

A Worker's Introduction to the U.S. War Industry
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COMPOSITION

Capitalism—the economic system by which a relatively tiny group owns the machinery and factories and enriches itself through hoarding the workers' surplus value, transforming the natural world into goods and services—is inherently destructive, exploitative, and polluting. The theoretical physicist Albert Einstein summarized the problem in the May 1949 issue of *Monthly Review*:

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of the smaller ones. The result of these developments is an oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

This is the environment in which the war industry operates. U.S. government serves corporate interest. And corporations, by design, strive to maximize profit.

The U.S. ruling class deploys the military for three reasons: to forcibly open up countries to foreign investment, to ensure the free flow of natural resources out of the global south, and because war is big business. The third of these reasons, the profitable nature of war, is what propels the military-industrial-congressional complex.

The military-industrial-congressional complex (MIC) is an insulated authority consisting of the U.S. military establishment, headquartered in the Pentagon; the war industry, the corporations that market and sell goods and services to the U.S. military, intelligence agencies, and allied capitalist regimes; and Capitol Hill, the elected representatives who fund the military and pass legislation abetting the permanent warfare state.

The U.S. financial industry, including investment banks, asset management firms, and private equity firms, sits at the top of the war industry. Investment banks and asset management firms hold the majority of shares in nearly every major war corporation. (The notable exceptions are Sierra Nevada Corporation and General Atomics, two private corporations run by billionaires: Fatih & Eren Ozmen and the Blue Brothers, respectively.) The other way that U.S. finance dominates the war industry is by outright owning war corporations. This can be seen in the private equity firm Lindsay Goldberg's ownership of the corporation Amentum, whose sales include administering prepositioned matériel, maintaining military aircraft, and training helicopter pilots.

The troops—the average soldier, sailor, airman, and Marine—are *not* part of the MIC. From a military and congressional perspective, the troops are pawns deployed to help pry open countries to foreign investment, to ensure the free flow of natural resources, and to threaten and implement violence against any government or group that resists D.C.’s machinations. From an industry perspective, the troops are vessels to use the war industry’s goods and services and occupy the military bases through which industry routes further goods and services.

The only uniformed military personnel who are part of the MIC are the high-ranking generals and admirals. The troops themselves enlist in the U.S. Armed Forces largely for economic reasons (though it can be comfortable for them to couch their participation in traditionally patriotic terms), as the military uniform offers one of the few well-paying jobs remaining in an economy that Wall Street and D.C. have systematically gutted using neoliberal economic policies. Neoliberal economic policies decrease government monitoring and regulation of corporate activity; cut government spending on healthcare, education, and public infrastructure; export and automate jobs; and sell off such government assets and services as schools, transportation, and utilities. Both capitalist political factions, the Republican and Democratic parties, abide by and promote such policies. The U.S. war industry thrives in D.C.’s embrace of neoliberalism.

Calling themselves “defense contractors,” war corporations do more than design and pitch products. They also fabricate, test, evaluate, qualify, assemble, market, inspect, package, deliver, sustain, maintain, upgrade, monitor, and redesign products—all billable activities. Additionally, war corporations regularly bill their military customers for such services as configuration management, contractor logistics services, data, documentation, engineering, incidental materials, integration, logistics, management, operational security, parts, production costs, revitalization, spares, support equipment, technical services, and training. To make more money, more and more goods and services must be conceived, marketed, and sold.

Though headquartered in Virginia, California, and other parts of the United States, war corporations have no loyalty to the nation. They are loyal to the almighty dollar, Euro, riyal, or any currency that comes their way. The top U.S. war corporations are:

1. Lockheed Martin
2. Raytheon Technologies
3. Boeing “Defense, Space, and Security”
4. General Dynamics
5. Northrop Grumman
6. L3Harris
7. Textron
8. Huntington Ingalls
9. SAIC
10. AECOM
11. Booz Allen Hamilton
12. Leidos
13. CACI
14. Honeywell
15. PAE
16. General Electric

17. Accenture
18. Amentum (just purchased DynCorp)
19. KBRWyle
20. Jacobs

These are the main players in profitable war. Omitted from the rankings, some foreign corporations (e.g. London's BAE Systems, Rome's Leonardo DRS, Ottawa's Canadian Commercial Corporation) are deeply tied to the U.S. war industry and are therefore important to acknowledge.

War corporations market their goods and services as "solutions." A Raytheon executive, John Harris, explained to the *Defense & Aerospace Report* in summer, 2018, that engaging "with senior members of government" is just "providing solutions to our customers," providing "integrated solutions to meet our customers' needs," and even "figuring out how we can solve our customers' problems using a dispassionate system approach." The *solutions* trick works well when selling to the U.S. military. For example, Booz Allen Hamilton offers digital solutions, CACI offers information solutions, and Leidos offers innovative solutions. Through its inherently harmful, anti-democratic activities, the war industry helps create the miserable conditions for which it then offers "solutions," of course without ever taking responsibility for the dismal state of affairs (i.e. nonstop war) that it helped create. "Providing solutions" sounds prettier and more generous than "making money off death and destruction." MIC officials also regularly couch D.C.'s imperialism, weapon sales, and war-first foreign policy as giving the troops the "tools they need." A similar phrase ("We've listened to the warfighter") is utilized when selling goods and services, particularly upgrades and technological insertions.

Corporations regularly invoke "our troops." Non-martial corporations are on the record exploiting the troops in advertisements for financial gain—for example, Budweiser is "proud to serve those who serve" and Fritos honors "our nation's heroes"—but war corporations take it to another level. Northrop Grumman has marketed products under the headline, "Protecting SOCOM's Most Important Asset – Its People." A major corporation selling military vehicles, says it "builds the world's best military vehicles because we care most for the people who drive them... No matter where our vehicles serve, our troops will never ride alone." Another corporation, Peraton, boldly claimed to "protect and promote freedom around the world," as the ABOUT US tab on the corporation's website has made clear. These corporations flagrantly position themselves as benevolent or altruistic. If war corporations truly cared about the troops, they wouldn't lobby and push for policies that end up maiming and killing the troops.

War corporations use standard, industrywide schemes when contracting with the U.S. military. The first scheme is to **underestimate** the cost when pitching a product. Expenses accumulate, and the final product costs far more than initially estimated. Corporations underestimate cost and overestimate performance as a matter of routine. The second scheme involves incorporating regular **upgrades** of software and hardware into the product. That way, the war corporation remains involved indefinitely. Technicians service, maintain, and upgrade the product, all at great expense. The third scheme is pushing for **noncompetitive** contracts. When the Pentagon solicits proposals using an open, competitive bidding process, corporations at least somewhat compete to deliver decent services at cheaper prices. Noncompetitive contracts allow greater profits. Furthermore, many major contracts that are awarded through nominally open and free competition are not open or free; only a handful of corporations have the

technology and financial clout to place a legitimate bid. In order to obtain noncompetitive contracts, corporations masterfully exploit the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), the rulebook that sets out the parameters by which the U.S. government can purchase goods and services. The fourth scheme is piling additional **modifications** onto a supposedly straightforward contract. Years into a contract with a war corporation, a lone Pentagon official might step back and marvel at how the provision of a simple good has metastasized into a ballooning multiyear project that incorporates disparate services and a variety of funding sources. The fifth and final scheme is the sale of **consumables**. Products produced by war corporations ought to be repaired. But many industry products are pushed as consumables instead of reparable. In other words: use it, discard it, and then buy a new product, instead of using it and repairing it. In parallel, corporations require many goods sold as reparable to be regularly scheduled for repair, regardless of whether the good actually needs to be repaired at that point. Collectively, these schemes produce contract after contract caring for industry's profits, not military need.

Secrecy is the MIC's chainmail. Military and industry classify information (e.g. Confidential, Secret, Top Secret) in order to keep the public ignorant of government criminality, the scope of the surveillance state, the full costs of war, MIC incompetence, and fraud, waste, and abuse. Classifying information prevents the public from understanding and acting against entrenched, costly militarism.

FINANCES

The military-industrial-congressional complex is expensive. Brown University's Costs of War project estimates that \$6.4 trillion has been allocated to post-9.11 U.S. "homeland security" and wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria through fiscal year 2020. Writing in *The Nation* in May 2019, William Hartung and Mandy Smithberger calculated that roughly \$1.25 trillion was spent that year on war and sundry "national security" costs. It is estimated that less than an annual \$300 billion could end world hunger, and roughly \$240 billion could pay for primary and early secondary education for the world's population.

