

Guns for Hire: No, the U.S. Government Shouldn't be Using the Military to Police the Globe

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"Of all the enemies to public liberty war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes... known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few.... No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare." — James Madison

Eventually, all military empires fall and fail by spreading themselves too thin and spending themselves to death.

[It happened in Rome.](#)

It's happening again.

At the height of its power, even the mighty Roman Empire could not stare down a collapsing economy and a burgeoning military. Prolonged periods of war and false economic prosperity largely led to its demise. As historian Chalmers Johnson predicts:

The fate of previous democratic empires suggests that such a conflict is unsustainable and will be resolved in one of two ways. [Rome attempted to keep its empire and lost its democracy.](#) Britain chose to remain democratic and in the process let go its empire. Intentionally or not, the people of the United States already are well embarked upon the course of non-democratic empire.

The American Empire—with its endless wars waged by U.S. military servicepeople who have been reduced to little more than guns for hire: outsourced, stretched too thin, and deployed to far-flung places to police the globe—is approaching a breaking point.

War has become a huge money-making venture, and America, with its vast military empire and its incestuous relationship with a host of international defense contractors, is one of its best [buyers](#) and [sellers](#). In fact, as Reuters reports, "[President] [Trump has gone further than any of his predecessors to act as a salesman for the U.S. defense industry.](#)"

Under Trump's leadership, the U.S. military is [dropping a bomb every 12 minutes](#).

This follows on the heels of President Obama, the so-called antiwar candidate and Nobel Peace Prize winner who [waged war longer than any American president](#) and whose targeted-drone killings resulted in [at least 1.3 million lives lost to the U.S.-led war on terror](#).

Most recently, the Trump Administration signaled its willingness [to put the lives of American troops on the line](#) in order to guard Saudi Arabia's oil resources. Roughly [200 American](#)

[troops will join the 500 troops already stationed](#) in Saudi Arabia. That's in addition to the [60,000 U.S. troops that have been deployed throughout the Middle East](#) for decades.

As *The Washington Post* [points out](#), "The United States is now the world's [largest producer](#) — and its reliance on Saudi imports has [dropped dramatically](#), including by 50 percent in the past two years alone."

So if we're not protecting the oil for ourselves, whose interests are we protecting?

The military industrial complex is calling the shots, of course, and profit is its primary objective.

The military-industrial complex is also the [world's largest employer](#).

America has long had a penchant for endless wars that empty our national coffers while fattening those of the military industrial complex.

Aided and abetted by the U.S. government, the American military-industrial complex has erected an empire unsurpassed in history in its breadth and scope, one dedicated to conducting perpetual warfare throughout the earth.

Although the U.S. constitutes only 5% of the world's population, America boasts almost [50% of the world's total military expenditure](#), spending [more](#) on the military than the next 19 biggest spending nations combined. Indeed, the [Pentagon spends more on war than all 50 states combined](#) spend on health, education, welfare, and safety.

Unfortunately, this level of war-mongering doesn't come cheap to the taxpayers who are forced to foot the bill.

Having been co-opted by greedy defense contractors, corrupt politicians and incompetent government officials, America's expanding military empire is bleeding the country dry at a rate of more than [\\$32 million per hour](#).

In fact, the U.S. government has [spent more money every five seconds in Iraq](#) than the average American earns in a year.

With [more than 800 U.S. military bases in 80 countries](#), the U.S. is now operating in 40 percent of the world's nations at a [cost of \\$160 to \\$200 billion annually](#).

Despite the fact that Congress has only officially declared war eleven times in the nation's short history, the last time being during World War II, the United States has [been at war for all but 21 of the past 243 years](#).

It's cost the American taxpayer more than [\\$4.7 trillion](#) since 2001 to fight the government's so-called "war on terrorism." That's in addition to "[\\$127 billion in the last 17 years to train police, military and border patrol agents](#) in many countries and to develop antiterrorism education programs, among other activities." That does not include the cost of maintaining and staffing the [800-plus U.S. military bases spread around the globe](#).

The cost of perpetuating those endless wars and military exercises around the globe is expected to [push the total bill upwards of \\$12 trillion by 2053](#).

The U.S. government is spending money it doesn't have on a military empire it can't afford.

As investigative journalist Uri Friedman puts it, for more than 15 years now, the United States has been [fighting terrorism with a credit card](#), "essentially bankrolling the wars with debt, in the form of purchases of U.S. Treasury bonds by U.S.-based entities like pension funds and state and local governments, and by countries like China and Japan."

War is not cheap, but it becomes outrageously costly when you factor in [government incompetence, fraud, and greedy contractors](#).

For example, a leading accounting firm concluded that one of the Pentagon's largest agencies "[can't account for hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of spending](#)."

Unfortunately, the outlook isn't much better for the spending that can be tracked.

