

Help Us Build Investigative 'War Chest'

From Editor Robert Parry: I often hear the complaint that Consortiumnews is not devoting enough attention to some story of particular importance to that reader. And I must admit the criticism is often valid, but the explanation is mostly our lack of resources, not our lack of interest.

I'm especially concerned that we are not doing more in areas relating to war or peace. Over the years, we have invested a great deal of effort to report on wars (or near-wars) in Central and South America, Iran, Iraq, Kosovo, Libya, Lebanon and Israel/Palestine. We have done some work though not nearly enough on the current conflict in Syria.

Given my background with the Iran-Contra Affair, we also have focused on expanding knowledge of historical scandals that I believe were bungled by the mainstream press over the past several decades. That explains our continued excavation into the real histories of the Vietnam War, Watergate and the crimes of the Reagan-Bush years.

Ironically, our coverage of current events especially the rise of the Tea Party has forced us to delve back even deeper into the past to examine the real history of America's Founding. That's because right-wing operatives were getting millions of Americans to buy into false narratives of the Constitution and the Second Amendment, deceiving the public about what the Framers were trying to accomplish and why. The reason for those stories was to stop false renditions of the past from distorting the present.

Yet, while we try to provide a diverse selection of investigative articles and thoughtful analyses, I do concede that we could do better if we had more resources. We currently operate on a thinly stretched shoestring budget.

I am, therefore, proposing the creation of a \$100,000 "war chest" for expanding our investigative journalism and our reporting on war zones, like Syria. (I use the phrase "war chest" ironically, because I believe that accurate and balanced information is the best way to avoid actual war.)

You can help with a tax-deductible donation by [credit card online](#) or by [mailing a check](#) to Consortium for Independent Journalism (CIJ); 2200 Wilson Blvd., Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. (For readers wanting to use PayPal, you can address contributions to our account, which is named after our e-mail address: "consortnew @ aol.com").

Or, you can buy one of my last four books through the [Consortiumnews' Web site](#)

or my latest book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, through Amazon.com, either in paper or the e-book version. A portion of each sale will go to this fund.

Third, for only \$34, you can get the trilogy that traces the history of the two Bush presidencies and their impact on the world. The three books *Secrecy & Privilege*, *Neck Deep* (co-authored with Sam and Nat Parry) and *America's Stolen Narrative* would normally cost more than \$70.

To get the books for less than half price and help us fill our "war chest" just go to the Web site's "Donate" button and make a \$34 "donation" using Visa, Mastercard or Discover. We will read a donation of that amount as an order for the trilogy.

If your mailing address is the same as your credit card billing address, we will ship the books to that address. If your mailing address is different, just send us an e-mail at consortnew@aol.com and we will make the adjustment. For U.S. orders, we will pay for the shipping. (For non-U.S. orders, add \$20 to defray the extra cost.)

You can also take advantage of this special offer by mailing a check for \$34 to The Media Consortium; 2200 Wilson Blvd.; Suite 102-231; Arlington VA 22201. Or you can use our Paypal account, "consortnew @ aol.com." Just make sure you include your mailing address in the message. A portion of those sales also will go to our goal of building a "war chest" to help avoid war.

Thanks for your support.

Robert Parry is a longtime investigative reporter who broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for the Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. He founded Consortiumnews.com in 1995 to create an outlet for well-reported journalism that was being squeezed out of an increasingly trivialized U.S. news media.

Stuck in a Job at the End of the World

Very little sympathy is felt for Air Force personnel assigned to fire nuclear missiles that could end all life on the planet. But their grim, boring and existentially absurd job has eroded staff morale so much that their collapsing competence has added to the world's risk, explains John LaForge.

By John LaForge

Some of the Air Force's self-styled nuclear "missileers", sitting at launch

controls in Minot, North Dakota, recently earned a “D” on their intercontinental ballistic missile firing (ICBM) skills. More than 10 percent of the Minot Air Force Base’s 91st “Missile Wing” was declared incompetent and was stripped of launch-duty clearances.