Many war corporations receiving money from the Pentagon (e.g. AECOM, Amazon, Honeywell, IBM) do not pay their fair share of taxes, according to the Center for Public Integrity (Kranhold, April 2019) and *Fortune* (Sherman, April 2019). The Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy issued a report in December 2019, which cited 91 U.S.-based corporations that did not pay any federal income taxes on their 2018 domestic income. This irresponsibility is part of a wider pattern wherein the ruling class shirks social responsibility: The richest 400 families in the U.S. paid a lower share of the tax burden in 2018 than any other income range, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman document in their 2019 book *The Triumph of Injustice*. The tax burden falls on the working class. The working class in the United States pays high taxes relative to the working class in other industrialized nations but is not granted the social safety net that usually comes with high taxation, *Jacobin* reports (Bruenig, 14 Apr 2019). And, of those taxes that workers pay, more tax dollars go to war corporations than the troops.

The U.S. government pays for industry's goods and services with tax dollars and money raised from selling Treasury marketable securities. From this, the U.S. military has dozens of different funding buckets to pay for goods and services. Popular funds include working capital funds, operations & maintenance funds, procurement funds, and research, development, test, and evaluation funds.

The government has a long-standing policy that guides military units of all sizes to spend their budgets by the end of the fiscal year. If units spend all of their money, they are typically allocated the same amount of money or more in the next budget appropriation. However, if they economize, find savings, or do more with less, they likely get their budget cut in the next appropriation. This policy, often called “use it or lose it,” does not incentivize fiscal responsibility.

It gets worse. The Defense Finance & Accounting Service is the military’s primary financial management arm. A 2013 *Reuters* investigation by Scot Paltrow concluded that DFAS implements monthly “unsubstantiated change actions”—illegal, inaccurate “plugs”—that forcibly make the War Department’s books match Treasury’s books:

Fudging the accounts with false entries is standard operating procedure... Reuters has found that the Pentagon is largely incapable of keeping track of its vast stores of weapons, ammunition and other supplies; thus it continues to spend money on new supplies it doesn’t need and on storing others long out of date. It has amassed a backlog of more than half a trillion dollars... [H]ow much of that money paid for actual goods and services delivered isn’t known.

DFAS cooks the books, and the Pentagon’s high-ranking officers and civilian leaders are complicit. Since the public has no true idea of how much money the Pentagon is wasting, the Pentagon is able to ask Congress every year for more and more money, in brutal contempt of soldierly efficiency and military necessity.

In recent years, the Pentagon has hired Corporate America to audit its books. The U.S. military has yet to pass the audit. The audit is ongoing and quite costly.

The main role of the federal government under capitalism is to maintain the capitalist economic system and set the general conditions by which large corporations and billionaires are able to accrue more and more profit. The aforementioned military and congressional activities—substantial spending on the war industry’s goods and services, namely—demonstrate that the federal government is fulfilling its main role under capitalism.

Federal departments are encouraged to allocate nearly one quarter of their procurement funds to small businesses. The U.S. military establishment dishes out more money to small businesses than any other government department or agency. All sides of the MIC are bound symbiotically in the small business game: The Pentagon fast-tracks contracts and militarizes greater portions of the economy, industry gets noncompetitive contracts, and Congress spouts “jobs” rhetoric, placating and misdirecting some within the working class. Small businesses can be quite big, including corporations with over \$100 million in contracts with the military or corporations with hundreds of employees. Corporations have been known to hold on to Small Business classification even though they are now larger than “small.” Awarding numerous contracts annually to small businesses, genuine or posers, militarizes the economy, further trapping the country in the costly permanent warfare state.

INDUSTRY LOCATIONS

War corporations are spread across the United States. The top war industry hubs in the U.S. are Huntsville, Alabama; greater Boston, Massachusetts; greater Tampa, Florida; the Dallas-Fort Worth region of Texas; southern California; and the corridor stretching from northeast Virginia, through D.C., to Baltimore (consistently home to the wealthiest counties in the country). Most major war corporations have their headquarters within a stone's throw of the nation's capital.

The U.S. war industry profits well through global supply chains, including setting up subsidiaries in allied capitalist countries and using countries' industrial bases to produce a weapons platform (such as the costly, underperforming F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, parts of which are built in locations as diverse as Italy and Japan). War corporations manage global chains by organizing, coordinating, and enforcing a hierarchical command structure upon disparate locations worldwide. Orders flow down the chain and capital flows up, allowing the corporation's executives, and ultimately Wall Street—not workers who make the products—to harvest enormous amounts of wealth. This exacerbates inequality, not just in Lemont Furnace, Pennsylvania, and Marietta, Georgia, but also Rochester, England, and Aire-sur-l'Adour, France—all locations where U.S. war products are made. War corporations paint these actions as “building lasting capacity” and other euphemisms.

A euphemism is a kinder, gentler term used in place of a direct, often more accurate one. The MIC employs euphemisms adeptly. Public relations gurus know the English language very well. Recall George Orwell's 1946 essay *Politics and the English Language*: “In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible... Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.” With the care of a sommelier, MIC propagandists select the perfect euphemisms to mask their activities and present death and destruction in comfortable terms. Getting rid of euphemism, pursuing an honest language, is one step toward achieving a system that benefits people and planet.

Military installations are avenues through which corporations route goods and services. Sometimes the U.S. military sets up an installation overseas with permission from the allied capitalist regime. Sometimes the ruling class orders the military to take the land by force. It stole land in Guam, compensating locals a paltry sum or nothing at all. It took the Enewetak Atoll in the Marshall Islands. It stole Vieques, Puerto Rico. It teamed up with the Danish government to remove the indigenous Inughuit to make way for Thule Air Base in northwest Greenland. And the Pentagon and State Department teamed up with the United Kingdom to remove Chagossians from the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean in order to set up what is now called Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia. Incredible corporate profit (e.g. base operations, ordnance, platforms, construction, fuel, maintenance) runs through each military installation. Most U.S. military bases overseas are not in warzones. The largest concentrations of U.S. troops are on bases in the Persian Gulf, Europe, and the Western Pacific.

There are thousands of U.S. military installations inside the United States (land stolen from the Native Americans). As contract announcements indicate, Corporate America is sometimes put in charge of studying and documenting the effect a planned base or weapons range might have on the surrounding community—aircraft noise, potential for mishaps and accidents, and the extent to which land use works with or against local designs—even though Corporate America stands to benefit if the base or range gets established.

WORKERS & JUSTIFICATIONS

In the economic system known as capitalism, a relative few people control the means of production (e.g. machinery, factories). In order to survive, most people (the working class) sell their ability to work. They get a wage in return. A worker's work is what makes money for the ruling class. This is true across all industries, including the war industry.

Workers who design and assemble the major weapons of war form the core of the working class within the war industry. They put together missiles at Raytheon's factory in Tucson, Arizona. They manufacture drones at General Atomics' factory in Poway, California. They fabricate land vehicles at AM General's factory in South Bend, Indiana. They build landing craft at Textron's factory in New Orleans, Louisiana. Whatever the workers produce is not theirs. Instead, it belongs to the capitalist class. These rulers (sitting in corporate suites) decide what to produce, how to produce it, and to whom to sell it.

The ruling class profits by underpaying the workers. A given worker on a given day produces value, which we'll call *A, B, C, D, E, F,* and *G*. The corporation pays the worker a wage comparable to *F* and *G*. The rest (*A, B, C, D, E*) is "surplus value." This difference between what a worker is paid in wages and the value a worker creates is how the corporation profits. Those profits go toward executives' compensation (CEO pay at the top 5 war corporations totaled almost half a billion dollars over the course of 2015-2019); boost stock price and allow for stock buybacks; and are invested to make more profit. Money used to expand business to make more profit is functioning as capital. An example of this is General Dynamics building a 200,000-square-foot building for submarine assembly at its Groton, Connecticut, shipyard in order to make more goods to sell for profit.

The ruling class inundates the working class with various forms of advertising, public relations, propaganda, and disinformation in order to keep the working class (which greatly outnumbers the ruling class) passive and compliant. Many within the working class have swallowed such deception. Working class jobs within the war industry are various, and include administrative assistant, analyst, armed mercenary, astrophysicist, data officer, engineer, lawyer, lobbyist, linguist, mathematician, public relations specialist, technician, and tradesperson. From the haughtiest academic to the humblest welder, on to what propaganda have they seized in order to justify working in the war industry?

Civilian use. Unlike products from other industries, the public cannot eat, consume, play with, learn from, or interact with most goods and services sold by the war industry. Employees of war corporations invoke civilian applications of military technology: The internet, the jet engine, radar, and satellite technology all came about from military funding. But these are *ancillary* benefits. Imagine what technological benefits society could achieve if \$750 billion per year was directed intentionally toward research and development of technology that benefits humans and the natural world, not military and war. We can harness the human mind in many ways. So far, by the numbers, the U.S. government has only spent significant monies on military and war. Try throwing that kind of money at the sciences and arts every year—via other federal departments, such as Interior, Agriculture, Health & Human Services, Transportation—and see where unpressured, non-militarized research and development lead.

