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Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:

   The White House
   1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
   Washington, DC 20500
Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:

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For a knowledge-based peace, justice, and ecology movement and an informed citizenry as the foundation for opposition to empire, militarism, and wars. Here is the link to the Index: http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/ See: Continental US Westward Expansion, Genocide, Indigenous People of Americas, Pentagon, US Imperialism, and more.

My blog:
It's the War Department

http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/

WHO TELLS THE STORY?

“. . .the dominant interpretation of the past often enjoys its status not because of its superior historical accuracy but because of its proponents’ social power.” Karl Jacoby, Shadows at Dawn: An Apache Massacre and the Violence of History (p. 276).

THE CHINA THREAT

“Percentage of Americans who say China ‘can’t be trusted: 68.’” (“Harper’s Index” January 2013). Where do you think that fear came from? US encirclement of China would not happen without the majority of people first having been persuaded by the warriors to believe China is an enemy, just as with Vietnam and the “Axis of Evil.” Who’s next? --Dick

Nos. 3, 4, 5 at end

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SEVERAL ON TPP

MOYERS & Co. (Nov. 3, 2013)

Interviews of Yves Smith, “Naked Capitalism” Blog
Dean Baker, “Beat the Press” Blog

TPP has all the liabilities of NAFTA: not a free trade agreement because it weakens worker protection regulation, decreases jobs, strengthens property rights and profits (patents), weakens Dodd/Frank legislation, and weakens or removes regulation of financial sector. TPP is for corporations not people.

Also, like NAFTA, it will harm the environment.

And it is anti-China, it isolates China.

Obama campaigned in 2008 to reform NAFTA, but he did not. Why? O. is a “very conservative,” that is, pro-corporate economist. –Dick

Bill Moyers | Yves Smith and Dean Baker on Secrets in Trade

Bill Moyers, Moyers & Company: Some vigilant independent watchdogs are tracking the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations with sources they trust, including Dean Baker and Yves Smith, who join Moyers & Company this week.

Watch the Video and Read the Transcript

Global Justice Advocates: Spectacle Actions Continue in Washington, DC to Expose Secret Trade Agreement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 24, 2013
3:18 PM

CONTACT: Global Justice Advocates

Cassidy Regan, 203-470-9255, stopfasttrack@popularresistance.org

Margaret Flowers, 410-591-0892, info@popularresistance.org
Spectacle Actions Continue in Washington, DC to Expose Secret Trade Agreement

WASHINGTON - September 24 - A fourth day of action will take place today as energy builds to expose the secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and pressure Congress to vote “no” on granting Fast Track (Trade Promotion Authority) to the President. Fast Track would allow the President to negotiate and sign the TPP without Congressional hearings or amendments on the full content of the text and without full consideration of the impact the TPP will have on laws that protect consumers, workers and the environment.

http://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2013/09/24-2

• 'Winning the Race to the Bottom': Obama Moves to Fast-Track the TPP

• 104 comments

Basil_Bullion — Dammit, people, it is time for a general strike! The numbers are on the side of the working people ...


The TPP Is Another Job Killing Trade Deal - So Why Are Both Parties Supporting It? By Natalie Pompilio, Yes! Magazine 31 August 13

Factory owners in the United States say that the Trans-Pacific Partnership—which is being negotiated this week in Brunei—will force them to lay off workers. Yet opponents in Washington are few and far between.
igwam Mills has been making socks in Sheboygan, Wis., for more than 100 years. This is quality footwear sold at sporting goods stores and specialty outlets, not the cheaper, flimsier items you might find at a big box store. Wigwam has more than 200 skilled and semi-skilled workers-some of whom are second- or third-generation employees.

The company is a rarity, a survival story that inspires flag-waving. It endures in an industry that has seen similar plants close or move overseas where labor and real estate is cheaper and environmental regulations less stringent. It's a holdout from a time when the United States dominated the sock market.

That wasn't so long ago, says Robert Chesebro Jr., Wigwam's president and CEO. He points out that in 1990, less than 10 percent of socks sold in the United States were imported. Today, it's the opposite: 90 percent are imports.

The small percentage of the sock market still supplied by U.S. manufacturers could decrease even more if the United States joins the latest global trade deal, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). The partnership, which has been called "NAFTA on steroids," would establish a free-trade zone between the United States and 11 other countries, including Vietnam, Australia, and Singapore. Japan will also join the agreement, meaning TPP countries will account for nearly 40 percent of global gross domestic product and about one-third of all world trade.

Critics say that if the TPP is approved, the United States will lose jobs as even more major companies move their operations overseas.

Bringing it home
Michael Stumo, CEO of the advocacy group Coalition for a Prosperous America, said that of the Americans who lose their jobs as a result of the TPP, about one-third will never work again, one-third will find lower paying positions, and only one-third will eventually find a comparable position.

"There will be much more poverty, meaning your infrastructure suffers and the divorce rate goes up. This puts stress on kids and causes social problems," he said. "If you want to have a successful economy, you want to capture as much of the value in the supply chain as you can."

That means bringing manufacturing back to the United States and supporting products made in this country.