The Air Force removed 17 of Minot’s 150 missile launch officers in April, over what commander Lt. Col. Jay Folds called “such rot” that, according to The AP on May 8, “even the willful violation of safety rules, including a possible compromise of launch codes, was tolerated.”

Air Force commanders told The AP they were concerned about an “attitude problem” among the ultimate bomb scare command. The Air Forces’ two-person crews work three-day shifts in underground Launch Control Centers and are supposed to be constantly at-the-ready to fire the 10 Minuteman IIIs under their control. Minot AFB is in charge of 150 ICBMs, 15 “flights” of 10 missiles each, with one launch control center for each flight.

Another 150 are on alert in Wyoming and 150 more out in Montana. All 450 of the relics are armed with a 300-kiloton “W-87” warhead. Three-hundred kilotons is a magnitude equal to 18 times the destruction that incinerated Hiroshima in 1945 killing 140,000 people.

The Air Force put on its dress uniform in the face of the scandal. In May it announced it would retrain the incompetent nuclear triggermen and the commanders asserted to Congress that its H-bombs were secure.

Gen. Mark Welsh, the service’s top general, told the *Washington Post*, with deliberate irony one hopes, that Air Force officers sense that the land-based missile system “is a dying field.” And it’s a fact that everyone from President Barack Obama to the War Resisters League has called for the Bomb’s abolition. Gen. Welsh admitted to the press that there are “a limited command positions to which missile launch officers can aspire.”

Being stuck in dead-ended Air Force careers and posted in the wilderness of central North Dakota, Minot’s Cold War throw-backs, who call themselves “Roughriders” and “Vulgar Vultures” on their website, are trained to fire Minuteman III ballistic missiles at the sea (they can be re-programmed but are targeted on the oceans for “safety”) and, day after wind-swept prairie day, have absolutely no military function or purpose whatsoever.

It’s hardly surprising that their minds drift. Since they’re prepared to commit the bloodiest, most nightmarish crime in human history or imagination, the missileer’s principal pre-occupation must be to think about something else, anything else. Many work on graduate degrees. One launch control center I

visited in December 1987 was decorated with Christmas lights.

The inevitable if not impending elimination of their useless rockets has to depress what's left of the launch teams' *esprit de corps*. Even their civilian commander, Pentagon chief Chuck Hagel, has signed onto a call by the group Global Zero to eliminate all the ICBMs and to eventually discard all nuclear weapons.

Of course Minot AFB has been demoralized by more than the nuclear war flunky scandal. In August 2007, three of its Colonels, a Lt. Colonel and dozens of low-level personnel were demoted or sacked after they allowed the fantastically dangerous loading and cross-country air transport of six nuclear-armed Cruise missiles from Minot to Barksdale AFB in Louisiana. Even if that astonishing action was covertly orchestrated by Vice President Dick Cheney for an attack on Iran that never materialized, the highly implausible but official cover story of mismanagement, rule-breaking and recklessness was an international humiliation for Minot.

That same year, Cold War super-hawks Sam Nunn, George Shultz, William Perry and Henry Kissinger publicly declared their support of a "world free of nuclear weapons." These life-long nuclear arsenal defenders had finally joined Reagan Administration adviser Paul Nitze and Strategic Air Command leader Gen. George Lee Butler in calling the arsenal worse than useless.

Even Sen. Carl Levin, D-Michigan, who last week defended the Pentagon's usurpation of authority to attack anywhere on Earth for the next 20 years, said about the nuclear arsenal last June, "The more weapons that exist out there, the less secure we are rather than the more secure we are." ["Senator Urges Bigger Cuts to Nuclear Arsenal," New York Times, June 15, 2012]

No wonder the Air Force missileers are lackadaisical about the apocalypse. There's just no future in it.

John LaForge, syndicated by [PeaceVoice](#), edits the Nukewatch quarterly newsletter.