Distancing. Lockheed Martin’s Director of Communications once said, “The missile has nothing to do with the manufacturer... Lockheed Martin was not the one that was there, firing the missile” (Fisk, *Independent*, 18 May 1997). Such distancing is no different than an engineer at a U.S. university who justifies her work on nuclear weapons along the lines of, “Well it’s not me pushing the button. Surely, there are military professionals in charge of these weapons.” Other workers in the war industry rationalize like so: “I might disagree with the wars, but I’m not the one elected to make such decisions. I’m just doing my job.” Those who resort to distancing focus on their own daily, incremental tasks, blocking out all consequence.

Traditional patriotism. Traditional patriotism rallies a person around the flag and shuns holding authority to account. True patriotism, however, involves questioning government, making government accountable, and changing government when it is polluted and corrupt. Traditional patriotism allows the wars to continue.

For the troops. Some people justify working for the war industry by saying they do it for the troops. Journalist Jeffrey Stern (*NY Times*, 11 Dec 2018) describes how one machinist at a missile factory rationalizes his role:

[T]he thing that he said made him most proud about working at Raytheon was helping to keep American servicemen and women safe. The company makes a point of hiring veterans with combat injuries, which reminds him of whom he’s working for and why. He feels it when he sees the gigantic photos of service members that the company hangs in the most prominent parts of the plant. The photos, he explained, are of relatives of Raytheon workers. When he’s at work, the notion of helping American servicemen and women is not abstract. It’s almost tactile.

Well played, Raytheon. The phrase “support the troops” is a clever slogan through which the MIC throws a blanket of patriotism over the underlying issue: supporting the wars. “Support the troops” has been very effective in getting the working class to line up in favor of war.

Delusion and moral bankruptcy. Many people within the war industry are deluded or morally bankrupt and therefore have no problem working in such a destructive industry. Delusion and moral bankruptcy are the direct result of decades of refined capitalist propaganda and indoctrination. Many workers don’t understand that the system exists because of their exploitation. Many don’t understand that the war industry exists as a means of profit.

Lack of courage. Many smart people, blissfully comfortable with the paycheck that being part of the war industry brings, lack the courage to act. Consider one plucked at random from the middle ranks of a war corporation. The man’s résumé is impressive: degree from a prestigious university, awards from industry and the Pentagon, and not one ounce of moral courage. His participation in the war industry leads directly to the deaths of innocents abroad and perpetuates war.

This flexible, powerful recipe allows one to justify working in the war industry.

A few people within the MIC recognize the gravity of the situation—that funneling so much money toward military, espionage, and war has a negative effect on U.S. security because it drains manpower, time, and capital, and forestalls social care—but are afraid of the consequences of speaking up. Group think, hierarchy, compartmentation, economic incentive, and chain of command enforce the status quo. Violence and social isolation deter the few who push back against the machinery of war. The minor whistleblower is ostracized and demoted,

the leaker fined and locked up. When just a few people push back, the MIC crushes them. When the working class pushes back, united and together, the MIC wilts.

The ruling class employs other devices to ensure the workers continue to sell their labor power. Divide and conquer is a popular device: pit the workers against one another, profiting the capitalist while exhausting the worker. Wedge issues, such as race and nationalism, further split the working class along arbitrary, divisive lines, as seen when U.S. workers buy into the demonization of Arab, Persian, or Chinese workers. Capitalists also elevate a few workers here and there above their fellow workers (think of the foreman in a Virginia shipyard or a taskmaster in an office producing signals intelligence software). These elevated few are given a tad more money in exchange for keeping the majority of the workers in line.

Replacing workers with machines and automating jobs keeps the workforce desperate. With so many people unemployed and underemployed, capitalist rulers get to pick the most passive laborers for war industry jobs, the ones who will keep their heads down and not raise a fuss about the relative pittance they're paid. Purchasing the necessities of life (e.g. food, exorbitant healthcare, sky-high rent, utilities) requires that workers continue to sell their labor (the products of which maim and kill the working class in other countries) through which the ruling class becomes fantastically wealthy.

ACADEMIA

Education in the United States exists within narrow confines. The working class educated in elementary and secondary schools are not given the opportunity to learn about capitalism, let alone the horrific nature and devastating effects of the U.S. war industry. They are not taught about how the interests of the ruling class (including the Pentagon's leadership, industry executives, Wall Street financiers, and Congress) clash head-on with the interests of the working class. An uneducated population will not mobilize effectively against its oppressors. This atmosphere of ignorance greatly benefits the MIC.

The war industry and the Pentagon fund extensive science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) initiatives across the U.S. and in allied countries. By attracting students into STEM careers, the war industry and the Pentagon prepare and safeguard their future. Industry promotion of STEM lays the groundwork for future design, engineering, and production capacity, while the Pentagon promotes STEM in order to foster a technologically literate workforce and future generations of enlisted troops who are capable enough to operate the war industry's products. STEM efforts are comprehensive, covering a wide geographical area and all ages, from elementary through university.

Many universities in the United States are part of the U.S. war industry. The role of these academic institutions is threefold: research and develop technology, serve as a holding station (e.g. Harvard's Belfer Center) for MIC elites before they rotate into government or corporate suites, and accept philanthropy from war profiteers thereby whitewashing capitalist brutality. The main academic participants in the war industry include but are not limited to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Johns Hopkins University, Stanford University, the University of Dayton, and Georgia Tech.

The U.S. government runs many research labs pursuing military and intelligence R&D. The Army Research Lab and the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity are located in Maryland. DARPA and the Office of Research are in Arlington, Virginia. The Air Force Research Lab is run out of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, northeast of Dayton, Ohio, with branches in New Mexico and upstate New York. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Engineer Research & Development Center is in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Most work in and for these labs is carried out by corporations and academic institutions, not uniformed military personnel. A report by the Government Accountability Office issued in September 2020 detailed, "DOD does not know how contractors' independent R&D projects fit into the department's technology goals."

"Brain drain" happens when industry herds intelligent people toward purposes of war, like when a graduate of engineering school goes to work for a war corporation instead of a municipality. Humanity loses skilled human beings as a result. Brain drain is a great tragedy, and the war industry's biggest success. In Boston, the U.S. Air Force alone funds ninety different research projects, according to the Air Force Secretary (Lisinski, *Lowell Sun*, 6 Apr 2018). That's just the publicly declared actions of *one* branch of the military in *one* city. Lockheed Martin alone employs nearly 50,000 scientists and engineers, according to its CEO in her presentation to the Society of Women Engineers in autumn 2018. Imagine if these minds were working on problems and projects for the betterment of humanity and the planet, instead of devising more ingenious ways to surveil or murder. Imagine the possibilities.

Effective science is based on free, open discussion. Military funding and stipulations (compartmentation, shoehorned focus, classification, near-term deadlines, stovepiped fields) oppose free, open discussion. Breakthroughs benefitting humanity do not happen when people are tied to military-industry funding priorities, schedules, and narrow mental confines. Military and industry shun and condemn the polymath, the free thinker, and the uninhibited tinkerer. Military and industry embrace and fund the careerist, the complicit academic, the rigid functionary, the greedy corporatist, and the aspiring bureaucrat. Military-industry science may possess strong minds, but it does not make the scientific breakthroughs society needs.

INFLUENCE

Strategy involves establishing priorities, making choices, and then matching available resources to goals, means to ends. Capitalists running the war industry utilize a five-step strategy to capture government:

- 1) pull retiring military officers into war corporations
- 2) stack the deck by placing ex-industry officials in the Pentagon's leadership
- 3) finance congressional campaigns
- 4) lobby creatively
- 5) fund think tanks & corporate media

War corporations **recruit retired high-ranking military officers**. War corporations use these eager retirees to open doors, influence policy, and increase sales. Generals and admirals retire from the U.S. Armed Forces and then join war corporations where they set to work converting their knowledge (about the acquisition process, senior military and civilian leaders, long-term military policy, and how the Pentagon works) and connections into profit. Corporate jobs for these retired officers include manager, vice president, lobbyists, consultant, and director. Only a

small number of 3- and 4-star officers declines this systemic corruption. War corporations have plenty to pull from: there are more generals and admirals in uniform today in 2021 than there were at the end of World War II. Mere issuance of a bulletin announcing the hiring of a former high-ranking general or admiral often leads to a boost in stock price.

U.S. military officers benefit professionally and financially from implementing MIC aggression. There is no downside for high-ranking officers who support nonstop war. They'll retire soon with full benefits, and likely go work for a war corporation. Officers who make it to the highest military ranks are very good at conforming to the system. These officers support nonstop, optional war and broad military deployments, and defer to pro-war pretexts and jargon coming from industry think tanks and pressure groups. They judge military activity in terms of numbers (dollars spent, weapons purchased, bases active, troops deployed) instead of clear soldierly goals. Many officers are unable or unwilling to distinguish between the needs of a war corporation and the needs of a professional uniformed military. These U.S. military officers don't see war corporations; they see a *total force* in which military and industry work together. A wise man once said, "What is a general but an uncritical thinker who has said yes enough times to ascend to the top of the military chain of command?" One who dissents in a forceful manner risks one's career. As the MIC crafts pretexts to justify its own existence and expansion, officers who go against the system from the inside are isolated, shed, or spit out. Reality is difficult to stomach: There is an absolute dearth of class consciousness and moral courage within the Pentagon. The upper ranks of the U.S. Armed Forces are rife with a caliber of officer predisposed to seek out profit and reward upon retirement.

