

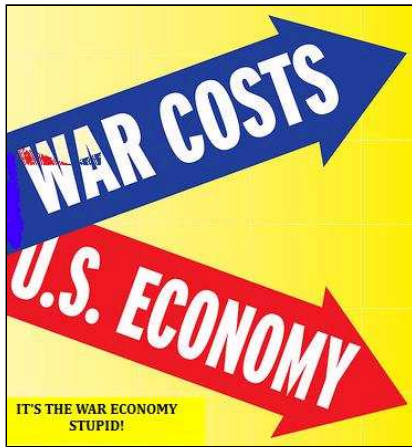
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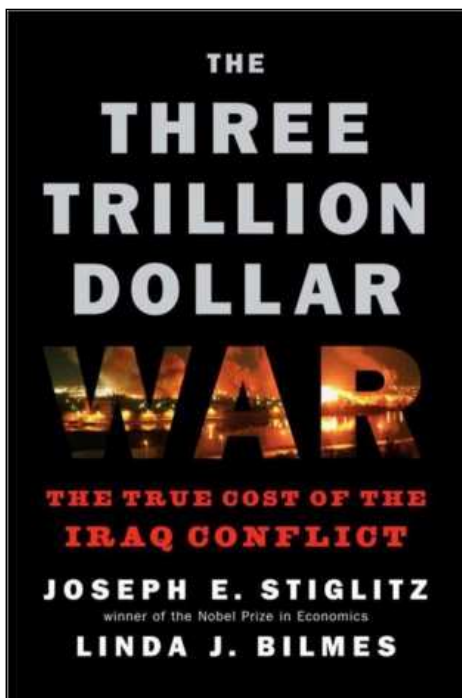
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## The War Economy pits Social Security against Defense

November 14, 2010 posted by [Robert L. Hanafin](#) · [1 Comment](#)



Recently we posted two articles based on media releases from [Military Families Speak Out \(MFSO\)](#) and [Veterans for Peace](#) on how they propose launching a public awareness campaign to educate the American electorate on how to connect the dots between the [Trillion Dollar Wars](#) and meltdown of the U.S. Economy.



In fact the projected fiscal cost of the War on Terror has [increase from one trillion in 2005 to over three trillion](#) and growing by 2008. [This is a fiscal conservative's nightmare just THINKING about how much the 2011 price tag of the wars will be](#) unless of course you are a fiscal conservative who benefits from the wars. Source: *The Three Trillion Dollar War: The True Cost of the Iraq Conflict* by Joseph E. Stiglitz and Linda J. Bilmes. *Winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics.*

Broader research across the political spectrum shows that these efforts by Veterans and Military Families of Peace to educate the public about the fiscal and human costs of war **are part of a larger war** that we can call *Operation War Economy*.

It is a war in which the troops are 'thinkers from opposing ideological think tanks' (not all of them Veterans or Military Families of course and most armchair warriors) from Neo-conservative versus almost liberal or fiscally conservative to libertarian **think tanks** educating the public, electorate, and members of Congress (regardless of 'parties' or 'ideologies' ) on where cuts need to be made in the federal budget and what spending are **SACRED COWS** such as those at the conservative Heritage Foundation who promote hands off and increase the Defense

Budget, versus those thinkers at the more libertarian, if not liberal, CATO institute who believe that:

### **Military Spending Shouldn't Get a Free Pass.**

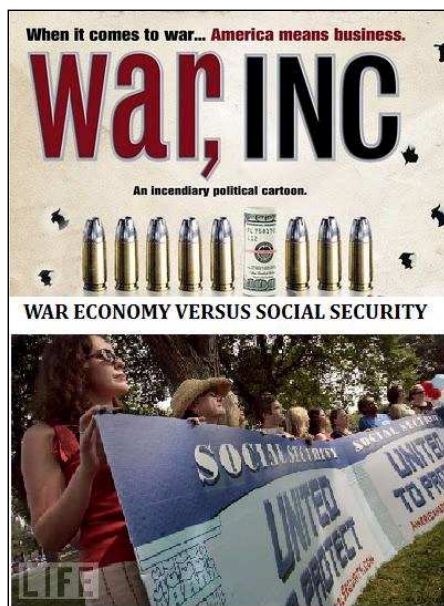
The story below reflects views on the federal deficit from all sides, however, we at Veterans Today believe that Veterans and Military Families with the courage to speak out or have PEACE in their logo must seek out allies in the larger populace and electorate who are able to connect the dots, and also think and feel that WE THE PEOPLE must dedicate ourselves to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, and seriously believe in peace.

### **War, Inc versus Social Security**

In sum, this article is about the battles that are going to be fought in the incoming Congress and mainstream media over just how to decrease the federal deficit, what programs will and should be cut. Will it be most domestic (social) programs such as Social Security, or defense?

