

Doctor Strangelove

In his [Farewell Address](#) to the Nation on January 17, 1961, President Eisenhower counseled the nation:

“This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence — economic, political, even spiritual — is felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

The Commander in Chief, the former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe and the first Supreme Commander of NATO, thought it was important to give a warning to the American public before he passed from the spotlight. What a warning it was! Simply put, be wary of those businesses that make war their livelihood.

In the 50 years passage of time since Eisenhower’s address we have seen the “total influence” be “felt in every city, every statehouse, every office of the federal government.” The military industrial complex has spread itself far and wide into as many communities as possible to ensure that every politician can “bring home the bacon” for his district. This proliferation makes it very hard for a representative to vote for defense budget cuts when it would possibly result in job losses for his constituency, not to mention the loss of contributions. No one seems to question if these government funded jobs could be for industries that raise the human condition, not destroy other humans.

We have observed the impact economically, politically, and most importantly, spiritually. As a nation, our moral center seems to be off kilter. Where America once went reluctantly to war, it seems that now we have adopted the gunslinger attitude of shoot first and ask questions later. Is the arrogant bully the image that peace loving Americans want to give to the world’s community? Do we raise our children to be used as cannon fodder, or as implements to sell more product for the armament manufacturers?

We know the ice cream vendor can’t wait for the first day of summer, while the mitten maker prays for snow. Every business has its most opportune times to sell the most of their product. So it is with the arms maker, stir up a conflict and those assembly lines start humming. War is much better for the production line, and the bottom line, than just replacing worn out equipment. Of course replacing worn out equipment would come under the heading, “provide for the common defense”. The term “protecting our vital interests” is used to describe our current level of militarism.

There are over 1,000 U.S. military bases around the world, 1,000. Why? There are 4 in Italy, one of

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which is supposed to be the largest U.S. base outside of the U.S. Why? It's been estimated that by closing the military bases in just Europe it would free up enough tax dollars to provide free kindergarten through graduate school education to all American citizens. If brought to a vote, would the American people vote for bases in Europe or college for their kids? Maybe I'm wrong, but I think most of us would vote for our kids.