Executives move smoothly from corporations to the Pentagon, particularly the sundry offices (secretary, deputy secretary, and assistant deputy secretary) within the building's inner rings. These men and women who run the Pentagon have been raised in an environment of profiteering; they are steeped in corporate thought; their allegiance is to corporate success. They bring with them their industry contacts and an exploitative ideology. They turn to corporate products when presented with a military problem. They benefit professionally and financially. Industry executives, the most rapacious of the capitalist class, enter "public service" and influence programs and policies. This invariably boosts the profits of former industry employers, who, thenceforth, capture and direct more of the U.S. military establishment. (Such actions, profit invested to make more profit, is money functioning as capital.)

Giant corporations **finance the campaigns** of people running for congressional office. Those people, once in office, help out the corporations. D.C. is so corrupt that they've legalized this process—they've legalized bribery. In *Buckley v. Valeo* of 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that limits on election spending are unconstitutional; in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* of 2010, the Supreme Court distorted the First Amendment's free speech clause, allowing corporations to spend unlimited amounts on political contributions; and in *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission* of 2014, the Supreme Court got rid of limits on the total number of political contributions one can give over a two-year period. We are told that the Supreme Court defends liberty and provides a check against the Executive and Legislative branches, however, the function of the Court, as its rulings demonstrate, is to abet corporate authority and financial interest in line with what the Executive and Legislative branches pursue.

The war industry targets both houses of Congress, particularly elected officials on relevant committees (Armed Services, Appropriations, Intelligence, Foreign Relations). The war industry

finances many political action committees, PACs. These are tax-exempt organizations that aggregate donations to fund political campaigns or influence federal elections. Super PACs (a.k.a. independent expenditure-only committees) allow *unlimited* contributions. Funding congressional campaigns directly impacts the way U.S. elected officials vote. Steven Semler of the independent, non-corporate organization Security Policy Reform Institute has documented this thoroughly, particularly in his 7 August 2020 piece, “Industry cash, not public opinion, predicts Democrat votes on defense.”

Politicians and their war industry bosses are proficient at claiming the “defense” industry creates jobs. Take caution when a war corporation throws the word “jobs” around. Many of these jobs are part-time, temporary, or menial (e.g. painters, welders, roustabout), parsed out to an increasingly desperate workforce. Some are construction jobs that vanish in a year or so. Working-class jobs in the war industry are often in difficult conditions. Industry jobs that pay very well typically require advanced degrees, which the majority of the population does not have. Some jobs within the tallies that corporate executives throw around are non-U.S. jobs (e.g. microchips manufactured overseas). Other jobs are induced (e.g. the mom making less-than-minimum wage on a ridesharing app driving an industry executive from work to a pub, or the waiter at a St. Louis restaurant where a missile engineer dines). Industry inflates job tallies. The goal is to confine the congressional side of the MIC, which cites the inflated jobs numbers and goes along for the ride.

The claim that the “defense” industry brings jobs is a stale public relations ploy. It hides the truth: Spending on healthcare, education, or clean energy creates more jobs than spending on military (Garrett-Peltier, *PERI*, 25 May 2017).

The war industry can inflate job numbers because there is no accountability coming from D.C.: Capitol Hill is largely content letting Corporate America police itself. You are likely familiar with cases where corporations get to inspect their own product (e.g. the airline industry, the pork industry) instead of government inspectors doing the job. Corporations policing corporations is rampant in the war industry, like when the advertising agency GSD&M measures the effectiveness of its own efforts recruiting the working class into the military. Sometimes one corporation polices part of industry, like when Calibre Systems conducts “cost and economic analysis of major weapons system programs and associated acquisition/financial management policies and procedures,” as contract announcements indicate. Congress does not exercise effective oversight. The average congressperson is clueless on the intricacies of war, espionage, and peace. The average congressperson on Armed Services or Intelligence committees is more aware, but their views are carefully circumscribed by capitalist imperative for profit and the information that armed bureaucracies selectively divvy out.

War corporations hire **professional lobbying firms** in order to influence federal policy. War corporations regularly spend millions on lobbying Capitol Hill. This is an effective, straightforward method for corporations to get their way. Jimmy Williams, a former lobbyist explains the system: “Years of legalized bribery had exposed me to the worst elements of our country’s political workings. Not even my half-million-a-year salary could outweigh my conscience... Today, most lobbyists are engaged in a system of bribery but it’s the legal kind, the kind that runs rampant in the corridors of Washington...” (*Vox*, 5 Jan 2018).

Williams continues:

Unlimited expense accounts, nights out on the town, expensive bottles of wine, elaborate meals with sitting senators and Congress members — that was my life... It was an endless cycle of money trading hands for votes. It's a wonder members of the House and Senate actually have time to legislate when they spend so much of their damn time raising money... Every fundraiser was yet another legal bribe. Every committee hearing I'd look up and think, 'I just bought his vote.' And every time I got a bill passed or, better yet, killed, I'd think to myself, 'That wouldn't have worked if I hadn't bought the outcome.'

Industry operates pressure groups, sundry 501(c) organizations. The most effective pressure groups include the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), Aerospace Industries Association (AIA), Association of the United States Army (AUSA), and Business Executives for National Security (BENS). Pressure groups are emphatically not lobbying firms, but they influence the military and Capitol Hill with consistency and weight. These groups advocate for gigantic military and intelligence budgets and “industry-developed” government regulation. Pressure groups arrange congressional testimony, issue fact sheets and policy packets, and give awards to sitting generals and admirals. Pressure groups frequently produce Industry Guides in order to help you, the war corporation, “place your company in front of your customers.”

Most importantly, pressure groups sponsor and support industry displays (e.g. NDIA, Air Armaments Symposium; AIA, Dubai Air Show; and AUSA, Global Force Symposium & Exposition in Huntsville). Such displays are where corporate representatives schmooze with military honchos (officer and civilian) and pitch goods, services, and recommendations to those directing the wars. A pressure group can state it was “founded to educate its constituencies on all aspects of national security.” This is one way to lobby without lobbying. Many adopt this “educating constituencies” character. Retired flag officers and corporate titans lead pressure groups. For example, retired Army General Joseph Votel, former commander of U.S. Central Command, is now in charge of BENS, supported by a leadership team and board of directors comprised of wealthy capitalists. Pentagon officials are in regular contact with pressure groups. The director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (the U.S. government unit in charge of abetting industry sales to allied capitalist governments), for example, has indicated that he regularly talks to and collaborates with pressure groups (*Brookings Institution*, 4 Jun 2019). Industry has crafted pressure groups of all shapes, sizes, and dispositions. Pressure groups are conduits of industry desires.

Seemingly mild traditions function as political persuasion. Elected officials touring war corporations (e.g. Senator Gary Peters visiting BAE Systems, Senator Jeanne Shaheen visiting L3) and military installations (e.g. Senator Martin Heinrich at a drone squadron on Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico; Senator Tim Kaine at naval bases in Hampton Roads, Virginia) is such a tradition. Elected officials are shown industry's products, regaled with job tallies, and bold claims about economic impact, and battered with refined talking points. The costs of war—financial, physical, and emotional—are tucked out of sight.

A handful of business interests owns media outlets in the United States. Profit drives **corporate media**. U.S. corporate media (CNN, MSNBC, FoxNews, et al.) share operate under the same business model: air what attracts the highest ratings in order to get more advertising revenue. Corporate media air info-tainment, designed not to inform or foster critical thinking about the

world. Informing the public is not a priority. Maintaining the existing economic order is. To the extent that corporate media air any information at all, the information reflects the opinions of the ruling class and capitalist dogma. There is no room to firmly address domestic issues (e.g. exploitation of the working class, dismal public education, over-dependency on petroleum, two corrupt political factions, government subsidies of harmful industries, GMOs and plastics in our food chain, war) or their root causes. Politically conditioning the U.S. public, corporate media do not blame the MIC or capitalism for any of the problems in the world.

Aiming for high ratings and lucrative advertising revenue, corporate media self-censor and taper the spectrum of acceptable foreign policy debate. War corporations purchase advertisements on news shows to further confine the debate, as corporate pundits and newscasters do not speak out against advertisers. Pro-war is as pro-war does. Corporate media hire career militants (former CIA Director John Brennan, MSNBC; former CIA Deputy Director Mike Morrell, CBS News; retired General Jack Keane, FoxNews) who further confine the debate. Retired generals and admirals regularly contribute to all forms of corporate media, often without disclosing existing ties to war corporations and/or financial investments in war. The Smith-Mundt Modernization Act of 2012 increased government propaganda in corporate media. Drawing funding from the wealthy donor class and large corporate interests, National Public Radio is similarly confined. NPR's CEO is John Lansing, whose previous job was chief propagandist at the U.S. Agency for Global Media.