Mitch Cahn, owner and founder of Unionwear, a uniform manufacturing company in Newark, N.J., says both can be done. In 1992, he took over an empty factory in a crime-blighted neighborhood. Today, his building stands on what he calls "one of the safest blocks in Newark." He has 115 employees, about 75 percent of whom have been there for 10 years or more. There are only 15 parking spaces on site, but that's not a problem: Most of the employees walk to work or use public transportation.

"From our factory rooftop, we can see dozens of houses where our employees live. We can see their kids playing outside. We can see them walk home from school," Cahn said.

A former Wall Street money mover, Cahn decided to open his manufacturing company because he "wanted to add value and create value instead of just moving it around." He rents out sections of his 75,000-square-foot building to businesses related to uniform manufacture, like screen printers and a sewing contractor. That reduces his transportation costs and carbon footprint.

Still, he says, products made in the United States are often more expensive than their foreign counterparts. Many of his company's products are sold to labor unions, government departments, and those in the anti-sweatshop crowd, like nonprofits and universities.

"Right now, no one buys a made in the USA product by accident. It's still more expensive, about 25 percent more expensive," he says.

**Buying American**

Mark Andol, whose two New York stores sell only American-made products, says customers recognize that the quality of his products makes up for the price. When Andol opened his first store in tiny Elma, N.Y., in 2010, he had 50 products he could boast were American-made, including the packaging. Today, Andol's stores stock more than 5,000 items produced by 350 U.S. companies, and his Made in America stores have become tourist destinations.

"We try to lead with quality. Everyone else leads with price," Andol said. "Most businessmen are about making money and I'm about making livelihoods."

Andol knows firsthand what can happen when companies take their businesses overseas. He ran his
own general welding and fabricating business from 1989 until 2007, when a major customer decided to give its business to a Chinese company that was marketing the same products for $3 less per piece. Andol had to lay off 38 of his 69 employees, including family members and three friends he'd known since kindergarten.

"Nobody realizes what is lost when one product goes overseas. It's not just my people. It's the guys who made the boxes for me and the company who made the staples and labels," he says.

**A bipartisan secret deal**

The TPP’s specifics have been hammered out during closed-door conferences held throughout the world over the past five years. The 18th round took place in Malaysia in July. Leaked chapters of the agreement have caused concern among a diverse group of critics including the Sierra Club, Public Citizen, and numerous U.S. labor unions. The agreement will give unprecedented powers to multinational corporations and affect individuals in member countries in ways that are both unexpected and undesirable.

Yet surprisingly, the TPP has supporters on both sides of the political aisle.

"On health care, on transportation, on abortion, on just about any significant policy issue, the Republicans and Democrats are at a complete stalemate," said Auggie Tantillo, a strategic consultant to the National Council of Textile Organizations, a lobbying group dedicated to the welfare of the U.S. textile industry. "On trade, there is an odd and convenient bipartisanship. You have these huge retailers and importers that are supporting the TPP on both sides of the aisle."

Curt Ellis, communications director for the American Jobs Alliance, put it more bluntly: "Both Democrats and Republicans have been captured by the financial elite on Wall Street and are doing their bidding. Both parties are collaborating on the economic destruction of this country," he says. "We can expect [U.S. House Speaker John] Boehner to hold Obama's hand as they push us over the cliff."

Of course, some would benefit from the TPP. During one round of negotiations, Chesebro said, one U.S. retailer argued that the TPP could save consumers money on socks—approximately 63 cents a pair. "How many people will be positively impacted by paying 63 cents less for a pair of socks?" he asked.

And to get those savings, product quality will likely suffer, says Tantillo. More importantly, working conditions in certain countries may worsen. Environmental concerns will be further ignored. Still, Tantillo doesn't think many American shoppers will care.

"We've created a consumer mindset that has almost no social conscience," he says. "If something goes on within U.S. borders, we're quick to react to it and rightfully so. If it happens outside the United States, such as the disastrous factory collapse in Bangladesh, we're like, 'Whatever,' as if there's no connectivity."

President Obama said he wants to see the TPP made law by October. He may get that wish if Congress grants fast-track authority allowing him to sign the agreement without pre-approval by Congress.

**Taking a stand**
Like other hometown American factories, Wigwam Mills is likely to take a hit from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, even though Sheboygan, Wis., 2,000 miles from the Pacific Ocean, is far from the international meetings where free trade deals are arranged. In the 1990s, this town of 50,000 was named "The Best Place to Raise a Family" by Reader's Digest magazine. Sheboygan is known for its bratwurst, and this year's 60th annual "Brat Days" featured carnival rides, a footrace, and an extreme eating competition.

Wigwam Mills factory employee Sue Procek is a Wisconsin native. She applied for a job at the company more than 30 years after seeing an ad for a sock pairer. Of course, she'd heard of Wigwam. Everyone here knows Wigwam.

"I heard it was a nice place to work and family-friendly and all that so I put an application in," she said. She got the job. Procek is now a work distributor, divvying up product among workers-"the girls," she calls them-who add finishing touches. The position is considered semi-skilled, and Procek, 56, also serves as secretary/treasurer for the local union. "I thought I could make a career here," she said, "and I was right."