Given the ability of all political parties assisted by mainstream media to keep both Veterans and Wars out of the public eye and off the political radar going into this past Mid-Term Congressional election that gave the Republicans (and their Tea Bag allies) back the House, I'd say that War, Inc is going to trump Social Security, and maybe even Veterans Programs.

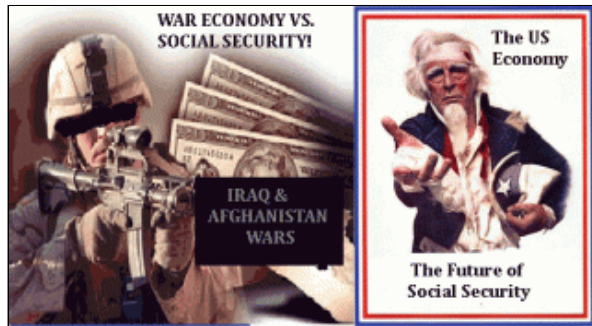
Those of us paying attention know what happened to Veterans benefits over the eight years of the Bush administration and when the Republicans owned the Congress. We remember who Congressman Steve Buyer from Indiana is – the point man for the Bush admin to cut access to the VA by means tesing Veterans and placing us into catagories.



Already, we are receiving [alerts from those most concerned about cuts to Social Security](#) and other domestic programs that serve as a safety net for the most vulnerable among us in contrast to the call for not only hands off the defense budget based on not only fears of terrorism but also a grand scheme of continued American superiority in the world that only a strong military can promote. The irony is that as the Heritage foundation promotes this neo-conservative view of American military might that will set back the clock to the beginning of the Bush administration that created the federal deficits in the first place, our military is getting increasingly broken in the process. ***Throwing more money and weapon systems (if they need them or not) at our exhausted troops as they continue to be sent on multiple tours to at least two regions in the world we have yet to fully conquer, stabilize, or remake in our image as the chickenhaws and arm chair warriors often fail is ludicrous.***

Robert L. Hanafin, Major, U.S. Air Force-Ret, GS-14, U.S. Civil Service-Ret, Veterans Issues Editor, [Veterans Today News Network](#)

### The War Economy versus the Domestic Economy and Social Security



With the federal government now in the hands of the Republican Party and their Tea Party allies, it is more essential than ever for not only Veterans and Military Families to continue to unite to cut the fiscal costs of the continued occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, but for the elderly, unemployed, and most vulnerable in our society to do as effective a job at connecting the dots between the War Economy and threats to Social Security. In fact everyone, Vets, Military Families, and Social Security recipients need to do just a good a job at **GETTING ANGRY** as the Tea Bag Party movement did with the help of mainstream media.

The Fiscal Cost of War campaigns kicked off by VFP and MFSO must be part of an overall war to downsize the Defense Budget and end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The CATO Institute yesterday (13 Nov 2010) released a series of talking points called Military Spending Shouldn't Get a Free Pass to counter neo-conservative talking points coming from the Heritage Foundation (and most likely will also come from the right-wing think tank American Enterprise Institute (AEI) about cutting domestic programs such as Social Security in order to increase the Defense Budget and provide money for more wars.

Herein the Peace movement will find allies not only to protect cuts to Social Security but connect the dots from the bloated Defense Budgets to meltdown of the U.S. Economy with the only solution being to end the wars in Iraq and Af-Pac with no intention of starting a war with Iran or anyone else.



The CATO Institute starts off their Downsizing the Federal Government report by recognizing the anger of the Tea Party movement but also asks the question – does the Tea Party limited government ideology and anger extend to foreign policy or are they no different from their Republican allies?

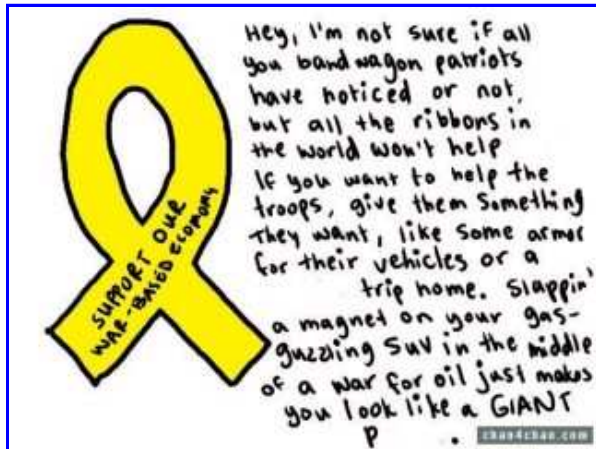
**VT Editors Note:** When we say Tea Party in this article it can mean the Constitution Party or to some degree the Libertarian Party.