Capital dominates other media through which people learn about war. Regent Equity Partners owns Sightline Media Group, whose products include most of the major military-focused periodicals: Air Force Times, Army Times, C4ISRNET, Defense News, Federal Times, Marine Corps Times, and Navy Times. Private equity prioritizes profit. And when war is profit, earnest questions are sacrilege. The Pentagon runs its own massive media empire, coordinated by the Assistant to the Secretary for Public Affairs, further polluting the minds of the working class.

Hollywood collaborates with government in disseminating propaganda. If you are a producer wanting to make a movie involving military or paramilitary operations, you're going to want assistance from the Pentagon or CIA in acquiring matériel, an important part of producing an enthralling film. The Pentagon and CIA are happy to help, at a price: they must approve your movie's script. If the script questions the accepted benevolence of U.S. foreign policy, the movie won't receive support from the Pentagon or CIA. It will be sunk before it starts. Dedicated offices in Arlington and McLean liaise with Hollywood. The second role Hollywood performs is demonizing Arabs, Persians, Muslims, and other official enemies, priming the public to loathe the stereotypical enemies on the receiving end of U.S. ordnance. The final role Hollywood plays is to function as a recruiter: It puts forth alluring portrayals of military and intelligence activities, seducing new generations into believing the thrill or benevolence of such undertakings. For example, Hollywood makes CIA case officers look like a shoot-'em-up cowboys and martial arts masters, when in reality most CIA case officers are not athletic, possess little to no martial arts skill, and are almost never in danger overseas. See Ishmael Jones' *The Human Factor: Inside The CIA's Dysfunctional Intelligence Culture*, Philip Agee's *CIA Diary*, and Marks & Marchetti's *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence* for candid accounts of life as a CIA case officer.

Think tanks guide the discourse inside the Beltway. Think tanks promote views advantageous to their funders. Think tanks issue information that endorses and advances the ideology and profits of their benefactors. U.S. war corporations fund major D.C. think tanks. In turn, the think tanks

invent, hype, and promote new threats and new rationalizations for why the United States must maintain a global military presence and fight wars. Like most parts of the MIC, it's a self-selecting process: people with deep empathy, strong morals, and an understanding of the brutalities of U.S. foreign policy do not become part of the war industry's think tanks. Such an environment reliably and loudly produces report after report, panel after panel, and interview after interview, about Iran's "malign activities," China's "destabilizing influence," Russian "aggression," and the Arabs' "terrorism." Corporate media amplify this disinformation. Think tanks also swarm presidential candidates whenever the candidates are assembling their foreign policy teams, ensuring foreign policy options remain within confines benefitting the MIC. Finally, there is no need for you, a congressperson, to go to the Congressional Budget Office when a think tank (that takes money from the same war corporations your campaign takes money from) will promptly provide you with a silky-smooth, pro-war report. Many think tanks draft legislation for congresspeople who receive campaign funding from the war industry.

When war is your business, peace is your enemy. The MIC incessantly fabricates threats. Threats—both specific and vague—sustain the racket. The world is filled with all kinds of threats, including advanced persistent threats, affiliates, biological agents, black identity extremists, dark networks, dirty bombs, great powers, guerrillas, hackers, insurgents, malicious actors, non-compliant governments, non-state actors, a non-state hostile intelligence service, people who don't accept state violence or intimidation, regimes, rogue states, special interest aliens, terrorists, unaccompanied immigrant children, and unprivileged enemy belligerents. All of these "threats," real or not, are hyped. Reality—for example, you have a greater chance of getting struck by lightning in the United States than falling victim to a Muslim terrorist attack—is ignored. Glazing the public with layers of fear, threats can sell any good or service imaginable, benefitting industry. Threats can justify sky-high budgets, invasive legal authorities, and bloated bureaucracies, benefitting the Pentagon.

BUSINESS SECTORS OF WAR

To make more money, more and more parts of life must be pulled into capital (to be exchangeable for money). This is why we see everything in civilian life being commodified, including food, housing, land and water. And this is why we see corporations taking over many military functions. A given corporation now in charge of what was once a governmental job needs to get a layer of profit out of the task. To obtain that profit the corporation ends up charging a lot, cutting jobs, polluting, and/or reducing labor protections, including safety.

Corporate America is in charge of the tasks that keep a military installation up and running. They call it base operations support services, or BOSS—one of many business sectors of war. Corporations selling BOSS usually provide a combination of facility management, fire and emergency services, grounds maintenance, janitorial services, pavement clearance, pest control, and waste management. These basic duties used to be done by soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines. The cost of paying a corporation for BOSS is "higher than paying government employees or soldiers" to do it "because of the profit motive involved" the *International Business Times* reports (Young, 23 Mar 2013). EMCOR, Fluor, IAP, KBRWyle, Pride, Vectrus, and TRAX International are some of the big names selling BOSS. Low-wage U.S. citizens and residents carry out most BOSS stateside. Third-country nationals (TCN)—not locals and not U.S. citizens—carry out BOSS overseas, often in poor working conditions. Workers of the world have more in common with one another than they have in common with the ruling class.

Business sectors of war are military functions that corporations now run. Most large war corporations specialize in multiple business sectors of war.

The most visible business sector of war is the design and production of platforms. Platforms include piloted aircraft, drones (in the air, on the sea, under the sea), surface ships, submarines, land vehicles. Most people see an aircraft or a ship or a vehicle. War corporations see a platform upon which to route goods and services. Take the General Atomics MQ-9 drone. It's a General Atomics product, sure, but many corporations sell goods and services for the platform. Honeywell makes the engine. Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Raytheon make the bombs and missiles. L3Harris makes the training system and sells depot maintenance, and Raytheon makes the targeting sensor and the radar warning receiver. And on and on.

Intelligence is another government job now in corporate hands. Intelligence is corporatized, and IT-intensive. Most intelligence positions within the enormous U.S. intelligence community are people sitting at desks. Contractors comprise the bulk of the workload in both military and civilian intelligence agencies. The major corporations that fill out the IT-heavy intelligence organizations include Accenture, Booz Allen Hamilton, CACI, Carahsoft, General Dynamics, Leidos, L3Harris, ManTech, PAE, and SAIC.

Other business sectors of war include propaganda and public relations; office work and program management; consulting and advisory & assistance; audit, finance, and accounting; training & simulation; transportation; cataloguing, maintaining, and guarding prepositioned stock, which is war matériel and weaponry sitting at strategic locations around the world; mercenaries and personnel with active government clearances; telecommunications; nuclear weaponry; anti-ballistic missiles and tracking; small arms & light weaponry; space (satellites, ground-based monitoring, launch vehicles, launch support, range operations); ordnance (bombs, missiles, artillery); and microelectronics.

Corporations are also in charge of recruitment and retention. Corporations sustain war by enticing youth to enlist. Most recruits don't become cannon fodder, but rather become vessels for corporate goods and services. Major advertising firms, such as GSD&M, Wunderman Thompson, Young & Rubicam, and Blaine Warren, design and implement military recruitment strategy, campaigns, and advertisements.

Special operations kit is another business sector. The war industry outfits special operations forces like sporting goods companies outfit Tiger Woods or LeBron James. Small arms & light weaponry, body armor, visual augmentation devices, and munitions bedeck the operator. Contracts for SOF gear can be very expensive. One issued 7 March 2019 to six corporations, including the ever-present Atlantic Diving Supply, cost up to \$4 billion. War corporations know what they're doing: special operations forces are vessels for industry goods and services. Using competition against Moscow and Beijing as an excuse, the Pentagon and the war industry are looking to create "hyper-enabled operators." A hyper-enabled operator is an extra-packed vessel. Hyper-enabling involves selling the military new technology for use on and through the operator, including biomedical monitoring, real-time social media monitoring and social network mapping, tools for long-distance identification, apps for data aggregation and to speed up decision-making, and instruments for tactical navigation. Hyper-enabled operators are end-

to-end digitization of warfighting. And with full digitization of the grunts comes full opportunity for selling endless upgrades and follow-on goods and services.

Information technology is the most profitable business sector of war. Networking equipment, servers, hardware, and software that process, relay, and distribute data are known as information technology (IT). The cloud (corporate computing power) and artificial intelligence are included in this business sector. IT-related contracts are more common than any other business sector of war. The major U.S. corporations selling IT-related goods and services to the military establishment include Amazon, Booz Allen Hamilton, CACI, Dell, General Dynamics, L3Harris, HP, Microsoft, Oracle, SAIC, and Vectrus.