Procek and her colleagues on the factory floor only learned about the TPP a few months ago. Chesebro, their boss, has long followed TPP negotiations, and he alerted employees to possible ramifications of its passage. "If this were to go through and increase our costs, we could lose 20 people," Procek said. "That's just us. One small place. Add 10 other plants and that's 200 people. This could affect a lot of people."

The key to defeating the TPP at this point is to employ a "vampire strategy," according to Arthur Stamoulis, executive director of Citizens Trade Campaign: Drag it out of the shadows and into the sunlight, then watch it burst into flames.

If the American public knew the details of the TPP-which Stamoulis calls the "biggest corporate power grab so far this millennium"- they would not stand for it. There would be a popular uprising, he said, similar to the one against the World Trade Organization in 1999, at the so-called "Battle of Seattle."

"People's movements have stopped corporate power grabs like this time and time again. The more people learn about them, the more upset they become," Stamoulis says. "It's up to us to spread the word from the bottom up."

"AIR FORCE LAUNCHES MISSILE IN TEST FLIGHT." Arkansas Democrat-Gazette (Sept. 23, 2013). Comment by Dick.

Imagine China or North Korea launching “test” intercontinental ballistic missiles 4000 miles eastward toward the US several times a year to a
designated target. From Shanghai the missile would reach at least to Midway Islands west of Hawaii. You can hear the din of patriotic indignation from Washington and all around the super-security sick USA against such acts of war.

Well, China and NK would only be repeating what the US has been doing for years from Vandenberg Air Force Base northwest of Los Angeles. The latest missile sped 4,200 miles to Kwajalein Atoll, under the threatening Air Force Global Strike Command. Do our leaders wish to guaranty retaliatory, arms-race preparation? Oh no, they are lobbing strike weapons into the Pacific because they are acting in defense—the Defense Department you know.

The Air Force, the report says, wants “to verify the weapons system’s accuracy and reliability.” Several times a year? And aimed at China—well a little south. To strike Kwajalein Atoll. Remember where that is? The Marshall Islands—Bikini Atoll, H-bomb “tested” over 60 times during the 1950s. The little nation is under our trust, so what does it matter we are sending missiles to one of their islands in the middle of their other islands? The missiles are not armed, and our military is only testing. It’s not as though this is 1984 and the US is Oceania bombing itself to keep its population under control.

What was the result of the test? The Strike Command “did not include results of the test.” Why didn’t the newspaper acquire the information for its readers? You guessed it: “Calls and an email were not immediately returned.” The test failed? Better keep that a secret. Doesn’t matter: the threat is still there, and the US controls the Pacific!

MICRONESIA

the Human Rights page of Al Jazeera English.

Micronesians in Hawaii face uncertain future

COFA Agreements provide US regional control in exchange for limited access to America.

Jon Letman  Last Modified: 03 Oct 2013 06:40

Tommy Esang Remengesau, President of Palau, addresses the 68th session of the General Assembly at United Nations headquarters, Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2013. [AP]

When the bloodiest Pacific battles of World War II were over, the United States found a new use for the small islands of Micronesia: open-air nuclear testing. Between 1946 and 1958, the US conducted at least 67 nuclear weapons tests in the Marshall Islands, unleashing the equivalent of over 7,200 Hiroshima-sized bombs in the Marshall Islands. The largest test, carried out in March 1954, had a yield of 15 megatons, over 1,000 times the strength of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

Once idyllic atolls were transformed into radioactive craters and local people were forced to relocate, sometimes to islands previously considered uninhabitable. With no knowledge of
nuclear weapons, Marshallese and other Pacific Islanders became unwitting atomic guinea pigs. America’s nuclear tests spawned a legacy of stillborn babies, birth defects, sterility, cancer, and other maladies. When it came time to "clean up" after the tests, the US recruited hundreds of Micronesians who worked in highly contaminated areas, allegedly without adequate protection.

The United States, which administered the UN mandated Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, used this unchallenged control over the region to advance it’s own military and political agenda, but was also charged with the economic development and care for over a thousand small islands and their people.

In 1986 the US signed agreements called the Compact of Free Association (COFA) with two newly independent Pacific island nations: the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and the Republic of the Marshall Island (RMI). A similar compact was entered with the Republic of Palau in 1994. These compacts gave the US greater control and exclusive access to over a million square miles of the Pacific, allowing for additional military and weapons testing facilities like the Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site on Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands, a critical support for the US's Space Surveillance Network.

In exchange for US claims of "strategic denial" (exclusive territorial control), citizens FSM, RMI, and Palau (also called Belau) were granted the right to live permanently or come and go at will in the United States. What often goes unmentioned is the fact that under the compacts the US will maintain strategic denial and use of military sites like Kwajalein for decades even if economic assistance and other defense provisions are not renegotiated.

As legal residents (but not citizens), COFA residents can work, study, receive medical treatment and are required to pay local, state and federal taxes. In return, they were initially eligible for most of the same public benefits as Americans. That changed during 1996 federal welfare reform when Congress restricted access to a broad range of programs to certain non-US citizen residents including COFA migrants. The result was many COFA patients were cut off from the very health care system their tax dollars were supposed to support.

