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WAR AND IMPERIALISM / RICH PEOPLE

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Abolish the Billionaire Class

A Plan to Win Socialism In America

Wielding the Imperial Presidency

Ilhan Omar Is Not Antisemitic

<u>Luke Savage</u>

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<u>Meagan Day</u>

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MAGAZINE

Abolish the Military

wars by stopping future ones.

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GREG SHUPAK

We should honor those killed and injured in past US



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and capitalism, is coming soon. Get a

across the world in recent years, it's even more apparent that US crimes aren't isolated — there's an underlying structure that produces them. Tackling that underlying structure, though daunting, also fosters opportunities for unity. Because of

1. US imperialism breeds racism.

says "US Out of Everywhere."

the sheer destructiveness of US militarism, and its vital role in maintaining global capitalism, a reinvigorated antiwar movement could bring together leftists with a broad range of concerns. So on Veterans Day, here's how US militarism stands in the way of a just world — and why the Left

It is a slogan that should be ubiquitous on the Left. With the string of disastrous military interventions

isa Simpson had the right idea. In a 2002 episode of The Simpsons, the elementary

should come together to bring it to its knees.

or starters, the main victims of the US military have been people of color. Just since World War II, there are the millions slaughtered in Korea and Indochina, the over one million

killed in Iraq, and the tens of thousands in Afghanistan — all of which have then been affixed with dehumanizing labels to rationalize the murdering sprees.

The bigotry doesn't stay overseas. Using racist language to legitimize attacking Arabs or Southeast

There's also the long-running presence of Klansmen and Neo-Nazis in the American forces and the

tacit acceptance of their presence by officials. As Reuters' Daniel Trotta reported in 2012, white

Asians contributes to the dissemination of racism against minorities in the United States.

supremacist groups encourage their followers who join the Army and Marine Corps to acquire the skills to overthrow the "Zionist Occupation Government" that they think is running America and to prepare for the race war that they see as imminent.

Former service members such as Wade Page and James Burmeister have carried out racist murders on

US soil, and a 2008 report commissioned by the Justice Department found that half of all right-wing

extremists in the United States had military experience. 2. The military is anti-feminist.

Millions of women in the Global South have been killed, maimed, assaulted, or traumatized by the United States military. In just one horrifying example, a set of documents declassified in 2006 shows

recurrent attacks on ordinary Vietnamese — families in their homes, farmers in rice paddies, teenagers

violent minority who murdered, raped and tortured with impunity. Abuses were not confined to a few

Similarly, activist and scholar Kozue Akibayashi notes that in Okinawa, Japan a "problem caused by

the US military presence is sexual or gender-based violence by US soldiers," including "hundreds of

and contractors sexually abused at least fifty-four children between 2003 and 2007 — and were never

held accountable because American military personnel are protected by diplomatic immunity

Still more women around the world have been widowed and left to raise children, or have been

out fishing. Hundreds of soldiers, in interviews with investigators and letters to commanders, described a

S military actions also need to be thought of as exercises in mass violence against women.

cases of sexual assaults against women and children of all ages." The same problem exists in Colombia where, according to an April 2015 report, US military soldiers

agreements between the two countries.

greater share of household tasks.

more than second-place China.

capitalism's police force.

ruling class.

in solidarity.

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the line by and for capitalists.

rogue units... They were uncovered in every Army division that operated in Vietnam.

burdened by physically or mentally scarred spouses and family members. Sexual assault is also widespread within the military's own ranks. The Journal of International Affairs recently reported that, "according to the US government, in 2012, there were 26,000 sexual assaults in the US military." But "only 3,374 were reported" because a "culture of impunity" prevails.

Freedom found that "of 125,729 veterans who received Veterans Health Administration primary care or mental health services, 15.1 percent of the women and 0.7 percent of the men reported military sexual trauma when screened" — though these are likely conservative estimates because sexual violence tends to be underreported.

Many male soldiers, moreover, return from the trauma of war to abuse their families. Veterans are

responsible for nearly 21 percent of domestic violence in the United States, and these instances are

function is also compromised, which often forces their wives to provide for the family and take on a

statistically more likely to result in death than those perpetrated by non-veterans. Their ability to

examination of veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and of Operation Iraqi

In the US military, it is overwhelmingly women who are subject to sexual violence. A 2010

3. US militarism is bad for American workers and for the planet.

S imperialism should be a major concern for labor organizers if for no other reason than

that it's the US poor and working class whose lives, bodies, and minds are usually put on

During the Cold War, overly optimistic liberals and social democrats looked forward to a "peace dividend" that the American population could enjoy in the event of a permanent thaw in relations with the Soviet Union or its dissolution. Their mistake was to assume that the existence of the USSR was the main reason for the US's obscenely large military budget.

However, the US military doesn't consume the volume of resources it does because of external threats,

but because it is a co-dependent of American capitalism. The US military is itself a site of accumulation

At times, organized labor has supported weapons manufacturing on the grounds that it provides

Americans with a source of employment that cannot easily be outsourced. It is better, however, to

and a force for the protection and expansion of American capital's interests worldwide.

