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# counterpunch

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## *Military Contractor Philanthropy*

### Why Some Stay Silent

By JOAN ROELOFS

The military-industrial complex is elephantine, yet it is rarely taken into account by political commentators. Connected to almost everything, it is one reason why the home front sustains our aggressive, illegal, military interventions and occupations throughout the world. Many good people are in thrall to the military-industrial complex, and consequently are silenced, unwilling to become active opponents. These include liberals, social justice advocates, and even professional soldiers who question our illegal interventions. There are, of course, some protesters in our nation, but not enough to make militarism the main issue in Congressional and Presidential elections, or to give the subject much visibility on a daily basis.

Militarism is promoted through the relentless manipulation of public opinion in all media: Hollywood films (aided by DOD armament loans), TV, video games, the public relations army of the DOD, newspapers, magazines, parades, etc. For the intellectuals, there are articles in "liberal" magazines alleging that violence is genetically implanted in humans, and a generally positive force. This barrage normalizes violence and war. Most people want to regard themselves as normal, and not fuzzy idealists or crackpots, so they increasingly view aggression as inevitable, and perhaps a good thing. Bombing people into democracy (as in Yugoslavia) becomes a reasonable proposition; overthrowing governments (as in Haiti) just a routine world improvement activity. Both these actions were widely accepted or ignored by liberals, among others.

Fear motivates human behavior; many people eschew protesting wars as they are afraid of being considered unpatriotic, and subjected to government harassment, discrimination in employment, social penalties, or beatings by local thugs. Even those who suspect that war is not normal may be convinced that nothing they can do will change anything.

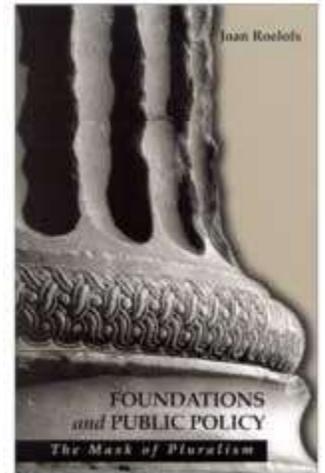
Yet the home front support is not based merely on psychological manipulation; there are *interests* served by the military-industrial complex. Many people are directly employed by the military and its auxiliaries, which include CIA, NASA, NSA, and agencies such as NED and USAID that are not alternatives to force, but work with our invasions and subversions. Those in the reserves or retired remain influential serving in local, state, and national governments, with few active dissenters among them. Of course, it is not news that military contractors help many politicians get their jobs via campaign contributions.

The military industries include the "big ten" (Kellogg, Brown & Root, Halliburton, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, United Technologies, General Electric, Dyncorp) and countless others involved in base construction worldwide, in armaments, protective gear, disorienting drugs, supplying mercenaries for contract operations, etc. Many civilian industries (e.g., computer software) have substantial contracts; others have ones that reliably pay the rent. The military buys or leases every kind of thing, including buttons, philosophy, toilet paper, and real estate.

War industries are spread throughout the country (and also have overseas branches and subsidiaries). They are crucial in providing employment in the many declining areas of our economy: the rust belt of the Midwest, the shoe belt of New England, the cotton belt of the South. The corporations and their employees are major consumers in their communities, purchasing real estate, furniture, clothing, food, medical services, entertainment, tap dancing lessons, etc. All these businesses know where their bread is buttered-with guns.

A similar multiplier effect occurs surrounding military bases, which is one reason why our bases overseas are often quietly accepted. In the US, the notorious Fort Benning, GA SOA-WHISC is a local mainstay. "Special" military training is also performed by contracts with universities, such as Norwich University in Vermont, or University of Kentucky. Research grants and ROTC embed many academic institutions. The military academies likewise radiate power in their communities, encouraging silence on militarism.

"Greed" is often indicted as the source of war. This may describe stockholders or highly paid executives, but many ordinary people are simply dependent on the military-industrial complex. Often, our economy doesn't provide attractive or practical alternatives for employment or community survival. Whatever the personal opinions of war industry employees, service workers, retailers, volunteers, or municipal employees in contractor territory, few will become anti-war activists or attempt to unseat their Congressperson for supporting invasions, occupations, and overthrows. In addition, the military is deeply involved with disaster relief, which brings many more good people into its orbit: Red Cross volunteers, state and local government officials and staff, Vista workers, etc.



**Foundations and Public Policy  
by Joan Roelefs**

Yet another rampart is built from military contractor philanthropy. Large corporations in every industry have established foundations that act like the large private foundations: Ford, Rockefeller, McArthur, etc. Traditional business charity has been used for public relations, community projects, and product-related benevolence, but today corporate philanthropy works with the general foundations to protect the long-term interests of capitalism and its access to resources, markets, and labor worldwide. In this process, it is essential that potential dissidents be distracted into discrete, yet important, good works, and away from systemic challenges.