The implicit mission of the U.S. military, and military intelligence in particular, is to cover the globe. The war industry seizes upon this boundless mission to market all manner of IT goods and services. With no strategy whatsoever in terms of overall military mission or acquisition, the U.S. military establishment eagerly gobbles up said goods and services. A deluge of information results; the system is functionally overwhelmed. Or, rather, the system is *overwhelming* by its very nature. The flood of information then allows the war industry to develop, market, and sell even more IT, including but not limited to software and hardware that aggregate or merge information, allegedly simplifying the big picture.

Connect it all is the logical conclusion of such a fundamentally greedy system. One can see this today in industry's push (citing such official enemies as Moscow and Beijing) to connect everything—aircraft, satellites, ships, artillery batteries, and other weapon systems—into a single network. Combined Joint All-Domain Command & Control (CJADC2) seeks to link and share information from all military sensors and shooters. CJADC2 will incorporate artificial intelligence, or machine learning, in order to aid military and civilian decision-making. Designed and maintained by the war industry, and marketed as exquisite battlefield awareness, CJADC2 offers endless sales, including upgrades and modifications, ensuring an inherently profitable future.

Bureaucratic nooks and crannies provide opportunities for corporate profit. And corporations jostling for elbowroom create more nooks and crannies within which to extract profit. Corporations carry out the work of every large military unit. For example, Systems Commands are the primary large bureaucratic divisions in the U.S. Navy. Corporations have had great success assuming dominion across large swaths of Systems Commands. Another example is Unified Combatant Commands, broad units of control organized based on function (e.g. Special Operations Command, Transportation Command) or geographical jurisdiction (e.g. Africa Command, Southern Command). Corporations work on program management, business processes, planning and analysis, policy recommendations, and acquisition in these commands. If high-ranking officials cannot handle paperwork or manage programs, what good are they? That issue does not concern the corporation, which profits from the neoliberal push for privatization and incompetent or apathetic military leadership.

The Pentagon itself has undergone remarkable corporate growth within its bureaucracy since 2001. Examples include but certainly are not limited to Concurrent Technologies running and managing portions of the Under Secretary for Personnel & Readiness; Strategic Analysis Inc. guiding research and engineering objectives within Assistant Secretaries' offices; and E3 Federal Solutions covering over three dozen "separate offices headed by senior level individuals" within

the Office of the Under Secretary for Policy. On 30 April 2019, the Institute for Defense Analysis (Alexandria, VA) was contracted to support the Department with research, analyses, technical evaluation, and test & evaluation involving “comprehensive evaluation of national security issues, including systems and technologies at all stages of development, deployment, and use.” Such contracts are common occurrences. Corporations have also overrun Washington Headquarters Services, the military’s primary stand-alone administrative unit.

PHYSICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COST

War is when the ruling class of one country sends the working class of that country off to fight the working class of another country. Over 7,000 U.S. Armed Forces personnel and 8,000 mercenaries have died in the post-9.11 wars. Nearly one million veterans have filed disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs. These numbers do not account for the active duty troops and military veterans who commit suicide, live mentally maimed, or inflict ripples of misery throughout U.S. society as a result of the trauma they experienced while in uniform.

Untold millions of humans have died from U.S. military and intelligence activity worldwide since the National Security Act of 1947, which entrenched armed bureaucracies and fortified the MIC. Well over one million humans have died across the globe as a direct result of D.C.’s post-9.11 wars. Wall Street, U.S. war corporations, and their politicians are responsible for the post-9.11 deaths: Afghan, Colombian, Iraqi, Libyan, Pakistani, Somali, Syrian, U.S., Yemeni. Any given war corporation misdirects the public by saying it has “delivered strong operating results, demonstrating the power of our business portfolio.”

Mercenaries are personnel who work for war corporations, nominally under a nation’s flag, while receiving greater financial pay than their peers in military uniform. Money and generations of propaganda lure portions of the working class into becoming mercenaries. War corporations make a lot of money selling armed mercenaries to the Pentagon. These mercenaries die, too. Why use armed mercenaries? The ruling class knows it needs to keep the deaths of uniformed troops at a minimum. Too many soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines dying (in the optional wars pushed by the war industry) would draw unnecessary attention to the racket. Mercenaries die in warzones, absorbing deaths that would otherwise bloody the military ranks. This allows the Pentagon and Capitol Hill to cite low casualty figures. Additionally, using mercenaries keeps conscription off the table. Conscription would expand the burden of war into the upper classes of society, dragging in the sons and daughters of the ruling elite. That would be unacceptable to MIC elites. Mercenaries keep the war machine firing on all cylinders.

Capitalists profit when they adeptly shift costs onto others (humans, other animals, planet). This includes enforcing poor labor safety, crushing labor unions, and polluting the natural world. We, the people, see so much pollution and harm because that’s how the system is designed. Those are intentional byproducts of capitalism.

The military-industrial-congressional complex is the world’s worst polluter. This pollution comes in many forms, including:

- Military use of polluting platforms (e.g. aircraft, most ships, land vehicles).
- War industry manufacture and distribution of goods and services causes a great deal of pollution. Corporate opacity prevents the public from understanding the extent of industry’s pollution. For

example, the *Orlando Sentinel* reported on 28 September 2020, “Lockheed Martin created an ‘environmental nightmare’ at its facility off Sand Lake Road by mismanaging hazardous toxins, which contaminated nearby workers who were later diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, brain lesions, cancer and other diseases, newly filed lawsuits say... Instead of carefully managing the waste, attorneys alleged Lockheed Martin stored toxins in leaking storage tanks, collected and transported waste in leaking underground piping systems and dumped tons of toxic waste sludge inside trenches dug at the Orlando facility.”

- The U.S. war industry uses depleted uranium (DU) in a lot of armor and ordnance because DU is very dense. The U.S. military’s use of DU, a chemical weapon, creates public health emergencies wherever it detonates overseas.
- Construction firms build and repair military installations of all sizes. Corporations such as AECOM, Jacobs, Parsons, RQ Construction, Tetra Tech, and Whiting-Turner are among the Pentagon’s go-to engineering and project management firms. Fossil fuels power all military construction—from cranes to backhoes to bulldozers to dump trucks to private vehicles commuting to and from the work sites to fossil-fuel-intensive manufacture of concrete and steel. Not a single structure is erected without immense, unmeasured fossil fuel pollution. The Pentagon does not require construction firms to reuse, repurpose, and recycle materials. Military construction physically lays the foundation that extends the permanent warfare state.

Pollutants contaminate soil and groundwater at current and former military and industry sites across the United States. Pollutants can include radioactive waste, rocket fuel, components of buried chemical and conventional weaponry, exploded ordnance, degreasers and other chemical solvents, petroleum products, coatings (such as hexavalent chromium, used in protecting missiles, aircraft, and certain land vehicles from corrosion), and fire retardants. The substances used to put out aircraft fires are highly toxic (see, for example, “Cancer-causing foam could be banned in military training next year, off military bases entirely by 2029,” *Military Times*, 4 Jun 2019). Polychlorinated biphenyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances are common. Current and former military sites across the U.S. are riddled with pollutants, from the Aleutian Islands to the Atlantic seaboard. Many of these sites are in or around populated areas, harming the working class.

Military activities and infrastructure keep U.S. society headed in the wrong direction, postponing the necessary demilitarization of U.S. society and demobilization of the war industry. Demilitarization and demobilization are the only healthy, non-polluting ways forward.

How does the Pentagon clean up its pollution? By turning to Corporate America, of course. Many corporations tackle the Pentagon’s pollution. The bigger ones, such as Jacobs and Tetra Tech, are best known for their engineering and construction prowess. In exchange for money, Corporate America conducts studies and environmental assessments, the positive passage of which unbridles corporate greed on the road to more profits; prepares plans, drafts documents, and issues reports; surveys sites, oversees wetlands, and supervises land use; writes up Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act documentation; administers compliance with laws (e.g. Safe Water Drinking Act, Clean Water Act); estimates costs; dredges muck; monitors environmental compliance; peruses Executive Orders; plots basing patterns; reviews the National Environmental Policy Act; removes contaminated soil; excavates, characterizes, separates, and transports waste; studies socio-economic issues and demographics; drafts emergency response preparedness; disposes of radioactive material; and runs community outreach and strategic engagement. Public relations are often packaged as part

of a corporation's environmental remit; total honesty regarding the polluting footprint of military and industry does not come to light.

The U.S. Armed Forces and the corporations running U.S. military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan burned trash in open-air pits. Routinely incinerated were appliances, batteries, fecal matter, medical waste, paint thinner, vehicle parts, and a variety of plastics. Jet fuel, itself a carcinogen, was often used to ignite the blazes. Severe medical problems afflicted anyone who crossed paths with the black clouds and the particulates spewing from these burn pits. In October 2014, the Department of Veterans Affairs finally established a registry to track veterans who believed they were exposed to burn pits during their time in Afghanistan or Iraq. Over 30,000 people had enrolled in the registry by the end of January 2015, according to *Military Times* (Kime, 12 Feb 2015). In autumn 2016, the Government Accountability Office affirmed that the Pentagon needed to study exposure to burn pits and the long-term health problems that may result. The GAO accused the Pentagon of taking too long to study the problem (Brunswick, 24 Oct 2016). Data indicate a rise in certain types of cancers among veterans over the past two decades of war, *McClatchy* reports (Copp, et al., 30 Oct 2019). The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine published research in September 2020 concluding that there was insufficient data to establish a firm link between many severe pulmonary diseases and deployments to Afghanistan and the broader Middle East.