“Will tea partiers extend their **limited government principles** to foreign policy? Recently, more and more figures on the right have come forward to utter a conservative heresy: that *the Pentagon budget cow perhaps should not be so sacred after all*. If these tea partiers need specifics in their drive for fiscal discipline, they need look no further than Cato’s [DownsizingGovernment.org](#) project. As of today, that site includes recommendations for over a trillion dollars in targeted cuts to the Pentagon budget over ten years.

**See related CATO article:**

“Conservative Rift Widening over Military Spending,” by Christopher Preble at <http://www.cato-at-liberty.org/conservative-rift-widening-over-military-spending/>

It is just this Fiscal Conservative vs Neo-Conservative rift that Veterans and Military Families in the Peace movement need to *drive a stake through to widen the wedge*. The Peace movement needs to reach out to the fiscal conservatives in the Tea Party, or any third party, about serious efforts to balance the federal budget and bring down the National deficit with *common sense reasoning* that far too much money has already been spent on Defense, and the wars for profit that even Tea Bag supporters are never going to benefit from.



Even if Veterans and Military Families in the Peace Movement are reluctant to reach out to Tea Partiers, should they prove to be as Neo-Conservative on foreign policy as the Republican leadership they claim to challenge as much as they do the legitimacy of President Obama, *at least take note of and USE the talking points provided by the CATO Institute* to educate the public that ending the occupations and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be GREAT for the U.S. Economy and divert projected billions, if not trillions, back into the U.S. Economy to help drive down the federal deficit.

The remainder of the article with the exception of the Alert to Protect Social Security comes from the CATO Institute focus called:

**Downsize This!**

- [Refocusing U.S. Defense Strategy](#). The [Defense] department's budget is built on an excessively ambitious strategy that tries to do too much [with not enough troops], but leaves the nation less safe from true threats. Defense is a core federal function, but much of the work of today's military has little to do with protecting our vital interests.
- [A Plan to Cut Military Spending](#). U.S. ground forces should be reduced by one-third over time, which is possible without reducing U.S. security. The Navy should be restructured to operate as a surge force, rather than being a permanent global presence. We should also shift more of the burdens of defense to other prosperous democracies [in lieu of nation building].

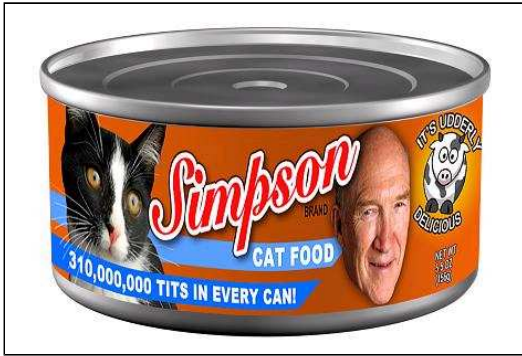
*“Our problem is to achieve adequate military strength within the limits of endurable strain upon our economy. To amass military power without regard to our economic capacity would be to defend ourselves against one kind of disaster by inviting another.”*

- [President Dwight Eisenhower, State of the Union address, February 2, 1953.](#)

Why the Peace Movement needs to not only ally with young people, especially on college campuses, but also advocates for the elderly who are concerned about cuts to Social Security in order to finance more wars:

**URGENT: Social Security Cuts from the Cat Food Commission**





Advocates for Seniors and the Disabled who would be most vulnerable to federal budget cuts that favor the Military-Industrial Complex, with profits for the Defense Industry and more wars, have begun calling Obama's Bi-Partisan Committee on the Federal Deficit – **The Cat Food Commission**.

Social Security cuts are coming for “virtually every American alive and those yet to be born.”<sup>1</sup>

And for what? Corporate tax cuts.<sup>2</sup>

**Veterans Today Editorial Comment:** When these advocates for our Senior Citizens (many of them Veterans BTW) talk about Corporate tax cuts they must not fail to understand or ignore that the Defense Industry consists of corporations that will also be getting *corporate tax cuts*.

The co-chairs of President Obama's deficit commission want to cut Social Security benefits for everyone making more than \$25,000 a year. And then cap corporate taxes at just 26%.

Every member of this commission, every member of Congress, and President Obama himself must reject these insane ideas. Fire Dog Lake is starting an emergency petition to the Catfood Commission to take Social Security cuts off the table.

[Sign their petition to the Catfood Commission: hands off Social Security. Click here to add your name:](#)

<http://action.firedoglake.com/page/s/HandsOff>

The proposed cuts to Social Security are so deep, for so many people. This is a direct attack on America's middle class for the benefit of Corporate America.

We have an opening to keep Social Security safe. Today's report consists of the recommendations of the Catfood Commission's co-chairs, who were appointed by President Obama.

RYou'll remember one of them: **Alan “Social Security is a Milk Cow with 310 Million Tits” Simpson**. He's the guy who also said the Catfood Commission had to cut Social Security to “help the lesser people of society.”