Yet there are further ways in which the US war machine harms American workers. Extraordinary

amounts of resources that could be used to improve people's lives in the US and elsewhere are instead

diverted to the military. In 2013, the total US military expenditure was \$640 billion, over \$400 billion

understand the demilitarization of US society as an opportunity for workers. Productive capacities could be shifted from bomb-making to the creation of socially necessary goods. Rather than building instruments of death and environmental degradation, resources could be used to construct the infrastructure needed to save the planet and provide badly needed social services.

America's wars also defoliate, pollute bodies of water, corrupt soil, destroy ecosystems, and kill huge

numbers of animals. The Iraq War alone "added more greenhouse gases to the atmosphere than 60

percent of the world's nations," scholar Bruce Johansen reports.

and ecological needs can be a site at which organized labor and environmentalists forge alliances. 4. The US military is global capitalism's police.

ome ostensibly concerned with class politics contend that the military provides workers'

families with decent jobs and opportunities for personal advancement. But this is

incredibly myopic. Building movements that confront capital is far more effective at

An antiwar movement that advocates redirecting resources from the military toward serving human

improving the lot of the working class. And challenging capitalism necessitates challenging US imperialism. Capitalism needs certain political conditions in order to operate, such as stable, enforceable property

satisfactorily resolved only by the existence of a superordinate power, capable of imposing discipline

on the system as a whole." That superordinate power is the United States, and its military is global

As Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin argue, in managing global capitalism, the American state rules

rights across national borders. Yet, as Perry Anderson points out, international legal regimes for

ensuring these are weak, and "the general task of coordination" of the capitalist system "can be

unconcealed manner. To be sure, the military is not the only way that the US oversees global capitalism. But because US imperialism is an essential feature of contemporary global capitalism, any blow to one is a blow to the other. Anticapitalists of all stripes are doomed to failure if they do not treat building a new antiwar movement as a foremost concern.

help it extract resources throughout Africa. In 2008, American Vice Admiral Robert Moeller said that one of AFRICOM's aims was to ensure "the free flow of resources from Africa to the global market," and in 2010 he said that one of AFRICOM's purposes is "to promote American interests."

penetration and circulation" — and a global strategy to halt any social or political force that challenges, even mildly, this system. We've seen this in in the US military assaults on Cuba, Vietnam, and Grenada, to say nothing of the innumerable covert or proxy attacks carried out against left-leaning forces around the world for nearly a century. The US maintains eight hundred military bases outside of its borders — an example of the kind of geopolitical posturing that allows for US political and economic hegemony across the globe. Nowhere

is this more apparent than in the Middle East, where the United States is able to safeguard its

disturbance that may disrupt the flow of oil or the circulation of petrodollars.

commercial interests and enhance its economic opportunities by threatening to quash any social

particularly those in the Global South — the room to flourish. And if the Left can peel back the

Even partially weakening the US war machine would afford the socialist initiatives outside the US —

humanitarian veneer of American intervention, it will be harder for imperialism to sell its wars to the

leftists are concerned. A reinvigorated anti-imperialist, antiwar movement is thus an ideal site for

leftists with disparate priorities to converge in ways that can strengthen us all. We overlook this opportunity at our own peril.

through other states, and turning them all into "effective" states for global capitalism is no easy matter. It is the attempt by the American state to address these problems, especially vis-à-vis what it calls "rogue states" in the third world, that leads American imperialism today to present itself in an increasingly 5. The military is no humanitarian force. n the post-Cold War era, few matters have caused as much friction on the Euro-Atlantic left as the question of whether American military might should be used in the name of human rights across the world. Despite its horrific record, some progressives persist in believing that the US military can be used to liberate women, build democracy, and protect human rights. NATO's 2011 intervention in Libya is just another example of the misguided tendency to view the United States military as the armed wing of Amnesty International. In Slouching Towards Sirte, Maximilian Forte writes of the US's frustration at Qaddafi's attempt to obstruct the building of Africa Command (AFRICOM) bases in Africa, which the US had hoped would Similarly, Horace Campbell's examination of Wikileaks cables finds that in 2007-08, Western oil companies such as the American firm Occidental were "compelled to sign new deals with [Libya's] National Oil Company, on significantly less favorable terms than they had previously enjoyed." A January 2010 cable shows that oil companies and the American government were frightened by the Qaddafi government's "rhetoric in early 2009 involving the possible nationalization of the oil sector." There is no doubt that Qaddafi's government violated human rights, but the professed humanitarian concerns were only a pretext for American involvement. We must resist the misconception that the American armed forces can play a neutral role on the world stage to protect victims of rights violations or to end tyranny. The US military's purpose is to pursue and protect the interests of the American As Doug Stokes explains, since the end of World War II American foreign policy has been focused on "the maintenance and defense of an economically open international system conducive to capital

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR Greg Shupak teaches media studies at the University of Guelph in Canada. He is the author of the upcoming book, The Wrong Story: Palestine, Israel, and the Media (OR Books). **FILED UNDER** UNITED STATES WAR AND IMPERIALISM / RICH PEOPLE HOME-FEATURED / VETERANS DAY / TEST-HOME-EXTRA

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