The Pentagon has no plans to help Iraqis or Afghans who were exposed to its burn pits.

CENTRAL COMMAND

The Pentagon has divided the world into geographical areas of responsibility so it can better manage the imperium. U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) is the geographic combatant command in charge of the greater Middle East. CENTCOM stretches from Kazakhstan in the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the east, westward across the Arabian Peninsula, ending in Egypt. U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is in charge of the African continent, minus Egypt. CENTCOM and AFRICOM receive the brunt of the MIC's violence because they are regions rich in natural resources and because their restive populations do not bend to the will of capital.

The ruling class deploys the U.S. Armed Forces to Middle Eastern countries—countries where the Armed Forces fight (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria) and countries where they launch aircraft, conduct information gathering, store matériel, train, and station troops (e.g. Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE). The U.S. ruling class prefers anti-democratic countries in which to locate military installations; if the working class of Middle East had their say, U.S. military forces likely wouldn't be allowed in. Countries run by anti-democratic regimes house some of the Pentagon's biggest and most active overseas installations (e.g. al-'Udeid in Qatar).

You dismount a corporate ride and stroll around a U.S. military installation—say, Camp Arifjan in Kuwait. You run into a variety of corporations carrying out different governmental tasks. Mission 1st Group manages network and communications infrastructure. Your peer stateside receives you on his new audiovisual equipment, maybe purchased from Wildflower International. Perhaps he works for a U.S. branch of the British firm Serco, which manages programs, runs intelligence logistics and air operations centers, and plans operations for CENTCOM. Your stomach growls, so you end the call and exit the building, which was built by CH2M Hill (now

Jacobs). You pass a group of AECOM personnel rigging up infrastructure to support U.S. Navy surveillance operations. CGI Federal maintains nearby software. On your way to the chow hall, which is run by Vectrus, you pass a warehouse in which AECOM personnel using General Dynamics software sort and track weaponry and matériel. Leidos expertise helps account for munitions. You glance to your right at the distant gate, where SAIC personnel are arranging the latest entry control systems. Triple Canopy personnel guard the gate. Vectrus personnel are fueling the military police vehicles. Members of the 595th Transportation Brigade are driving cargo (unloaded at ports by Cargo Transport System) onto the base. KBR runs morale, welfare, and recreation, including the gym you hit every morning. The chow hall isn't open yet, so you duck into a safety briefing, featuring materials from Kaiyuh Services. U.S. construction firms build military infrastructure through which U.S. war corporations then route profit.

U.S. activity in Afghanistan illustrates the profitable nature of war.

Corporations began selling weaponry to the Afghan government shortly after Hamid Karzai assumed presidential authority in December 2001. The longer the war lasted, the better U.S. weapons brokers became at dealing. Sales to Afghanistan have been thorough, spanning Harris radios, Northrop Grumman reconnaissance aircraft, PAE training, General Dynamics rockets, L3 fuses, AM General and Textron vehicles, Colt rifles, Capco training bombs, and Jacobs logistics. Notable corporations involved in building up the Afghan Air Force have included AAR, Lockheed Martin, MD Helicopters, and Sierra Nevada Corporation. Billable categories include support equipment, transportation, repair, and sustainment. U.S.-directed plans for the Afghan Air Force aim for 80 Lockheed Martin UH-60 helicopters in Afghan possession by 2030, the *New York Times* reported (Zucchino, 10 Jan 2019). Sales to Afghan forces have also included avionics maintenance equipment for “counter narcotic activities,” a contract announcement issued 2 June 2016 attests. Opium production has skyrocketed since the U.S. Armed Forces began occupying the country, *Business Insider* notes (Woody, 16 Nov 2017). Corporations have even managed Afghanistan intelligence operations. One such program cost \$457 million and didn't meet a bare minimum of standards (McVeigh, *Guardian*, 2 Aug 2017).

Corporate goods and services form the bulk of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. The corporate occupation force in Afghanistan is broad, including EXP (Chicago, IL) electrical maintenance; Boeing drones, equipment, and field service representatives; AC First (a JV between construction giant AECOM and the IT firm CACI) logistics, maintenance, supply, and transportation; and CACI IT-based intel ops. Other services include Jacobs logistics and Mission 1st Group project management and network infrastructure. PAE has maintained military vehicles at Hamid Karzai International Airport. SAIC runs protection services around the country. Multiple corporations work on blimps deployed above U.S. military installations to keep an eye on things. For a pretty penny, such corporations as AAR and Columbia Helicopters have transported U.S. military forces, cargo, and casualties across the country. The aforementioned corporations comprise a small sample of the contracts involving U.S. military forces that occupy Afghanistan. There are more than seven contractors for each U.S. military service member in Afghanistan, *Stars & Stripes* reports (Lawrence, 19 Jan 2021).

For year after year, war industry officials, high-ranking military officials, and industry think tanks insisted that the U.S. military was making “progress” in Afghanistan. They were lying. In late 2019, the *Washington Post* released its in-depth investigation into official assertions of progress. The *Post*'s reporting was based on thousands of pages of government documents and hundreds

of interviews. “U.S. officials constantly said they were making progress. They were not, and they knew it,” the *Post* summarized (Whitlock, 9 Dec 2019).

In early 2021, a congressionally mandated panel, the Afghanistan Study Group, issued its recommendations: stay in Afghanistan longer. The bulk of the panel was comprised of war profiteers, members of war industry think tanks (e.g. Institute for Study of War), consultancies within the war industry (e.g. Cohen Group, WestExec), and elites with vested professional and financial interests in war. For example, two of the co-chairs were retired general Joseph Dunford (sitting on Lockheed Martin’s board of directors) and former Senator Kelly Ayotte (sitting on BAE Systems Inc.’s board). Joseph Dunford asserted, “it’s not in anyone’s best interest right now for a precipitous withdrawal from Afghanistan” (Kheel, *The Hill*, 3 Feb 2021).

Post-9.11, the MIC successfully achieved an increase in bombing rates in the Middle East, regardless of which capitalist faction sat in the White House. The pursuit and bombing of sundry populations in the Middle East, which is the backbone of post-9.11 military action, is a direct transfer: money from U.S. taxpayers and from sold Treasury marketable securities to U.S. war corporations, and ordnance from war corporations to sovereign land in the Middle East. These are one-way routes, casting wealthy executives and dead civilians in their wake.

PORTFOLIO OF CONFLICTS

Without looking at military adventurism through the lens of the corporation, analysts are bound to produce error-filled studies. For example, one analyst contended in an interview on *The Real News Network*, “Military force is almost never going to achieve your political aims. The Americans learned this in Vietnam. They’re learning it in Afghanistan. They’re learning it in Syria... So Obama supporting the Saudis/Emiratis in Yemen is a sign really of incoherence on the part of the United States” (14 Jul 2018, 16:23). Far from incoherence, the behavior is quite rational. A variety of conflicts, disparate and some seemingly futile, is *precisely* the aim. Conflict itself—producing untold mountains of profit for war corporations and Wall Street—is the goal.

Recall that capital is money used to expand business in order to make more profit. Capital isn’t just building new factories to produce more goods from which to profit. Capital is also putting money toward cultivating and promoting politicians who advocate for wars and broad military deployments; media and think tanks to propagandize and generate militant narratives; attaining through neoliberal economic policies a U.S. military establishment so rife with corporations that it becomes one bloated, self-sustaining, profitable entity; arranging industry pressure groups and think tanks to encourage and award high-ranking military officers who support and extend conflicts overseas; and marketing, pushing, and operating goods and services that harm populations and destabilize countries around the world, generating more profitable conflict.

The war industry pursues a portfolio of conflicts as any organized, dominant industry views the global marketplace, parses demographics, shapes consumer tastes, and pursues profit maximization at all costs. Afghanistan, Pakistan, Colombia, Iraq, Iran, Korea, Libya, Mexico, Palestine, the Philippines, Somalia, Syria, the Sahel, Ukraine, Yemen—each conflict has advantages and disadvantages, unique terrain and unique obstacles. Industry’s products monitor, control, and destroy populations. The particular goods and services selected are not the point here. The point is that from the eyes of the corporate suite, conflict must endure. Peace is not profitable. A strong portfolio of conflicts, which vary in intensity and scope, is what

industry has achieved. Global capitalism demands infinite growth. War corporations' portfolio approach demands endless, dispersed armed conflicts of varying intensity.

