

America: Dead Nation Walking. The Use of Propaganda to Frighten and Manipulate Public Opinion

Regardless of who is our president, from either of the two 'War Parties', military spending has been going through the roof.

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They have a term for those on death row awaiting execution, as 'Dead Men Walking'. Well, ditto for a large (too large) segment of our American populace. One needs to first read William Hartung's brilliant piece "How the Military Industrial Complex Preys on the Troops". Google it and learn what the hell is really happening to your tax dollars!

The poor folks in Puerto Rico are so desperate for drinking water that they are going to toxic wells for it. At this writing 86% of the island still has little or no power... weeks after the hurricane! Where in the hell is the money needed to help these victims, as well as those in Houston, Florida, the wildfire-ravaged West Coast and elsewhere? Hartung knows: In the fiscal year 2016, the Pentagon issued \$304 billion in awards to corporations, nearly HALF of its \$ 600 billion-plus budget for that year. Five firms received nearly \$100 billion of those funds (Lockheed Martin @ \$36.2 billion; Boeing @ \$24.3 billion; Raytheon @ \$12.8 billion; General Dynamics @ \$12.7 billion and Northrup- Grumman @ \$10.7 billion). The heads of those top five contractors earned a total of \$ 96 million last year... of YOUR tax dollars! Factor in their other highly paid executives and board members who also are sucking on our taxpayer teat.

Regardless of who is our president, from either of the two 'War Parties', military spending has been going through the roof. Under the Cheney/Bush cabal, it hit 50% of our federal tax revenue. Under Obama, it broke 50%. Now, Trump, who ran for office on a (so-called) non-interventionist platform, just backed a \$54 billion budgetary rise, while the Senate, in the recently passed *National Defense Authorization Act*, backed a \$90 billion increase. The aforementioned five companies, along with their cohorts in the defense industry, according to Hartung, paid out \$65 million on Political Action Committee contributions since 2009. One surmises that 'free elections' are not free. In response to advocates of this crazy and obscene spending who say how 'Military spending creates jobs', Hartung relates that in 2011 a study by economists at the U of Mass. said the opposite. Their detailed study showed how military spending is the *worst* way to create jobs. Putting the same money into any other area- from infrastructure to transportation to alternative energy to health care or education- creates up to TWICE as many jobs as military spending.

You drive in your car and read the license plates of many of your neighbors. There are plates advertising the Marines, Navy, Air Force and Army. You turn on *any* sporting event or

attend one, and you see the pregame ceremonies of giant flags and honor guards... as if we are actually at war. The last time I checked, the most recent war that was actually a 'declared war' was WW2. All the rest were attempts by the Military Industrial Empire to send our soldiers into various 'hornet's nests' for their own geopolitical reasons. This new Orwellian move, going on for too long, and labeled 'Perpetual War' by the late, great Gore Vidal, is this *War on terror*. I guess if you invade another sovereign nation, destroy its infrastructure, occupy it while killing lots of its people, is really what the definition of *terrorism* is. Then, when their people, and those in neighboring countries, some innocent and some fanatical, start killing back...

My fellow Americans should all take the time to either read or at least view the film of Orwell's *1984*. The use of propaganda and jingoism to control and manipulate a populace is frightening... and, guess what, it has been happening for some time now. We baby boomers recall having to 'duck and cover' under our elementary school desks during the 1950s and early 60s, during air raid drills. In those days any dissent by true and really patriotic citizens was labeled as being 'Commie lovers'. After the Cheney/Bush gang lied us into the single most horrific act by our nation since the two A-bombs in 1945, any dissenter was labeled as a 'Terrorist lover'. Finally, the next time you see a crowd at a rally of any sort yelling 'USA USA' go to the films of the Nazi Nuremberg rallies, and learn what we have become as a culture.

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