

# OMNI PENTAGON WATCH NEWSLETTER #1

June 21, 2011, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace

See Dick's Blog, "IT'S THE WAR DEPARTMENT" <http://jamesrichardbennett.blogspot.com/>

**and the many newsletters related to U.S. militarism and empire in**  
**<http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/>**

The SOA, it's only a bit of hail in the global storm of US militarism and empire, yet a few citizens have created a SOA Watch. But for the \$600 billion Pentagon (not including the wars and nuclear weapons, interest on national debt for wars, and long-term treatment of the wounded) not one WATCH. One hundred are needed; one thousand. Why are the journalism departments not teaching the reporting of this national disaster? Why is the public not demanding relentless reporting by their newspapers?

## Contents

Pentagon War Budget, Cold War to Today

Pentagon Budget Today

Congress Will Trim the Budget?

Arming Mid-Eastern Despots

Nuclear Weapons

Pentagon Marketing Itself and Propaganda to Children

Counter-Recruiting Resistance

Book Censorship

Books: James Carroll, Arthur Ekirch, Sebastian Junger, Jeffrey St. Clair

**“Follow the Money’: Why the US Defense Budget Soars,  
Even as the Military Shrinks” <http://www.counterpunch.org/turse05182011.html>**

A brilliant, extended account by Andrew Cockburn of what, in terms of Pentagon spending, the Cold War was really about, and what has happened to military spending between the end of the Cold War and today. [Shrinks? D]

*New York Times* Editorial – “A Rational Budget for the Pentagon”

April 19, 2011

In their budget-cutting zeal, Republicans are demanding harsh sacrifices from the country's most vulnerable citizens. At the same, they are determined to leave one of the biggest areas of wasteful government spending untouched: the Pentagon budget.

The budget plan they pushed through the House this month would spend \$7.5 trillion on the military over the next dozen years. And that does not include the cost of actual war-fighting. The country cannot afford to spend that much, and it doesn't need to.

The \$7.5 trillion was President Obama's projection, which he has since lowered to \$7.1 trillion. Saving \$400 billion is better but still not enough, especially since it can be achieved merely by holding annual non-war-related spending at its current swollen level, adjusted for inflation.

National security is a fundamental responsibility of government. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Pentagon has spent without limits and in some cases without sense. Annual budgets, adjusted for inflation, have grown by 50 percent in the past decade. And that is apart from the more than \$1 trillion spent on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The White House and Congress must impose some rationality on this process. Here is a path that could save hundreds of billions of dollars more through 2024:

**PERSONNEL** Pay and benefits account for nearly half of the basic Pentagon budget. The size of the uniformed services should not be reduced, at least for now. The Pentagon's civilian work force, currently 650,000, should be cut by up to 10 percent, saving more than \$7 billion a year.

We in no way minimize the sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform. But after years of lagging far behind, military pay is now more than \$5,000 a year higher than comparable civilian employment, more than \$10,000 a year higher when special allowances and benefits are counted. Freezing noncombat pay for three years would save \$3 billion per year. The formula for future increases should be adjusted to incorporate allowances and benefits, saving an additional \$5 billion a year.

Another \$4 billion to \$6 billion annually could be saved by reasonable increases in annual health insurance premiums for military retirees of working age. Those premiums — currently \$460 per family — have been frozen for the past 15 years while health care costs soared.

All told, these changes would save about \$20 billion annually or more than \$200 billion over the next 12 years.

**FORCE STRUCTURE** The Pentagon took too long to recognize that today's wars make more intensive demands on the Army and Marines and less on the Navy and Air Force. Ground forces have been increased, but that needs to be paid for by corresponding reductions at sea and in the air. That shift has already begun but needs to go further. Another \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year could be saved by reducing the number of aircraft carrier groups from 11 to 10 and associated air wings from 10 to 9.

**PROCUREMENT** Twenty years after the cold war's end, the Pentagon is addicted to hugely expensive weapons systems that are poorly suited to current and future military needs. Defense Secretary Robert Gates successfully pressed Congress to end production of the costly Air Force F-22. He now needs to cut way back on the far overbudget F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Far fewer of these are needed to assure American dominance of the skies. Terminating the deeply troubled Marine Corps version of the F-35 and cutting back the Navy and Air Force versions by 50 percent would save \$130 billion over the life of the program, with most of those savings achieved in the 2020s. Eliminating the Marine Corps' costly and accident-prone V-22 Osprey vertical take off and landing aircraft would save another \$10 billion to \$12 billion. Further savings may be possible by scaling down future orders for the Virginia class nuclear attack submarine and reconsidering the newly vulnerable littoral combat ship.