U.S. WAR INDUSTRY SALES TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES

The U.S. war industry sells to capitalist regimes around the world through direct commercial sales and foreign military sales (FMS). FMS tend to deal with big-ticket items or goods and services of a sensitive nature. Through FMS, the U.S. government procures and transfers industry goods and services to allied governments and international organizations. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) is the intermediary between the U.S. war industry and the customer overseas for FMS. On any given day, DSCA is managing "14,000 open foreign military sales cases with 185 countries," the director Lt. Gen. Charles Hooper explained at the Brookings Institution in June 2019.

Violent regimes are frequent customers, including London, Riyadh, Abu Dhabi, and Tel Aviv. The Leahy Law, which is intended to prevent U.S. military assistance from reaching militaries that have committed serious human rights violations, is not enforced when it comes to FMS. The Arms Export Control Act requires recipients of U.S. war industry goods and services to use them in self-defense. So, customers of the U.S. war industry typically affirm that they're using the goods and services in self-defense, and the U.S. government doesn't press them on the matter. In fiscal year 2020, the war industry sold \$50.8 billion through FMS, and \$124.3 billion through direct commercial sales (Mehta, *Defense News*, 4 Dec 2020).

The Pentagon often cites industry's claim that FMS reduces the cost of military systems to the U.S. Armed Forces. The Pentagon supports FMS because foreign militaries dependent on U.S. equipment, knowhow, training, parts, and software are more likely to listen to the U.S. government on military matters, the direction to take in regional conflicts, and international policy.

Without tensions, military provocations, and ongoing war (e.g. Japan v. China, South v. North Korea, Taiwan v. China, absolutist Arab regimes and Apartheid Israel v. Iran, Apartheid Israel v. Arab populations, the war on drugs), the U.S. war industry would lose billions in annual sales to allied regimes and sales to the U.S. military that is "responding" to such conflict.

Major war corporations have people in charge of selling to each Arab country in the Persian Gulf (e.g. Joe Rank, a career soldier who helped guide Middle East policy for the U.S. Secretary of War, is now charge of Lockheed Martin's business with Saudi Arabia). U.S. flag officers who work on FMS often doff the uniform and then join war corporations to help sell goods and services overseas. From May 2015 through March 2016, U.S. war corporations sold over \$30 billion of goods and services to anti-democratic Arab Gulf allies (*Fortune*, 28 Mar 2016). Given the U.S. war industry's long sales history to regimes like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, it stands firmly on the side of profit, and firmly against democracy. Or, as Raytheon's website puts it, "With more than 50 years in the Middle East, Raytheon's steadfast commitment and uninterrupted presence in the region is a testament to the tremendous value we place on being there for our customers."

The 1945 Quincy Pact between U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz al-Saud started it all: D.C. would entrench bases in and around the Persian Gulf and protect the House of

Saud, while the latter would keep the oil flowing and give preferential treatment to U.S. corporate interests. The Saudi regime would later agree to use the dollar in international oil trading. Saudi Arabia purchases a lot of goods and services from U.S. industry, including the war industry. The D.C. regime assented when in 2015 the Saudi and Emirati regimes turned U.S. weaponry on Yemen. The U.S. war industry, in addition to U.S. military and intelligence assistance, has been the cornerstone of the UAE/Saudi destruction of Yemen. Yemenis now suffer from raging famine, disease outbreaks, and crippled infrastructure. The UAE/Saudi coalition has hit civilians (school field trips, funeral processions, weddings, markets) and prevented humanitarian aid from entering Yemen. In autumn 2018, the head of the U.S. State Department's legislative affairs team (a former Raytheon lobbyist) certified that Saudi Arabia and the UAE were taking steps to reduce civilian deaths in Yemen (Fang & Emmons, *Intercept*, 21 Sep 2018). Roughly 233,000 people have died in Yemen as a result of the war, according to the United Nations humanitarian office. Such destruction is evidence of the military-industrial-congressional triangle doing its job. In early February 2021, the Biden administration claimed it would halt support for Saudi-UAE "offensive" operations in Yemen. This claim is full of loopholes and will not substantially alter or end the myriad of ways the U.S. ruling class aids and abets anti-democratic Arab regimes.

Zionism is the ideology that justifies the colonization of Palestine and the maintenance and expansion of that colonization using brutal violence and espionage. Zionists declared independence when they set up a new state, Israel, in Palestine in May 1948, ethnically cleansing hundreds of thousands of Arabs from the land. Apartheid Israel administratively fell under U.S. European Command until January 2021 when it was shifted to U.S. Central Command. Each year, D.C. gives roughly \$3.8 billion to Israel, which then is supposed to use such monies to purchase from the U.S. war industry. The occupation of Palestine and Zionist aggression against neighboring countries provide the U.S. war industry with a valuable slice of its portfolio: an outsourced proving ground to test, evaluate, use, and improve weaponry. When war is profit, death ensures a healthy bottom line. The aggressive military posture inherent to Zionism is a commercial advantage from an industry perspective. Israel has killed Arabs quite effectively with a variety of aircraft and weaponry purchased from U.S. corporations. The U.S. State Department turns a blind eye (Kane, *In These Times*, 13 Dec 2018). Israel claims self-defense when using U.S. and Israeli weaponry to kill Arabs. The U.S. and Israeli war industries collaborate, including through research & development and joint ventures. In April 2019, the U.S. war industry pressure group NDIA signed an agreement with the Manufacturers Association of Israel, bringing the latter into the former's International Division. Executives of U.S. war corporations travel to Israel regularly. U.S. war corporations have offices there to eye collaboration, the U.S. tax dollars that flow through the apartheid state, and reciprocal procurement deals wherein major U.S. war corporations invest in and partner with Israeli corporations on large contracts. Heavy Israeli espionage and lobbying guarantee the D.C. regime does not stray from unconditional support of the apartheid state.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Pretexts keep the military budget elevated, sustain the war industry's profits, and incite a violent foreign policy. Manufactured fear is essential. After pumping the "War on Terror" for trillions of dollars, the war industry has returned to targeting Russia and China through "great power competition." Facing off against Russia and China is more comfortable territory for war corporations. In the calculus of corporate suites, the big-ticket items inherent to competition

with another major industrial nation are where the real money can be made. A war on terror was lucrative for a decade or two, and it will continue, but it is not enough to justify excessive spending on cyber, submarines, satellites, hypersonic propulsion, ballistic missiles, nuclear weaponry, artificial intelligence/machine learning, and aircraft carriers.

Competition against Moscow and Beijing also continues the militarization of U.S. society, channeling anger (which might otherwise manifest itself as class awareness and/or physical protest against D.C.'s corruption) into outrage against a stereotypical enemy that resides overseas—just as the War on Terror did.

Great power competition is fully entrenched in the Pentagon, as made clear by the 2018 National Defense Strategy, developed in 2017 by military and corporate personnel. It emphasized, “inter-state strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security.” Etching the National Defense Strategy into stone, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford declared on Saturday, 17 November 2018, that great power competition was here to stay, demanding a shift in Pentagon funding priorities and weapons development. Dunford was speaking at the Halifax International Security Forum, sponsored by corporations (e.g. Boeing, CAE, United Technologies) and NATO, among other powerful groups, including energy and IT firms. Four months later, the war industry pressure group known as the National Defense Industrial Association presented General Dunford with its most prestigious award. Dunford soon retired and joined the board of Lockheed Martin.

Great power competition has enabled a high volume of war industry goods and services and U.S. military personnel to deploy to Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland and eastern Europe, particularly in the Baltic States and Romania, and clients surrounding China, particularly South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Guam. Large engineering and project management firms build and sustain associated infrastructure. Meanwhile, Beijing’s construction is framed as a threat. “I mean, this is insane. Look at all that crazy construction,” remarked a U.S. naval officer observing Chinese military construction projects in the South China Sea (Beech, *NY Times*, 20 Sep 2018). Though a useful bogeyman, Beijing construction in the South *China* Sea does not hold a candle to what D.C. has built up overseas.

Great power competition fills peaceful voids. At the Sea Air Space Forum of 2019 (sponsored by CACI, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls), MIC officials cited great power competitors in order to expand U.S. military power into the Arctic. They ignored the real threat: The U.S. Armed Forces’ rampant carbon-based military activity contributes to anthropogenic climate change, which melts Arctic ice, which opens up northern sea lanes, into which the Pentagon projects its polluting arsenal, which puts more carbon in the atmosphere.

Great power competition’s consequences are terrifying: increased militarization of an already militarized U.S. economy and public life; greater likelihood of wars big and small; more pollution (notably toxic particulates, carbon emissions, and radiological contamination) in an era of climate catastrophe and mass extinction; nuclear weapons on a hair trigger; narrowing of permissible speech and assembly; and relentless corporatization of the U.S. Armed Forces, the world’s mightiest organization. The pretext known as great power competition is off to an impressive start, financially, bureaucratically, and industrially. It is incumbent upon the workers of the world to stop it.