Published on *Corrente* (http://www.correntewire.com)

Home > To end the wars, end blowback. To end blowback, dismantle the self-licking ice cream cones

To end the wars, end blowback. To end blowback, dismantle the self-licking ice cream cones

Submitted by lambert on Tue, 02/03/2015 - 3:44am
Tags:
#12p10 [1]
12-point Platform [2]

Given that the 12-Point Platform [3] has this plank:

10. End the Wars

I've come to the conclusion, with a sense of dawning horror, that I actually have to develop some views on defense policy.* Which is complicated. However, since we're now entering the budget season, it seems natural to take a look at the defense budget. And leaving aside from squillion-dollar anecdotes, like the F-35 boondoggle, what seems really remarkable, to my naive eye, is that the Pentagon *doesn't actually know* what it's sending that trillion dollar budget on. In contrast, Obama just decided to publish yearly physican payment data under Medicare [4]. OK, fine, but how come the Pentagon gets a pass when it comes to "yearly contractor payment data," anyhow?** Seems like a double standard...) Foreign Policy [5]:

> The Pentagon has never been audited, despite having a budget larger than any other federal agency anywhere in the world. Despite a coalition spanning Ralph Nader to Grover Norquist, the agency has resisted the fiscal accountability requirements imposed by law on every other branch of the government. The Defense Department has for years slow-rolled demands to get its books in order, though now claims to be on the verge of readiness [6] to have independent auditors come in to inspect and validate its accounts. But signs of dysfunction, waste, and corruption persist [7], and a complete audit during the next two years is not guaranteed.

"Never been audited." What could go wrong?

For example, personnel:

> [T]he Defense Department [for some reason!] has not produced a realistic plan to make [personnel cuts ? and can?t say how many people it has or needs at its management headquarters.

> In a new report, the Government Accountability Office described an unwieldy personnel system that <u>seems unable to account for the size of military and civilian staffs</u> at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff and the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force secretariats and staffs ? all headquarters that ballooned in size after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and have only recently begun to level off.

Many of these in the 20%, I would bet.

> Compounding the problem, contractors form a large chunk of these employees, but DOD does not have an accurate handle on how large, auditors found.

Ditto.

> ?Without a systematic determination of personnel requirements and periodic reassessment of them, DOD will not be well positioned to proactively identify efficiencies and limit personnel growth within these headquarters organizations,?

BWA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!!!!! No indeed.

Anyhow, Pentagon bloat is one area where a strange bedfellows coalition does seem to be possible. <u>William Hartung in HuffPo</u> [8]:

> Last year Representatives Barbara Lee (D-CA) and Michael Burgess (R-TX) introduced a bill that would have reduced spending on sections of the Pentagon that cannot be audited by <u>one-half of one percent</u>, as an incentive for the department to clean up its act. Hopefully Congress will take up a similar measure this year.

Great idea. But one-half-of one percent seems a little light. How about 50%?

* * *

So, toying with what will at some point evolve into actual recommendations:

1) Before I forget, let me say that I think it's time to give the Department of Defense its original name back: The Department of War. For one thing, the DoD isn't really very adept at defending us; it keeps losing wars, for example. More centrally, <u>war is a serious business</u> [9], too serious to lie ourselves into it with Orwellian languagel

2) "Audit the Pentagon," with the percentages in the Lee-Burgess bill adjusted to have real teeth;

3) Audit for self-licking ice cream cones, with a view to dismantling them. At this point, I freely admit I don't know how to do that. However, I'm reasonably sure that a similar approach to <u>William R. Black's recipe for accounting control fraud would bear fruit</u> [10], and one we understand the institutional factors, we can set about monkey-wrenching them. (Pentagon PR and planted material in the press probably has a lot to do with the process.)

Anyhow, quick thoughts. I don't think fighting about the minutiae of billion-dollar programs and weapons systems is the way to go -- though the F-35 is so bad, it's like trophy animal for boondogglery. We need to stop these systems from reproducing themselves by making the problems they were sold as solving worse. I suppose I need to read Chalmers Johnson on blowback.

NOTE * End the wars also means ending the drug war, ending the militarization of the police, and ending the surveillance state.

NOTE ** Because the elite want to gut and then privatize Medicare, of course, but that's another story.

☆
☆
☆
☆
☆
No votes yet

Updated:

Links
[1] http://www.correntewire.com/category/tags/12p10
[2] http://www.correntewire.com/category/tags/12_point_platform
[3] http://www.correntewire.com/www.correntewire.com/the_12_point_platform_0
[4] http://www.wsj.com/articles/medicare-to-publish-physician-payment-data-yearly-1422842176
[5] http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/01/06/obama-unbound-presidential-legacy/
[6] http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-10-02/pentagon-says-it-s-ready-for-audit-after-years-of-delays.html
[7] http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2013/11/22/209356/pentagons-bosses-thwart-accurate.html
[8] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/william-hartung/put-the-pentagon-on-a-rea_b_6582960.html
[9] http://pando.com/2014/11/20/the-war-nerd-why-sherman-was-right-to-burn-atlanta/
[10] http://neweconomicperspectives.org/2012/03/the-value-of-applying-control-fraud-research-to-microfinance.html