Contractor philanthropy takes many forms and embraces a wide circle. (Sources for the following discussion include Tax Form 990s accessed through the Foundation Center or Guidestar web sites, the database of the Capital Research Center, and the annual reports or web sites of the corporations. Most grants mentioned were given in recent years; a few in the late 1990s.) There are the unsurprising grants to policy-planning think tanks, such as Boeing-McDonnell Foundation's to the Hudson Institute, Heritage Foundation, and the American Enterprise Institute. Another conventional largesse is scholarship aid to aspiring engineers, who may then be predisposed to seek future employment with the benefactor.

Widely unremarked is the benevolence that touches many members of the general population: minorities, poor people, social justice activists, liberals, civic-minded volunteers, and those not in the elite or military minded. In short, the good people, who, because of their own oppression, or their warm hearts, might have been likely recruits for an anti-war movement.

Education is a gifted field. Of course, universities with large science and engineering faculties receive grants, but so does every kind of institution: liberal arts, Catholic colleges, public universities, community

colleges, colleges with large minority enrollments, etc. For example, General Electric lists a grant (in 2002) to Barnard College, my alma mater. Cooper Union, site of 1950s Pete Seeger hootenannies, benefits from Northrop Grumman. Halliburton helps out the Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Northrop is very generous to career services offices in higher education. Programs preparing disadvantaged students for college do well: GE has committed half a million to Brandeis University's College Bound, and \$80,000 to CUNY's center (perhaps to forestall a repeat of the 1930s ruckus there). Associations in minority higher education, such as American Indian college organizations, the Hispanic Scholarship Fund, and the United Negro College Fund, are supported generously.

An even broader base of gratitude has been created by contractor grants to all types of high and elementary schools (private, public, parochial), e.g. Northrop's to Emmanuel

Christian Academy and Melvin J Berman Hebrew Academy. The very young are not neglected; the Long Beach Day Nursery Newsletter, Fall 2004, features a photo of a Boeing representative handing over a \$7,500 check for its Ready to Read program. Raytheon reaches into the public schools with a national project:

MathMovesU is a program designed specifically to reach students at a time where studies show performance declines in math and science -- middle school, grades six through eight. The MathMovesU program combines student interest in celebrities with grant money and awards to generate new interest and excitement in math.

Raytheon has partnered with skateboard legend Tony Hawk, soccer star Mia Hamm, basketball greats Bill Russell and Lisa Leslie, and BMX champ Dave Mirra to promote the MathMovesU program and demonstrate how math plays a role in "cool" careers. (Raytheon web site)

No matter how small the grant, it may well be noted by the children, who are alert to brand names and corporate logos (sometimes incorporated into textbook exercises), and by teachers and parents, especially those active in PTAs and bake sales. Gradually, they may come to accept that weapons of mass destruction are simply products like any others.

Support for community organizations is especially generous near contractor headquarters and facilities, which are widespread, yet the industries give grants everywhere, and to national organizations.

The NAACP has always had strong connections with major corporations. The civil rights movement of the 1960s prompted new close links between activist organizations and business. The Urban Coalition was formed, and thereafter, corporate philanthropy became more focused on defusing systemic threats. Its goal was to challenge segregation and discrimination while discouraging the more radical suggestions of that era's activists. (The same model was later applied to foundation intervention in South Africa, which aimed to end apartheid without furthering the ANC's socialist goals.) Today, Lockheed, GE, and Boeing are important funders of the NAACP.

Military contractors are attentive to every kind of minority organization: Asians Against Domestic Abuse and Vietnamese American Community (Halliburton); American Indian Science and Engineering Society and National Society of Black Engineers (Northrop Grumman); the Holocaust Museum and the Chinese Community Center (GE). Boeing has funded the Congressional Black Caucus and the Urban League. Lockheed even contributes to the Sons of Norway, perhaps to deflect them from the socialistic policies of their homeland. Religious groups of all kinds are grantees, not excluding the Benedictine Sisters and Zoroastrians.

Women's organizations are well endowed. Boeing and BAE Systems (a prominent contractor in New Hampshire) sponsor an AAUW program encouraging women to enter science and engineering. GE gives to the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy; Boeing to the National Women's Political Caucus, Lockheed to the National Museum of Women.

Children are nurtured. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, YWCAs, Little Leagues, UNICEF, Children's Defense Fund, etc., receive substantial grants, which aid many poor and minority children, and may impress them, their leaders, and their parents. Lockheed Martin was a major sponsor of the Girl Scout 2005 National Council Convention, and supports a special program within the GSA organization: The Lockheed Martin Science Career Exploration Fund.

