

9

**Seeking Green Jobs and Economic Development Through Military to Civilian Conversion**  
*a proposal to the State of Connecticut Legislature*  
*from the Greater New Haven Peace Council*  
2012 December

I'm Henry Lowendorf, Chair of the Greater New Haven Peace Council. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Thank you for considering ways Connecticut should anticipate and plan its future.

Our nation's economy is struggling in part because far too many limited resources are wasted on weaponry, wars and building a national security state.

Connecticut's future economy will continue to suffer if we as a nation and state fail to cut the hugely wasteful military budget and transferring the savings toward creating jobs and work that serves human needs. To ensure that we have a robust future economy demands analysis of opportunities missed and demands proposals for capturing those opportunities.

U.S. wartime spending equals that of all other countries in the world combined<sup>1</sup>. U.S. military spending is now 33% greater than the Cold War average and the highest in inflation-adjusted dollars since World War II. Over the last decade military spending has grown to over 1 trillion dollars a year, swallowing nearly 60% of federal discretionary spending<sup>2</sup>. President Obama's recent State of the Union address recognized the need to repair our nation's crumbling and inadequate physical infrastructure<sup>3</sup>. And the obvious place to find savings for repairing it is by moving funds from the military budget.

National polls indicate a large majority want military spending reduced<sup>4</sup>. A referendum on

the 2012 ballot in New Haven asked whether Congress should reduce the military budget, convert military to civilian production and fund human needs. It won by a nearly 6 to 1 margin<sup>5</sup>.

Connecticut's military industries are a significant part of our nation's weapons building. According to the Hartford Courant, nearly 41 thousand Connecticut jobs, 101,000 in total, are directly impacted by the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security<sup>6</sup>. Since 2003, military spending has increased in CT by 51% accounting for 6.3% of employment in the state<sup>7</sup>.

Spending in CT mirrors increases in national military spending since 9/11 and the initiation of the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. With these wars winding down, military-spending cutbacks are expected. Connecticut industries won't be spared. Importantly, CT is already a "loser" state: For every dollar CT taxpayers send to the DOD, the state receives back 80 cents<sup>8</sup>.

Under the guise of "national security" the goal of recent wars has been to assure control of territory, sources of fossil and other fuels and minerals used in manufacturing for the transnational corporations. We send our youth into wars to ensure high profits for the oil companies. The sad irony is that burning the oil causes climate overheating, which then leads to the extreme droughts, storms and floods we are experiencing – which then requires spending precious resources to fix. In

<sup>1</sup> Chris Hellman, National Priorities Project <http://www.nationalpriorities.org> The U.S. spends minimally 45% of the world's total military budget.

<sup>2</sup> Officially the U.S. spends over \$700 billion. But including Homeland Security, pension benefits and other war-related costs actual spending tops \$1.2 trillion. <http://www.tomdispatch.com/dialogs/print/?id=175361>

<sup>3</sup> The American Society of Civil Engineers report card gives the U.S. a D. <http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/>

<sup>4</sup> Program for Public Consultation, the Stimson Center and the Center for Public Integrity

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/355447-defense-budget-survey-full-results.html>

<sup>5</sup> 27,550 residents voted on the referendum. 23,398 voted yes.

<sup>6</sup> Hartford Courant 2012 Nov. 13 <http://www.courant.com/business/hc-defense-contractors-connecticut-20121113,0,7196515.story>

<sup>7</sup> Defense Technology Initiative report - in 2011 \$12.7 billion.

[http://www.defensetech.net/images/CT\\_Defense%20Industry\\_11\\_8.pdf](http://www.defensetech.net/images/CT_Defense%20Industry_11_8.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Chris Hellman, National Priorities Project <http://www.nationalpriorities.org>

fact, the Pentagon itself is the largest single global contributor to greenhouse gases.

The powerful Military Industrial Complex, warned against half a century ago by President Eisenhower, drains finite resources that would otherwise feed, clothe, shelter, educate and provide healthcare to our families<sup>9</sup>. Building and using killing machines encourages a national culture of violence. Yet ignoring Eisenhower's warning, Congressional delegations in every state, under the fig leaf of national security, view the military budget as a "jobs program"<sup>10</sup>. Connecticut's whole Congressional delegation fights to fund weapons manufactured in Connecticut, whether the Pentagon wants them or not<sup>11</sup>. Despite their efforts to protect military industries in CT, jobs in those industries have fallen sharply over the last 30 years<sup>12</sup>. The CT delegation's strategy has proven to be a losing one. **Military is the wrong jobs program.**

Newer technologies are replacing existing ones across the planet and will be part of the crucial global effort to protect our environment, our climate and waters, reverse global warming. They can help build a culture of peace.

Moreover, the skilled manufacturing jobs we now have can be converted from producing weapons to new technologies and green jobs. The metal workers who machine parts for military jet engines, helicopters and nuclear subs have the skills and tools needed to manufacture practically anything - wind and wave turbines, high speed rail and ships, robots and machinery and tools needed for

<sup>9</sup> Dwight Eisenhower, "The Chance for Peace," speech to the Amer. Soc. of Newspaper Editors, 1953 Apr. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Hellman, National Priorities Project

<http://www.nationalpriorities.org>

<sup>11</sup> [http://articles.courant.com/2011-01-17/business/hc-jsf-follow-20110114\\_1\\_alternate-engine-pratt-whitney-ge-engines](http://articles.courant.com/2011-01-17/business/hc-jsf-follow-20110114_1_alternate-engine-pratt-whitney-ge-engines); <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2012/08/20/congress-pushes-for-weapons-pentagon-didnt-want.html>

<sup>12</sup> At Pratt & Whitney the Peace Council was told that the workforce has dropped from 40,000 in the '80's to a few thousand today.

production, smart energy grids, hydrogen fuel cells and other batteries, new insulating and construction materials. Missing, however, are the political will and the incentives to put those skills and machines to good use, creating green, civilian products in civilian markets. What's missing is government investment to create research, development and demand.

After World War II, military industries quickly converted to producing civilian goods. In the 1980's, there was an effort led by the union and peace movements to convert manufacturing from weapons to civilian goods. Because the weapons manufacturers sole client is the Pentagon and their profits are guaranteed, they showed neither interest in producing consumer goods nor in competing in a civilian economy. Twenty years ago that conversion movement fell apart upon the nominal "end of the Cold War." More recently, in 2009, a forum at the University of Connecticut began to revitalize the goal of conversion, build its political support and develop possible ways to achieve it<sup>13</sup>.

Countering the loss of manufacturing jobs in our state urgently requires a program for fully entering into 21<sup>st</sup> century technology development. Transitioning from the economic drain caused by the U.S.'s enormous military budget must be a significant program focus.

Let a Futures Commission start to address the needs of Connecticut families for livable-wage jobs by providing the products and services of the new century. Stakeholders in this future, our trade unions and peace and environmental movements, must be significantly represented on it. Let it address how our state can proactively work toward redirecting the existing highly skilled workforce away from killing machines and expanding it towards a future secure in producing for human needs, for the environment and for sustainability for future generations.

<sup>13</sup> Peace Conversion Symposium: Transitioning to a Sustainable Economy. 2009 Nov. 14, Dodd Center, UConn, Storrs.