**For too long America's military spending decisions have been insulated from serious scrutiny or discipline. The result is that more than 50 cents of every dollar of discretionary federal spending**

**now goes to the Pentagon. There is no way to bring the deficit under control without making substantial and rational cuts in that budget.**

[http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/salsa/web/tellafriend/public/?tell\\_a\\_friend\\_KEY=581](http://act.truemajorityaction.org/p/salsa/web/tellafriend/public/?tell_a_friend_KEY=581)

[These cuts express "serious scrutiny"?? D]

From [imh@uwm.edu](mailto:imh@uwm.edu) U.S. | July 23, 2010

**Pentagon Faces Growing Pressures to Trim Budget**

By THOM SHANKER and CHRISTOPHER DREW

Political and economic conditions are forcing the first serious debate since the terrorist attacks of 2001 about the size and cost of the armed services.

Senator: Expect painful cuts in Pentagon budget 2009

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090331/ap\\_on\\_go\\_co/pentagon\\_budget](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090331/ap_on_go_co/pentagon_budget)

[No painful trimming happened, no significant trimming at all. With a few exceptions, Congress is an arm of the Pentagon. The US National Security State has captured their brains. They must be replaced by representatives who understand the need for a completely different kind of security that provides real security.. D]

**Arming Despots: Obama and the Mideast Arms Trade** By NICK TURSE

If you follow the words, one Middle East comes into view; if you follow the weapons, quite another.

This week, the words will take center stage. On Thursday, according to administration officials, President Obama will "reset" American policy in the Middle East with a major address offering a comprehensive look at the Arab Spring, "a unified theory about the popular uprisings from Tunisia to Bahrain," and possibly a new administration approach to the region.

**In the meantime, all signs indicate that the Pentagon will quietly maintain antithetical policies, just as it has throughout the Obama years. Barring an unprecedented and almost inconceivable policy shift, it will continue to broker lucrative deals to send weapons systems and military equipment to Arab despots.** Nothing indicates that it will be deterred from its course, whatever the president says, which means that Barack Obama's reset rhetoric is unlikely to translate into meaningful policy change in the region <http://www.counterpunch.org/turse05182011.html>

[Contradiction and double standards are fundamental to US imperial policies and practices, deriving from the doctrine of US "exceptionalism." Another example: US bombing Libya and sanctioning leaders of Syria while supporting violent repression of Bahrainis by the US Navy's Fifth Fleet-loving Bahraini monarch and his Saudi troops. Dick]

NUCLEAR WEAPONS ACTIONS

**OMNI PETITION ACTION 2009-10 for NEW START TREATY**

During Summer Saturdays at Farmer's Market 2009 and 2010, OMNI petitioned for a new START TREATY that would include : de-alert, no first use, no new nuclear weapons, banning nuclear testing, controlling nuclear material, Nuclear Weapons Convention eliminating nuclear weapons. Each year mailed to Senators Pryor and Lincoln. We also showed the film COUNTDOWN TO ZERO and distributed Nuclear Weapons Newsletter #7, August 29, 2010, on International DAY Against Nuclear Tests.

## Pentagon Watch needed:

What is a free country to do when the only way to make a living at dispensing information is to work for those who don't want balance of skeptical information dispensed?

Thompson, Doug. *Irony and the Internet*. (Free Weekly January 2009.)

## David Sirota, "Promoting Militarism While Hiding Bloodshed"

Truthdig June 17, 2011

David Sirota begins: "In a breathless story somehow presented as a groundbreaking revelation, *The New York Times* recently reported that the Pentagon is - shocker! - using all sorts of media channels to market itself to the nation's children."

READ MORE <http://readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/56-56/6324-promoting-militarism-while-hiding-bloodshed>

The Pentagon employs \$billions to draw youth into the military. But the peace movement provides counter-recruiting resistance. The 2011 WAR RESISTERS LEAGUE PEACE CALENDAR

War Resisters League Peace Calendar 2011. *NOT YOUR FODDER! Organizing Against the Militarization of Youth*. Vol. 56. 2011.

"A sacred cow, the U.S. military is revered in nearly every class within our class structure. Why?" The Pentagon and other centers of militarism spend billions of dollars to recruit young mind to perpetuate the ever-expanding empire. The calendar exposes and opposes this recruiting. Each facing pages combine an account of resistance with photos or a poster, and the calendar offers daily information about peacemaking and peacemakers.