In 2009, blaming a downturn in the economy, former Hawaii governor Linda Lingle’s administration notified COFA residents of drastically reduced health care access. Many complained they were given inadequate notice and without explanation in their own language. COFA patients visited their doctors only to find they no longer had the health care they relied on for cancer treatment, dialysis, medication and other life-saving treatment and medication.

The cuts resulted in a class action lawsuit which won a preliminary injunction in federal district court that would ensure access to essential health services. To date, the case remains on appeal in the 9th Circuit Court.

As tax payers, COFA migrants pay for social service programs like SNAP (food stamps), Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program and federally subsidized education loans, yet do not fully benefit from all programs.

The exact number of COFA migrants reside in Hawaii today is difficult to determine as they move fluidly between their home nations and the US without a visa or Green Card. Current estimates range from 12,000 to 18,000 migrants in Hawaii with additional communities on the
West Coast, Guam and as far away as Arkansas. As many as one-fifth of COFA nationals may live outside their home countries.

Assimilation to Hawaii’s Polynesian-based society would appear natural for Pacific Island migrants who share cultural and historical parallels, but despite Hawaii’s reputation as an ethnic and cultural melting pot and famous ‘Aloha Spirit’, Hawaii’s newest wave of migrants face discrimination and continued restricted access to federal and state benefits.

Fight for the right

In response to this discrimination, the Japanese American Citizens League in Honolulu produced a short documentary to educate the public about COFA migrants. Appearing in the video was William Hoshijo, executive director of the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission. Hoshijo said, "Hawaii residents from COFA nations have been scapegoated and described negatively as a burden and drain on resources, but for those who care about fairness and justice in Hawaii, it’s our responsibility to speak out to support our brothers and sisters in their struggle against discrimination."

Along with employment and education, health care is a top concern for many COFA migrants who suffer elevated rates of thyroid, colon and other cancers, ostensibly stemming from nuclear testing. Furthermore, the rapid urbanization and an interruption of their traditional diet based on subsistence fishing and farming has contributed to higher incidences of diabetes, heart disease and strokes.

Speaking about problems faced by Hawaii’s newest migrants, Wayne Tanaka, an administrator for Healthy Pacific, an online repository for COFA health care-related information resources calls it a "health care and justice issue." He says that racism is perpetuated by people who are unable to make national and ethnic distinctions between the diverse backgrounds of COFA migrants.

That racism manifests itself in the education, health care and criminal justice systems says Tanaka. It appears as offhand remarks, belittling jokes, and as graffiti like "Return my tax dollars" scrawled angrily on the side of a Micronesian food store in Honolulu.

Tanaka works with attorney Dina Shek, director of the Medical-Legal Partnership for Children in Hawaii. Nearly 80 per cent of her clients are Micronesian, most of them from the Chuuk Islands in FSM.

Micronesians aren't Hawaii’s first group of immigrants to be the target of discrimination, just the latest, Shek says. "Now that [Micronesians] have become a more identifiable group, they become an easier target." What’s different is that COFA migrants have a more complicated immigration status.

Shek explains, "There are these weird perceptions that they're not paying taxes. Actually, it’s the opposite. [COFA migrants] are paying all the same taxes…yet they are not benefiting from those taxes because there are so many limitations on certain services and programs."

Masters and slaves

Like many COFA migrants, Innocenta Sound-Kikku, a native of Chuuk, came to Hawaii for better
health care - not for herself, but for her father. Sound-Kikku, vice chair of the Micronesian Health Community Network has lived in Guam, Saipan, American Samoa and Hawaii, but returned to Honolulu in 2007 to care for her ailing father who is receiving dialysis treatment not available in Chuuk.

Although the number of Micronesians has grown in Hawaii over the last three decades, they remain misunderstood says Sound-Kikku. She points out that while the Marshall Islands were ground zero for nuclear testing, surrounding islands were also impacted and continue to suffer the effects of military pollution in the form of oil-leaking sunken ships and unexploded bombs and ammunition, a legacy of World War II.

When basic health services are denied to COFA residents, Sound-Kikku says it feels like her community is being singled out. That, coupled with bullying at school and being the butt of cruel jokes, Sound-Kikku says, begs the question, "If I'm looking at it from a Western perspective they would say, 'they are better off than if they were not even here.' But in whose lenses are we looking through?"

Sound-Kikku fears Micronesian migrant children are losing their cultural identity, language and values, as she concedes Western influence in Micronesia has shifted values away from more traditional systems, giving more status to those with money.

"Money has become more valuable than our culture. One of our elders said, 'we used to be masters of the currents of the Pacific but today we are slaves to the currency of the United States.'"


Joakim Peter, also Chuukese, is a Micronesian community advocate in Honolulu. Formerly director of Chuuk's campus of the College of Micronesia, Peter specializes in helping migrant families with health and disability issues. He sees COFA as a symbol of the relationship between the United States and the Pacific islanders who have sacrificed environmental sovereignty in order to accommodate US security demands.

