans for a stun-gun-equipped flying saucer that shoots stun darts at "criminal suspects or rioting crowds"; however, it has yet to be unveiled. Clearly there is no limit to Taser International’s capacity for creativity.

4. Calmative Agents for Riot Control

The Sunshine Project, a transparency and accountability organization, defines calmatives as "chemical or biological agents with sedative, sleep-inducing or similar psychoactive effects." Although the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the use of riot control agents in warfare, JNWLP and NIJ have long considered calmatives for both military and law enforcement applications, such as dispersing a crowd, controlling a riot or calming a noncompliant offender.

The most well-known and widely used riot-control agents are tear gas (CS) and chloroacetophenone (CN), also known as mace. A few ways that more advanced non-lethal calmatives might be administered, depending on the law enforcement environment, would include "a topical or transdermal skin application, an aerosol spray, an intramuscular dart, or a rubber bullet filled with an inhalable agent," according to NIJ research.

In the March 2010 issue of Harper’s magazine, Ando Arike gives an extensive overview of riot control technology in his article "The Soft Kill: New Frontiers in Pain Compliance." He wrote: Pentagon interest in “advanced riot-control agents” has long been an open secret, but just how close we are to seeing these agents in action was revealed in 2002, when the Sunshine Project, an arms-control group based in Austin, Texas, posted on the Internet a trove of Pentagon documents uncovered through the Freedom of Information Act. Among these was a fifty-page study titled “The Advantages and Limitations of Calmatives for Use as a Non-Lethal Technique,” conducted by Penn State’s Applied Research Laboratory, home of the JNLWDP-sponsored Institute for Non-Lethal Defense Technologies.

Penn State’s College of Medicine researchers agreed, contrary to accepted principles of medical ethics, that “the development and use of non-lethal calmative techniques is both achievable and desirable,” and identified a large number of promising drug candidates, including benzodiazepines like Valium, serotonin-reuptake inhibitors like Prozac, and opiate derivatives like morphine, fentanyl, and carfentanyl, the last commonly used by veterinarians to sedate large animals. The only problems they saw were in developing effective delivery vehicles and regulating dosages, but these problems could be solved readily, they
recommended, through strategic partnerships with the pharmaceutical industry. Little more was heard about the Pentagon’s “advanced riot-control agent” program until July 2008, when the Army announced that production was scheduled for its XM1063 “non-lethal personal suppression projectile,” an artillery shell that bursts in midair over its target, scattering 152 canisters over a 100,000-square-foot area, each dispersing a chemical agent as it parachutes down. There are many indications that a calmsative, such as fentanyl, is the intended payload—a literal opiate of the masses.

5. Screaming Microwaves That Pierce the Skull

Source: Wired

Researchers are in the process of developing the Mob Excess Deterrent Using Silent Audio or MEDUSA (that’s right, from Greek mythology), which uses "a beam of microwaves to induce uncomfortable auditory sensations in the skull." The device "exploits the microwave audio effect, in which short microwave pulses rapidly heat tissue, causing a shockwave inside the skull that can be detected by the ears," explains David Hambling in the New Scientist. MEDUSA's audio effect is loud enough to cause discomfort or even incapacitation. It may also cause a little brain damage from the high-intensity shockwave created by the microwave pulse. MEDUSA's intended purpose is deterring crowds from entering a protected perimeter, like a nuclear site, and temporarily incapacitating unruly individuals. So far the weapon remains in development and is funded by the Navy.

6. Ear-Splitting Siren

Source: Associated Press

The Long Range Acoustic Device, or LRAD, developed by American Technology Corporation, "focuses and broadcasts sound over ranges of up to hundreds of yards," according to David Axe in Wired's Danger Room. LRAD has been around for years, but Americans first took notice when police used it in Pittsburgh to ward off protesters at the 2009 G-20 summit. David Hambling says it is generally used in two ways: "as a megaphone to order protesters to disperse; or, if they disobey, as an "ear-splitting siren" to drive them away." While LRAD may not be deadly, it can cause permanent Similar sonic blasters have proven deadly. One is the Thunder Generator, an Israeli-developed shock wave cannon that farmers commonly use to scare away crop destroying birds. According to a Defense News report last year, Israel's Ministry of Defense licensed ArmyTec to market the Thunder Generator in military and security versions.

In a brief overview, Hambling explains that it works using "gas from a cylinder of domestic liquid petroleum," which is mixed with air. When detonated it produces "a series of high-intensity blasts," at a range of 50 meters." While the makers insist it doesn't cause permanent damage, they warn that people within 10 meters could suffer lasting injuries or possibly death.

The Impact

The application of pain to control to coerce people into submission helps achieve the desired aims of perception management, while sheltering the public from the brutality of such devices.

Perhaps these less-lethal tactics for crowd control do result in fewer injuries. But they also severely weaken our capacity to enact political change. Authorities have ever more creative ways to manage dissent, at a time when the need for change by popular demand is vital to the future of our society and the planet.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article has been corrected since its original publication for more accurate
ACTION: Stop the military from reading your email

Laura W. Murphy, ACLU aclu@aclu.org via uark.edu

August 1, 2012 to jbennet

FROM: Laura W. Murphy

Director, Washington Legislative Office

FACTS: The Cybersecurity Act of 2012 is on the Senate floor right now.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEF: The ACLU is demanding two key components of the Cybersecurity Act:

Stop corporations from sharing email information with the National Security Agency and the military

Keep companies from having unfettered access to monitor our communications

URGENT:


Spread the Word. Help by sharing this campaign with friends.
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!)