BOOK CENSORSHIP [Needed: Newsletters and Blogs on military control of information. D]

## Pentagon Considers Buying and Destroying Copies of Afghan War Memoir

The *New York Times* reports Pentagon officials are negotiating to buy and destroy all 10,000 copies of the first printing of an Afghan war memoir they say contains intelligence secrets. The book, *Operation Dark Heart*, was written by Anthony Shaffer, a former Defense Intelligence Agency officer and a lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserve. Army reviewers originally signed off on the book's publication, but the Defense Intelligence Agency later identified more than 200 passages suspected of containing classified information. The book reportedly includes Shaffer's accounts of clandestine operations, including eavesdropping operations by the National Security Agency.

*Democracy Now* 9-10-10

BOOKS [Needed: Newsletters and Blogs reporting books. D]

Carroll, James. *House of War: The Pentagon and the Disastrous Rise of*

*American Power*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. Winner of the National Book Award. The best book yet written about the Pentagon.

**The Civilian and the Military by Arthur A. Ekirch, Jr. 2<sup>ND</sup> ed. 2010.**

By elaborating on the role of the civilian and the military in American history up through the mid-twentieth century, the author helps us understand why the growing power and importance of the armed forces over many aspects of national and international policy is alarming for thoughtful citizens and policy makers today.

Junger, Sebastian. *War*. Twelve, 2010. Rev. Tom Bissell, *Columbia Journalism R* (July/August 2010): "...left me sickened, moved, terrified, awed, and angry, and which now takes its place among the best works on the subject that I have read." About a U.S. Army outpost called Restrepo in a remote, mountainous area in Afghanistan surrounded by hostile dwellers. From 2005 to April 2010 the US Army "sacrificed almost four dozen soldiers" to defend the small Korengal Valley." The book studies what happens to men in such violent circumstances. They become like "street gangs" who "want to fight and kill" with an intensity that seems psychopathic. A film has been made of this book, entitled "Restrepo."

## **Editorial Reviews of *The Civilian and the Military*.**

### Review

"The author develops the story of antimilitarism concretely, not only in terms of periodic wars, but also in terms of peacetime debates over military appropriations, the size and nature of the armed forces, and the role of the military in civilian affairs." —*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*

"An excellent, thorough chronological account of American opinion, pro- and anti-, regarding the place of military organization and military ideas . . . as a valuable contribution on a topic of much current interest." —*Public Opinion Quarterly*

### Description

Presenting a new perspective on the influence of the military complex on U.S. society, this account follows the rise and decline of the antimilitarist tradition—rooted in fear of dictatorship—that has been an important part of the American heritage from colonial times until the 1950s and even today. In addition to providing a documented historical survey of notable issues and landmarks that have affected the role of the civilian and the military until the mid-1950s, the volume also offers ample background for an understanding of the complicated problem of militarism in the last century, including principles and dynamics that are relevant in the 21st century. Bringing to light new materials and making use of archives and papers that ground the analysis in actual events, this compelling examination will excite controversy among pacifists, militarists, and anyone interested in history, U.S. military policy, and trends in current events.

# **Grand Theft Pentagon :Tales of Corruption and Profiteering in the War on Terror**

**BY Jeffrey St. Clair**

**Jeffrey St. Clair** (Author)

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“Jeffrey St. Clair is the Seymour Hersh of environmental journalism.”—Josh Frank

From the F-22 fighter jet and B-2 bomber to the Stryker tank and *Star Wars*, *Grand Theft Pentagon* chronicles how the Pentagon shells out billions to politically wired arms contractors for weapons that don't work for use against an enemy that no longer exists. St. Clair shows how many of the biggest arms contracts were literally inside jobs, negotiated by Pentagon generals who later went to work for the very same corporations that were awarded the contracts.

The co-founder of *Counterpunch* and author of *Been Brown So Long It Looked Like Green to Me: The Politics of Nature*, **Jeffrey St. Clair** lives in Portland, Oregon.

About the Author

Jeffrey St. Clair is an award-winning investigative journalist, co-editor of political newsletter CounterPunch and author of nine books, including *Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press*, *Been Brown So Long It Looked Like Green to Me: the Politics of Nature* and *Imperial Crusades: Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia*.

END OF PENTAGON NEWSLETTER #1