He says the exchange between the US and COFA nations is an attempt to balance a relationship in which both parties have given much. "[We] want to participate in the American dream no more, no less, than anyone else," Peter says, noting that the relationship affords America exclusive access to the islands, skies and waters. "Exclusive," Peter repeats for emphasis. "Nowhere else in the world do we have [such] a relationship with any other country but the US."

COFA migrants, Peter points out, have sacrificed much for the US and have the highest volunteer rate per capita in the US's military as well as a casualty rate higher than any US state. Furthermore, Micronesian migration, Peter says, contributes to America's diversity, introducing dozens of cultures and languages and dialects like Yapese, Marshallese, Puluwatese and Pohnpeian spoken in some 100 different islands. Peter, who encourages sharing traditional knowledge with outside cultures, adds that Micronesian celestial-based ocean navigation has been studied for decades by scholars in the US, including scientists at NASA.
Despite past and present difficulties, Peter remains optimistic. By working at the community, school and church level, wrong information can be corrected, negative stereotypes eliminated and Micronesians can be better integrated into American society, he says.

‘For the Good of Mankind’

The Pacific Proving Grounds, where the bulk of America's nuclear tests were conducted in the 1940s and 50s were in the Marshall Islands which Marshallese poet and writer Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner calls home. When Jetnil-Kijiner's parents took her and her brother from their home on Majuro to Hawaii for work and educational opportunities, she couldn't speak English but she learned the language even as she lost her ties with her own native tongue.

In 2012 Jetnil-Kijiner represented the Marshall Islands at Poetry Parnassus, an international gathering of poets akin to a literary Olympics. There she recited a poem called "History Project" in which she recounts her own experience researching the Marshall Islands’ nuclear history.

Reading her poem, her voice builds from conversational to a painful intensity, describing the shame of unexplained miscarriages and birth of "jelly babies," and how the Marshallese were told that allowing their atolls be used as atomic testing was "for the good of mankind."

She reads, "...at 15 I want megatons of TNT, radioactive energy and a fancy degree, anything and everything I could ever need to send ripples of death through a people who put goats before human beings so their skin can shrivel beneath the glare of hospital room lights three generations later as they watch their grandmother, their mother, their cousin's life drift across that same black screen. Knots of knuckles tied to steel beds cold and absent of any breath, but I'm only 15..." Through her poetry she evokes the raw pain of graphing her people's death "through cancer and canned-food diabetes."

Recalling a visit to Kwajelein Atoll when she was 10-years-old, Jetnil-Kijiner speaks of the beauty of the island and how she felt encountering "Restricted Access" signs.

"I remember thinking this island was so beautiful, so sculptured. It just seemed tragic to me. I don't agree with it at all. I don't see why we need to be giving away our islands like this."

(Not quite) Nuclear-free

The third Micronesian nation to reach an agreement with the US was the Republic of Palau.

Richard Salvador, an English teacher and organizer with the COFA Community Advocacy Network was born and raised in Palau and first came to Hawaii in 1989 as a student. He explains that Palau's agreement, signed during the Clinton administration, took the longest to reach largely due to Palau's constitution which proclaimed the island nation as nuclear free.

"We said if the US wants to use any part of Palau for military purposes, it can, but we don't want any nuclear materials there," recalls Salvador. The United States, which follows a policy of neither confirming or denying the presence of nuclear weapons on some naval vessels pressured Palau to abandon its commitment to being nuclear free. As a result negotiations dragged on for nearly two decades while the US continued to push for and fund referendums.
with an increasingly lower threshold for giving up its no nukes policy. In order to accommodate the compact, Salvador explains that Palau is essentially overlooking its stated goal of being "nuclear free" for as long as the compact persists.

Under the US-Palau compact, Salvador says the nation of 21,000 has seen many of its citizens migrate to the US in search of education and employment opportunities or to volunteer in the military. This loss of much of its own workforce has led to Palau importing guest workers from Southeast Asian nations, according to Salvador.

One aspect of COFA that gets little attention is that, along with Israel, Palau, FSM and RMI are the United States' closest allies at the United Nations, voting alongside the US even when other staunch allies do not.

Rising seas

But for all the financial support COFA nations receive from the US, they remain among the world's most vulnerable to climate change and sea level rise and, like other small islands, the people already face the reality that, as when pushed aside for nuclear tests, they may once again be forced to leave their island homes as rising seas and increased flooding and drought threaten their livelihood.

"However remote you are in the Pacific," Salvador says, "the fate of these islands is affected in so many ways by people on big continents."

Over seven decades, the unfulfilled promises of COFA which can be seen in the lack of economic development and self-sufficiency, along with unemployment and inadequate health care options in Micronesia make it likely that in years ahead, Hawaii will see more COFA migration, not less.

How Hawaii's newest residents will be welcomed to America's only Pacific island state remains an unanswered question with which advocates like Dina Shek still struggle. "There's so much more than the simplistic, 'these people are taking advantage of this open travel provision.' I think there is a linkage to Obama's Asia-Pacific build up...Why would the US want to let go of this region? There are certainly reasons to retain power and military control over this region," Shek says. "It's not a simple narrative that they're all coming here to take these benefits. It was the US that pushed for COFA nations to have unlimited travel access."

