

One-Minute Editorial



PRESIDENT EISENHOWER, in his last speech to Congress, warned the nation of the dangers from the military/Industrial complex.

He said, in 1961, there were 3.5 million men and women directly engaged in the defense establishment and the cost was more than the net income of all corporations in the U.S.

News you seldom get is that the military, controlled by the Pentagon, takes the biggest bite of the federal budget.

Most of Pentagon spending is so secret there is no accounting for the billions lining the pockets of big industries, like Lockheed and global companies like Halliburton or the actions of people like Paul Bremmer.

Bremmer headed up the Iraq Provisional Authority in the early days of the Iraq war. He, for example, failed to account for more than \$9 billion of reconstruction money. Part of the money was listed as payroll for 8,206 workers but an audit could only verify 602 of the names.

He later disbanded the Iraqi army, throwing 400,000 experienced soldiers out of work and into the streets, carrying automatic weapons, a decision our soldiers have been dying for ever since.

But, after letting \$9 billion of Iraq reconstruction money slip through his fingers, he came back to Washington where President Bush honored him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom award. For all his good works, President Bush made sure he had a good job and let him step right into the World Bank as its president, where he

has screwed up again.

The new Congress gives us hope, but not much. Changing the military's lust for dollars is about as easy as trying to suck Lake Norman dry with a soda straw.

Prodded by Congress, the Coast Guard is taking a \$24 billion modernization joint venture contract from Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman because of substandard work and cost overruns since 2002.

A U.S. Navy ship building contract with Lockheed was cancelled when cost control negotiations failed.

Doing business with U.S. industries is good but the Government Accountability Office said Lockheed's work on a new fleet of Marine helicopters has run over budget and the choppers are 1,200 pounds overweight.

Probably to justify the cost overruns, Homeland Security accused Lockheed of installing unauthorized electronics on Coast Guard cutters.

Does all this bother Lockheed? Not in the least. They even define losing the contracts, not as being fired, but merely a "departure from the norm."

This is from a company reporting 2006 sales of \$39.6 billion, an increase of 6.5 percent, helped along, we're sure, by military spending, overseen by the Pentagon, who enjoys a good laugh with their defense industry buddies whenever they turn over another fistful of blank checks signed by taxpayers like you...

... which is not "a departure from the norm."



THE PASSING PARADE The Week in Review

Nine U.S. soldiers died—and 20 were injured when two trucks carrying bombs exploded and collapsed a school building the soldiers were using as a patrol base. This was the deadliest attack since the invasion in 2003.

Sen. Arlen Specter—told Attorney General Gonzales his, and the administration's, credibility has been damaged because of his poor handling of the details when eight federal prosecutors were fired.

Top journalist—David Halberstam, 73, was killed in California when the vehicle in which he was riding was broadsided by another vehicle.

Gunmen—in Baghdad stopped a bus and killed 23 members of a religious sect. At least 20 others were killed in car bombs.

Israeli troops—killed nine Palestinians straining a five-month-old cease fire.

Six Afghanistan civilians died—and 40 were injured by a suicide bomber. A roadside bomb killed four others.

Heck-of-a-job—FEMA gave \$3.6 billion worth of Hurricane Katrina contracts to companies with poor credit and bad paperwork, a report by the Homeland Security Department said. The report said more than \$1 billion has been wasted.

Navy Blue Angel—jets paid tribute to one of their own with the "missing man formation." Lt. Comdr. Kevin Davis was killed when his plane went down in an air show near Beaufort, S.C.

In Memphis—former state Senator John Ford has been accused of taking \$55,000 to help change state laws to help a computer company.

The Justice Department—will look into charges of conflict of interest and mismanagement by the Education Department in the \$1 billion-a-year Reading First program.

The U. S.—is offering Russia our cooperation on defense technology, sharing of intelligence along with permission to inspect future missile bases if they will drop their opposition to our missile bases in Poland and the Czech Republic.

Since 1996—150,000 people have received grants from the Department of Agriculture who posted their Social Security numbers on their Web site for everyone to see.