Simpson's ideas are so awful, sixteen other members of the Catfood Commission didn't want to touch it.<sup>3</sup> Problem is, this is the “starting point” for discussions. This will be negotiated, and many of these awful ideas could be in the final proposal. **We need to stop it now.**

[Hands off Social Security: sign the petition to the Catfood Commission. Click here.](#)

We owe our citizens better than a retirement with cat food on the dinner table. That's why we call it the Catfood Commission: the proposed Social Security cuts to virtually every American would mean far less money in their pockets.

It's bad enough to even think about cutting Social Security – but to do it to pay for corporate tax cuts? That's insane.

We need to make sure they hear us loud and clear: hands off of Social Security.

[Click here to sign our petition to the Catfood Commission: don't touch Social Security.](#)

Thanks for all you do

Michael Whitney  
[Firedoglake.com](http://Firedoglake.com)

1. Statement of Eric Kingson, Co-chair, Strengthen Social Security Campaign. 11/10/10
2. "Fiscal Commission Recommendations: VA Co-Pays, Top Tax Rate 23%" David Dayen, Firedoglake. 11/10/10 <http://fdl.me/9DQmLx>
3. U.S. Debt Proposal Would Cut Social Security, Taxes, Medicare. Bloomberg News, 11/10/10 <http://fdl.me/aaTRoL>

Other references used for this article:

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2. **[The Trillion-Dollar War by Veronique de Rugy](http://reason.com/archives/2008/04/07/the-trillion-dollar-war)** from the May 2008 issue of Reason.com. <http://reason.com/archives/2008/04/07/the-trillion-dollar-war>
3. **THE RECKONING: The Iraq War Will Cost Us \$3 Trillion, and Much More** by Linda J. Bilmes and Joseph E. Stiglitz, March 9, 2008 a Washington Post Op/Ed at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/07/AR2008030702846.html>
4. **The three trillion dollar war: The cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have grown to staggering proportions** by Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes February 23, 2008 an Op/Ed in the London Times. [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest\\_contributors/article3419840.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article3419840.ece)
5. **Bipartisan Group Warns of Dangers from Unsustainable Debt, Deficit, November 10, 2010** By Fred Lucas a CNSNews report at <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/bipartisan-group-warns-dangers-unsustain>
6. **Plan to cut U.S. deficit by \$4 trillion unveiled by bipartisan panel's leaders Nov. 11, 2010** By Kevin G. Hall and David Lightman – McClatchy News in the Fresno (California) Bee. Read more: <http://www.fresnobee.com/2010/11/11/2155358/plan-to-cut-us-deficit-by-4-trillion.html#ixzz15AXGKPlx>
7. **Taking apart the federal budget: Explore the various facets of the government's budget and see how revenues and spending have changed over time. Where the money comes from (taxes, customs duties) and Where the money goes to (Defense, Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, other domestic programs).** White House Office of Management and Budget (2010) at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/budget-2010/>
8. **U.S. Defense Spending: The Mismatch Between Plans and Resources** June 7, 2010 by Mackenzie Eaglen a Heritage Foundation Backgrounder On National Security and Defense that

provides talking points for expanding the Defense budget at the cost of domestic programs that have long crowded out (taken priority) over the Defense budget. Among the Heritage talking points is this about Social Security: “2. Spending on the three major entitlements—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—has more than tripled. Entitlements and interest on the debt are crowding out defense spending and could soon consume every dollar of federal revenue.”

“5. Congress must maintain current levels of defense spending and implement a comprehensive reform agenda to prevent a debilitating investment crisis in defense.”

To review the other three talking points go to: [http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/06/us-defense-spending-the-mismatch-between-plans-and-resources#\\_ftn45](http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/06/us-defense-spending-the-mismatch-between-plans-and-resources#_ftn45)

**9. Military Spending Shouldn't Get a Free Pass: Downsizing the Federal Government – the Defense Department** November 13, 2010 AND **A Plan to Cut Military Spending** by Benjamin H. Friedman and Christopher Preble a series of post November 2010 election federal deficit cutting reports from the CATO Institute.

Military Spending Shouldn't Get a Free Pass at <http://www.cato.org/>

Downsizing the Department of Defense at <http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/defense>

A Plan to Cut Military Spending at [http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/defense/cut\\_military\\_spending](http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/defense/cut_military_spending)

- [Rightsizing U.S. Ground Forces](#). Rising personnel costs have added to the ballooning defense budget. The Army and Marines have grown 15 percent since 2001, driven by the view that future wars will resemble those in Iraq and Afghanistan. But it is not in our interest to topple foreign regimes and attempt long-term nation building. For combating terrorism, we do not need such a large Army as we have today.

- **VETERANS TODAY EDITORIAL COMMENT:**