Considering Micronesians who have left their home, either by choice or necessity, Jetnil-Kijiner, the young Marshallese poet, continues to tell the story of people who have figuratively or literally lost their home.

"I don't think people understand how important land is to Marshallese people. To completely lose your atoll, your home island like that, it's heartbreaking. You lose all your ties because land is life."

Source:
GLOBAL NETWORK AGAINST WEAPONS AND NUCLEAR POWER IN SPACE, SPACE ALERT! (FALL 2013.) By Dick Bennett.

The newsletter gives 16 reports relating to US Pacific/E. Asian expansion, named “The Pivot” by the Obama Administration. This euphemism for widening and hardening US domination of the area, clearly repeating the old Sovietphobic “Cold War,” can only bring conflict and grief. Instead, we could initiate the opposite policy, and define “The Pivot” to repeat US cooperative and supportive policy toward Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Government of China, the Kuomintang, 1928-1949, and afterward in exile in Formosa. Our China policy is as ideologically belligerent as is our Iran policy (see Iran newsletters or blogs).

Sixteen Reports:

1. p. 2 “Seeing the Pivot Up Close” Bruce Gagnon’s report of his Pacific tour Summer 2013: Hawaii, the Philippines, and Australia. Gagnon is founder and Coordinator of the Global Network.

2. p. 3 “Oliver Stone Goes to Jeju.” After speaking at Hiroshima and Nagasaki August 6 and 9, Stone joined protests against the US/S. Korean naval base under construction on Jeju Island, S. Korea.

3. p.8 “MD Radar in Japan.” US plans to deploy another “missile defense” radar to watch China’s missile launches.

4. p. 8 “No Drones for Mindanao.” Some indigenous resistance: The mayor of Davao City says no to US request to use an old airport as a military base.


6. p. 10 “Hawaii MD Testing.” “…these Aegis-based MD systems could also serve as destabilizing anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons.”


8. p. 10. “Global Strike Test.” Plans for an unmanned “hypersonic” vehicle to travel 5 times speed of sound to strike a target anywhere in the world being developed at the Pacific
Missile Range Facility at Kauai, Hawaii.

9. p. 10. “Japan Moves Further Right.” The government’s moves to strike Article 9 of the Japanese constitution forbidding foreign wars and to deepen its military preparations with the US vs. NK and China.

10. p. 10. “Pivot—Not Just the Navy.” “...the US Air Force will dramatically expand its military presence across the Pacific this year”—including Thailand, India, Singapore, and Australia.


12. p. 12. Photo of US Navy Aegis destroyer at Subic Bay in the Philippines, as part of the increasing warship visits since the Pivot began.


15. p. 14. “Pentagon Deploys THAAD Into Guam.” Another MD system “that has been testing with some success is the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense.” Guam is “one of the Pentagon’s largest Pacific staging areas.”

16. “Pushback Against the ‘Cyber Industrial Complex.” Describes an article pub. in China-US Focus about opposition to the US race to achieve “cyber superiority.”

The caption to the cartoon and photo p. 13 sums up Global Network’s attitude: “The Pentagon is now moving 60% of its military forces into the Asia-Pacific as part of Obama’s announced ‘pivot’ into the region. This containment of China will be an expensive and destabilizing strategy that could easily create miscalculation and ultimately war. The US is dragging an expanding NATO into the region as well to help share the costs.” What’s missing in this analysis is the pressure of the corporate-congressional-White House-mainstream media to maintain the militarized economic expansion.

Don't Destroy This Island
RootsAction Team info@rootsaction.org via uark.edu
to James

info@rootsaction.org

The U.S. military nearly destroyed the island of Vieques, in Puerto Rico, by using it as a bombing range for decades. But the people of Vieques...
demanded that the bombing stop.

The people of Pagan Island in the Northern Marianas don't want their paradise to be next.

Click here to tell your representative, senators, and president not to destroy this island or any other.

The U.S. Marine Corps has found a rich and beautiful island, falsely called it "desolate and uninhabitable" (despite the fact that many species live there, including hominids), and proposed to make it the new Vieques.

Pagan Island is an ancient home to the Chamorro people (some of whom live there and many of whom wish to return there) and the habitat of unique animals and plants, many of them endemic, rare and endangered. Every natural and cultural resource is threatened by the planned live-fire training ground.

Click here to save this island!

A transfer of our major resources from war-making to environment-saving is the clearest path to survival and prosperity. Let's take this opportunity to build a bridge between peace activism and environmental activism.

In the long run, a way to stop future missile strikes into Syria or anywhere else is to stop the testing of such weaponry on an island paradise that some people consider expendable and other people, animals, insects, birds, and fish consider home.

Stop the bombing range before it starts! Save Pagan Island!

Please forward this email widely to like-minded friends.

-- The RootsAction.org team

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, Frances Fox Piven, and many others.

P.P.S. This work is only possible with your financial support. Please donate.