Senate Republicans—blocked a bill that would let the government negotiate with the drug companies to lower prices seniors now pay.

Russia's first—freely elected president, Boris Yeltsin, 76, died of heart failure.

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt.—is sponsoring legislation to repeal the law giving the president powers to take control of the National Guard and bypass authority of state governors.

Mexico City—legislators have voted to legalize abortion.

Astronomers—found a planet about like ours. If you would like to visit, it's just 120 trillion miles away. Take your lunch!

Army Ranger Pat Tillman's—death by friendly fire was covered up by the military. A fellow Ranger, with him when he died, told a House committee he was ordered to conceal information from Tillman's family. President Bush called for accountability into the death of Tillman.

Details of Former—Pfc Jessica Lynch's rescue in Iraq were an elaborate lie, she told a House Committee on Oversight.

The Marine Corps—will put the V-22 Osprey hybrid aircraft in combat for the first time.

Land leases signed—North Carolina's Tweetsie Railroad will keep its engine chuggin' along through 2010.

Duke Medical Center—researchers say about 13,400 consumers were treated for nail-gun injuries in 2005, a 200 percent increase since 1998.

Regulations proposed—by the EPA will cut smog-forming engines, used mostly in lawn mowers, by 35 percent, starting in 2011 for riding mowers and in 2012 for the pushing kind.

A new breed—of wide-seat bikes called Coastings, by Trek, Raleigh, American and Giant Bicycle, has a small generator in the front hub to power a computer that tells the bike when to change gears.

The \$1.5 billion—research campus planned for Kannapolis has hit a money snag because of public financing questions.

The N.C. Court—of Appeals will hear a case that questions the legality of incentives given by Forsyth County to Dell Computer.

Canada will ban—incandescent light bulbs by 2012 and has promised to cut greenhouse gas emission 20 percent by 2020.

Venezuela—moves to nationalize its oil industry.

The European Parliament—has called for the resignation of World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz citing his favoritism in promotion and pay package for his girlfriend.

Jack Valenti—former White House aide and film-industry lobbyist, who set up the first movie-rating system, died in Los Angeles. He was 85.

By a 24-7 House—committee vote, the Lumbee Indian Tribe of North Carolina took a step closer to federal recognition, provided the tribe stays out of the casino business.

North Carolina—home-forgiveness filings jumped 25 percent to 9,563, the first quarter, compared to a year ago. Over the nation there was a 35 percent increase to 437,498.

A plan—by Democrat Charles Rangle would protect couples, 20 million taxpayers making \$250,000 or less each year, from paying the alternative minimum tax, the ARM. Republicans say they will oppose the bill.

UP Coming

Thursday, May 3
Art Talk- Journeys of an Artist will be at La Dolce Vita Café, at the corner of W. Broad and N. Center St. 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. Amy Queen will speak about adventures of painting in public.

Saturday, May 5
National Motorcycle Awareness Month starts with a cruise-in (for all bikes) at the Harmony post office, 10 until noon. On sale will be the new collectable, the Honda Goldwing, (three-wheeler), Trike stamp.

Saturday, May 5
The Grandchildren/Grandparent Rights Organization of North Carolina meets at 10 a.m. at the Iredell County Public Library, 201 N. Meeting St., Statesville.

Sunday, May 6
Clarksbury UMC is hosting its Family Day/Spring Celebration at 924 E. Memorial Highway in Harmony. Events planned are lawn games and bingo, hot dogs with all the trimmings, and entertainment by the Wesley Memorial UMC Clown Ministry and singing by the Gospel Voices.

Tuesday, May 8
The Democratic Party meeting for May will be held at the Captain's Galley Restaurant on Hwy. 21 north of Statesville. Dinner is 6 p.m. and the meeting is at 7 p.m. All Democrats are invited.

Thursday, May 10
The Union Grove ECA will meet at 2 p.m. in the home of Martha Lundy. The program will be "I'm Still the Parent." The club meets the second Thursday of each month. All are welcome. Call 704-539-5560 for information.

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