Organizations of ill and disadvantaged children are also beneficiaries: Child Abuse Network, Children's Brain Tumor Foundation, Make A Wish, Juvenile Diabetes, Special Olympics, Big Brothers Big Sisters, et al. Those working in such heartbreaking fields, and the parents involved, rarely hesitate to take whatever help is offered from whatever source. Private philanthropy may appear more desirable than the dreaded public taxation of many civilized nations.

Health and environmental organizations are not neglected: American Lung Association, Canine Companions, Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, American Cancer Society, AIDs services, Clean Air Campaign, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, etc. Most major charities are included, e.g., Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, etc. Arts of all kinds are funded, from major institutions such as the JFK Center for the Performing Arts to the Chicago Jazz Orchestra (Boeing), the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of Houston (Halliburton), the New York Public Library (GE) and Baltimore Shakespeare Festival (Lockheed Martin). Even organizations with pacifist connections receive contractor money: GE funds Peter Maurin House and the Hancock Shaker Village.

Civil liberties and human rights organizations also receive grants: Lockheed gives to the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, GE to the American Civil Liberties Union. Beyond grants, there are other links. Amnesty International USA has received hundreds of GE stock shares from individual donors. Whether these have been sold or are being nurtured would require more sleuthing. Human Rights Watch has 50 million invested in stocks and bonds; I know not where, except for \$1.5 million in the Soros Quantum Fund.

Connections and revolving doors between contractors and citizen organization boards and top staff further cement bonds and promote a non-critical atmosphere. In 2002, Chris Hansen, former chief lobbyist for Boeing, became the top lobbyist for the AARP. John H. Biggs was a director of Boeing while he was Chairman, President and CEO of TIAA-CREF, the college teachers' retirement fund.

What happens in the United States is also projected throughout the world: bases, military training, military contracts, military-civilian organization collaboration in disaster relief, and so too with philanthropy. Boeing Employees Community Fund helps to support the Teenage Cancer Trust of London, England, and a Japanese residential center for mentally disabled children; GE gives grants in Hungary and to Peking University; BAE Systems funds programs in Australia and Saudi Arabia. Reinforcing the corporate, general foundation, and government philanthropy abroad, NATO has its own considerable, and greatly understudied grant program.

This funds diverse organizations and projects, such as aid in environmental decision-making in Central Asia. Philanthropy (often a joint project of private, corporate, government, and intergovernmental institutions such as the European Union, World Bank, and NATO) has attempted to fill the void created by the overthrow of communist governments, which had previously provided for industrial employment, social services, culture, research, and education.

NATO now supports scientists in Eastern Europe and Central Asia studying arctic char, toxicity in leather tanning, pesticides, deforestation, sustainable human development indicators, mating systems in conifers, antioxidant activity of beverages, biotechnology, women's reproductive choices, superstrings, and cancer detection. Whatever anyone is doing; NATO is happy to help (and welcomes those focusing on leather tanning as the major environmental hazard).

How to estimate the influence of all this philanthropy? We can listen carefully for rejections of grants by organization leaders and members; or resignations because of acceptance; or anti-war protest activity by

all but the rare bird belonging to or benefiting from these organizations. Then we can investigate further, using teams of interviewers financed somehow the other side has plenty of finances to show their favored results.

Historical evidence indicates that people serving on boards or staffs of civic, social service, or reformist organizations would be prime recruits for radical activism, were the opportunity structure different. As it is, thousands of these potential leaders are tucked away in innumerable non-governmental organizations, funded by military contractors and other corporations and foundations friendly to US imperial policies. They are doing good works on a small scale, but the larger picture may cause more deaths than the rare diseases that get so much attention and funding.

My personal experience, and anecdotal evidence from activists with whom I have discussed my research on foundations, indicates that most people self-censor. Even I do sometimes, and when I haven't, I have often paid a price. For example, I was on the board of a local environmental organization, and was asked about the propriety of applying for a GE grant. I argued that the organization should not, because the military was the greatest threat to sustainability. An important board member claimed that I was being silly, for it would never affect the decisions of the organization. I argued that it gave legitimacy to GE, which would be acknowledged in the annual report, and it would soften members' attitudes towards GE and the military. The organization decided not to apply for the grant, but my popularity in the local non-profit world did not soar. In another case, I decided that I was finally ready to join a sorority after resisting for so many years. The best local one was the AAUW, where friends and associates belong. However, I won't join any organization that I know has ties to military contractors, and will lose out. It is easy to understand why so many good people are silent in the face of murderous policies; they are in thrall.

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