Background:
SavePaganIsland.org
Helen Jaccard and David Swanson: Vieques 10 Years After the Bombing Stopped

www.RootsAction.org
Philippines under the neo-colonial boot

By E San Juan Jr

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's visit to Manila in August and the proposal for a semi-permanent "rotational" stationing of US troops and military hardware in the Philippines are harbingers of a new Cold War in Asia. The Philippines is serving as a precarious lever in Washington's "pivot" to Asia, a bid to restore the US's eroding hegemony over the planet.

A classic US colony from 1898 to 1946, the Philippines today remains a semi-feudal neo-colony ruled by holdover oligarchs led today by president Benigno Aquino III. Resisting the US behemoth in the 1899-1913 Philippines-American War, 1.4 million Filipinos perished in the name of US "manifest destiny". Ever since, including after achieving independence, the Philippines has functioned as a strategic springboard for projecting US power throughout the Asia-Pacific. This has become more crucial with the recent "pivot" of US military resources - where 60% of total US naval assets...
US-assisted state terrorism has long thrived in the Philippines. Tutored and subsidized by the US Pentagon, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) are the two state agencies leading the counterinsurgency plan known as “Oplan Bayanihan” against the Communist-led New People’s Army (NPA) guerillas and other revolutionary groups led by the National Democratic Front.

They are aided by government-established “force multipliers” such as civilian volunteer organizations, police auxiliary units and the notorious Citizens’ Armed Forces Geographical Unit, whose members double as agents of local warlords. Aquino’s coercive surveillance and enforcement apparatus strictly obeys the privatization-deregulation ideology of US-led global capitalism, resulting in severe unemployment, rampant corruption, widespread poverty and brutal repression.

US imperial hegemony manifests itself in the use of Philippine territory by US warships and military through the 1999 Visiting Forces Agreement and other treaties. This rotating agreement has allowed hundreds of US Special Forces, CIA and other clandestine agencies to operate in helping the AFP-PNP counterinsurgency campaign, which doubles to brutally suppress indigenous communities that have protested mining by foreign corporations and other state-backed seizures of their land.

From 2001 to 2010, the US provided over US$500 million worth of military assistance to the Philippines. More recently, the US has significantly raised those annual disbursements to assist in the acquisition of patrol boats against Chinese incursions in the disputed Spratly Islands. Part of those disbursements have also been earmarked for so-called “civic action” projects, reminiscent of the US-CIA pacification schemes deployed during the anti-Huk guerrilla campaigns of the 1940s-50s, including under Ramon Magsaysay’s presidency.

While these past US interventions are by now well-documented, Washington’s current involvement in the Philippines’ ongoing civil wars is less appreciated. Prominent are the thousands of cases of unresolved extra-judicial killings, torture, warrantless detentions, enforced disappearances or kidnappings of dissenters by government security forces funded in part by the US.

State crimes

To keep the country underdeveloped, secure for multinational corporations, and safe from strikes and political dissent, the US supports a tiny group of political dynasties.
their retinue whose victory in periodic “democratic” elections guarantees the perpetuation of a society polarized into an impoverished majority and a privileged minority. Violence and a corrupt court system underwrite the maintenance of a status quo for corporate profit-making and legitimization of torture, kidnappings, assassinations, and other state crimes against citizens who oppose this neo-colonial order.

Since the fall of the US-propped Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship in 1986 and its destruction of constitutional processes and civil liberties, the volume and scope of human rights violations have jumped to staggering proportions.

In 2011, for instance, Amnesty International stated that “More than 200 cases of enforced disappearances recorded in the last decade remain unresolved, as did at least 305 cases of extrajudicial execution (with some estimates ranging as high as 1,200). Almost no perpetrators of these crimes have been brought to justice.”

Even the US State Department’s 2011 country report on human rights in the Philippines confirmed the persistence of arbitrary, unlawful, and extrajudicial killings by national, provincial, and local government agents" including "prisoner/detainee torture and abuse by security forces, violence and harassment against leftist and human rights activists by local security forces, disappearances, warrantless arrests, lengthy pretrial detentions, overcrowded and inadequate prison conditions.

The local rights monitoring group Karapatan recently documented Aquino’s abysmal human rights record from July 2010 to April 2013. It found 142 victims of extrajudicial killings, 164 cases of frustrated killing, and 16 victims of enforced disappearances. In that vein, the high profile murders of Father Pops Tenorio, Dutch volunteer Willem Geertman, botanist Leonardo Co, and environmentalist and journalist Gerry Ortega remain unsolved under Aquino’s watch.

Meanwhile, military officials like ex-General Jovito Palparan, Major Baliaga, and others linked by courts to the kidnapping of Jonas Burgos, Sherley Cadapan and Karen Empeno and other crimes against humanity remain at large.

Karapatan chairperson Marie Hilao-Enriquez noted that the victims of state terror are generally those who challenge inequality and oppression, those who were displaced by logging and transnational mining companies, and those branded as sympathizers of the NPA by the Oplan Bayanihan counterinsurgency campaign, which to date is responsible for at least 137 extra-judicial murders and thousands of suspects detained on dubious legal grounds.