Consider that the government lost more than \$160 billion to waste and fraud by the military and defense contractors. With paid contractors often outnumbering enlisted combat troops, the American war effort dubbed as the "coalition of the willing" has quickly evolved into the "coalition of the billing," with American taxpayers forced to cough up billions of dollars for cash bribes, luxury bases, a highway to nowhere, faulty equipment, salaries for so-called "ghost soldiers," and [overpriced anything and everything](#) associated with the war effort, including a [\\$640 toilet seat and a \\$7600 coffee pot](#).

A government audit found that defense contractor Boeing has been massively [overcharging taxpayers](#) for mundane parts, resulting in tens of millions of dollars in overspending. As the report noted, the [American taxpayer paid](#):

\$71 for a metal pin that should cost just 4 cents; \$644.75 for a small gear smaller than a dime that sells for \$12.51: more than a 5,100 percent increase in price. \$1,678.61 for another tiny part, also smaller than a dime, that could have been bought within DoD for \$7.71: a 21,000 percent increase. \$71.01 for a straight, thin metal pin that DoD had on hand, unused by the tens of thousands, for 4 cents: an increase of over 177,000 percent.

That [price gouging](#) has become an accepted form of corruption within the American military empire is a sad statement on how little control "we the people" have over our runaway government.

There's a good reason why ["bloated," "corrupt" and "inefficient" are among the words most commonly applied to the government](#), especially the Department of Defense and its contractors. [Price gouging](#) has become an accepted form of corruption within the American military empire.

It's not just the American economy that is being gouged, unfortunately.

Driven by a greedy defense sector, the American homeland has been transformed into a battlefield with militarized police and weapons better suited to a war zone. Trump, no different from his predecessors, has continued to expand America's military empire abroad and domestically, calling on Congress to approve [billions more to hire cops, build more prisons and wage more profit-driven war-on-drugs/war-on-terrorism/war-on-crime programs](#) that pander to the powerful money interests (military, corporate and security) that run the

Deep State and hold the government in its clutches.

Mind you, this isn't just corrupt behavior. It's deadly, downright immoral behavior.

Essentially, in order to fund this burgeoning military empire that polices the globe, the U.S. government is prepared to bankrupt the nation, jeopardize our servicemen and women, increase the chances of terrorism and blowback domestically, and push the nation that much closer to eventual collapse.

Making matters worse, taxpayers are being forced to pay [\\$1.4 million per hour](#) to provide U.S. weapons to countries that can't afford them. As *Mother Jones* [reports](#), the Pentagon's Foreign Military Finance program "opens the way for the US government to pay for weapons for other countries—only to 'promote world peace,' of course—using your tax dollars, which are then recycled into the hands of military-industrial-complex corporations."

Clearly, our national priorities are in desperate need of an [overhauling](#).

As *Los Angeles Times* reporter Steve Lopez rightly asks:

[Why throw money at defense when everything is falling down around us?](#) Do we need to spend more money on our military (about \$600 billion this year) than the next seven countries combined? Do we need 1.4 million active military personnel and 850,000 reserves when the enemy at the moment — ISIS — numbers in the low tens of thousands? If so, it seems there's something radically wrong with our strategy. Should 55% of the federal government's discretionary spending go to the military and only 3% to transportation when the toll in American lives is far greater from failing infrastructure than from terrorism? Does California need nearly as many active military bases (31, according to [militarybases.com](#)) as it has UC and state university campuses (33)? And does the state need more active duty military personnel (168,000, according to *Governing* magazine) than public elementary school teachers (139,000)?

The illicit merger of the global armaments industry and the Pentagon that [President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned us against more than 50 years ago](#) has come to represent perhaps the greatest threat to the nation's fragile infrastructure today.

The government is destabilizing the economy, [destroying the national infrastructure](#) through neglect and a lack of resources, and turning taxpayer dollars into blood money with its endless wars, drone strikes and mounting death tolls.

This is exactly the scenario Eisenhower warned against when he cautioned the citizenry not to let the profit-driven war machine endanger our liberties or democratic processes:

"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some fifty miles of concrete pavement. We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat. [We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that](#)

[could have housed more than 8,000 people.](#) This is, I repeat, the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

We failed to heed Eisenhower’s warning.

The illicit merger of the armaments industry and the government that Eisenhower warned against has come to represent perhaps the greatest threat to the nation today.

What we have is a confluence of factors and influences that go beyond mere comparisons to Rome. It is a union of Orwell’s *1984* with its shadowy, totalitarian government—i.e., fascism, the union of government and corporate powers—and a total surveillance state with a military empire extended throughout the world.

This is how tyranny rises and freedom falls.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#), the growth of and reliance on militarism as the solution for our problems both domestically and abroad bodes ill for the constitutional principles which form the basis of the American experiment in freedom.

After all, a military empire ruled by martial law does not rely on principles of equality and justice for its authority but on the power of the sword. As author Aldous Huxley warned: “Liberty cannot flourish in a country that is permanently on a war footing, or even a near-war footing. Permanent crisis justifies permanent control of everybody and everything by the agencies of the central government.”

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