Female victims
Women stand out as particular victims of the Aquino regime and more generally of the country’s patriarchal authority. They are discriminated and inferiorized by virtue of their gender, caste, class and ethnicity. In 2011, half of the political detainees arrested by the Aquino regime were female.
2001, 153 women have been targeted by extrajudicial assassins allegedly sponsored by the AFP-PNP, according to local human rights groups.

The Center for Women's Research (CWR) has claimed that women political prisoners suffer twice the violence experienced by men; they "are more vulnerable to intimidation, harassment and abuse, as well as torture," CWR said in a report. A significant number belong to ethnic or indigenous communities where US-sponsored counterinsurgency campaigns are underway. They languish in jail as "enemies of the state," charged with rebellion and other fabricated criminal charges. Some have suffered from torture and sexual assault while in detention.

Many of them are human rights defenders or advocates of advocacy for national sovereignty and genuine economic development for the poor and marginalized. Because they work for deprived sectors of peasants, workers, urban poor, youth, and indigenous communities, they are frequently being supporters of the communists (the NPA is labeled a "terrorist" organization, like the Abu Sayyaf, according to US State Department doctrine) to justify their illegal arrests and detention in horrible conditions.

This is only the tip of the iceberg of the cruel and inhumane punishment inflicted by Aquino's and previous administrations' US-backed neo-colonial order. Every day, warrantless arrests and torture of activists are occurring while national living conditions stagnate or deteriorate.

With the extra-judicial killing on March 4 of Cristina Morales Jose, a leader of Barug Katawhan (People Rise Up!), an organization of the survivors of the typhoon Pablo in Davao Oriental province, it now seems probable that instead of adding to the country's overcrowded prisons and detention centers the Aquino regime is resorting to the outright extermination of grassroots protest leaders.

All of these crimes may be attributed broadly to the US-supported "national security state" in the Philippines. This state of affairs is epitomized in the Department of National Defense and Department of the Interior and Local Government's Joint Order No. 14-2012, which lists the names of alleged communist leaders and offers massive peso rewards for their capture - a potential bonanza for AFP and PNP bureaucrats.

Under this order, Estelita Tacalan, a 60-year-old peasant organizer and rural health worker in Misamis Oriental was kidnapped by AFP-PNP agents on April 27 this year. On May 7, the PNP announced that they had detained Tacalan for being listed in the Joint Order and spuriously charged her with murder and arson. Countless arrests and detentions have been made pursuant to this broad and dubious order.

The Philippines' "national security state" under Aquino has effectively criminalized activism against this neo-colonial order, notably at a time Manila and Washington plan to significantly boost their strategic ties, including through a greater presence of
US soldiers on Philippine soil. Now as in the past, statesponsored violations hide behind the US-promoted concepts of free markets, democracy, liberty and justice.

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E San Juan, Jr is emeritus professor of Ethnic Studies, English and Comparative Literature; former fellow at the WEB Du Bois Institute at Harvard University and the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas. He was previously a Fulbright professor of American Studies at Leuven University, Belgium. His recent books include In the Wake of Terror (Lexington Books), and Social Transformation (Mellen Books), and Revolution in the Philippines (Palgrave).
U.S. Foreign Policy from the Founders' Perspective

By George Friedman

Last week I discussed how the Founding Fathers might view the American debt crisis and the government shutdown. This week I thought it would be useful to consider how the founders might view foreign policy. I argued that on domestic policy they had clear principles, but unlike their ideology, those principles were never mechanistic or inflexible. For them, principles dictated that a gentleman pays his debts and does not casually increase his debts, the constitutional provision that debt is sometimes necessary notwithstanding. They feared excessive debt and abhorred nonpayment, but their principles were never completely rigid.

Whenever there is a discussion of the guidelines laid down by the founders for American foreign policy, Thomas Jefferson's admonition to avoid foreign entanglements and alliances is seen as the founding principle. That seems reasonable to me inasmuch as George Washington expressed a similar sentiment. So while there were some who favored France over Britain during the French Revolutionary Wars, the main thrust of American foreign policy was neutrality. The question is: How does this principle guide the United States now? Read more »

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President Obama has declared his commitment to creating the most open and accessible administration in American history. That begins with taking comments and questions from you, the public, through our website.
Call the President

PHONE NUMBERS
Comments: 202-456-1111
Switchboard: 202-456-1414

TTY/TTD
Comments: 202-456-6213
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Write a letter to the President

Here are a few simple things you can do to make sure your message gets to the White House as quickly as possible.

1. If possible, email us! This is the fastest way to get your message to President Obama.

2. If you write a letter, please consider typing it on an 8 1/2 by 11 inch sheet of paper. If you hand-write your letter, please consider using pen and writing as neatly as possible.

3. Please include your return address on your letter as well as your envelope. If you have an email address, please consider including that as well.

4. And finally, be sure to include the full address of the White House to make sure your message gets to us as quickly and directly as possible:

   The White House
   1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
   Washington, DC 20500

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END US WESTWARD IMPERIALISM PACIFIC/E. ASIA

NEWSLETTER #8

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Dick Bennett

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