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NDAA Fuels Militarization, Enriches Defense Corporations, Expands Empire

By Rep. Ron Paul

December 20, 2012

Mr. Speaker I rise to oppose what will be the final National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) I will face as a Member of the US House of Representatives. As many of my colleagues are aware, I have always voted against the NDAA regardless of what party controls the House. Far from simply providing an authorization for the money needed to defend this country, which I of course support, this authorization and its many predecessors have long been used to fuel militarization, enrich the military industrial complex, expand our empire overseas, and purchase military and other enormously expensive equipment that we do not need and in large part does not work anyway. They wrap all of this mess up in false patriotism, implying that Members who do not vote for these boondoggles do not love their country.

The military industrial complex is a jigsaw puzzle of seemingly competing private companies; but they are in reality state-sponsored enterprises where well-connected lobbyists, usually after long and prosperous careers in the military or government, pressure Congress to fund pet projects regardless of whether we can afford them or whether they are needed to defend our country. This convenient arrangement is the welfare of the warfare state.

Because of the false perception that we must pass this military spending authorization each year or our men and women in uniform will go hungry, Congress has over the years taken the opportunity to pack it with other items that would have been difficult to pass on their own. This is nothing new on Capitol Hill. In the last few years, however, this practice has taken a sinister turn.

The now-infamous NDAA for fiscal year 2012, passed last year, granted the president the authority to indefinitely detain American citizens without charge, without access to an attorney, and without trial. It is difficult to imagine anything more un-American than this attack on our Constitutional protections. While we may not have yet seen the widespread use of this unspeakably evil measure, a wider application of this “authority” may only be a matter of time.

Historically these kinds of measures have been used to bolster state power at the expense of unpopular scapegoats. The Jewish citizens of 1930s Germany knew all about this reprehensible practice. Lately the scapegoats have been mostly Muslims. Hundreds, perhaps many more, even Americans, have been held by the US at Guantanamo and in other secret prisons around the world.

But this can all change quickly, which makes it all the more dangerous. Maybe one day it will be Christians, gun-owners, home-schoolers, etc.

That is why last year, along with Reps. Justin Amash, Walter Jones, and others, we attempted to simply remove the language from the NDAA (sec. 1021) that gave the president this unconstitutional authority. It was a simple, readable amendment. Others tried to thwart our straightforward efforts by crafting elaborately worded amendments that in practice did nothing to protect us from this measure in the bill. Likewise this year there were a few celebrated but mostly meaningless attempts to address this issue. One such effort passed in the senate version of this bill. The conferees have simply cut it out. The will of Congress was thus ignored by a small group of Members and Senators named by House and Senate leadership.

There are many other measures in this NDAA Conference Report to be concerned about. It continues to fund our disastrous wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and elsewhere for example.

The Conference Report contains yet another round of doomed-to-fail new sanctions against Iran. These are acts of war against Iran without actually firing a shot. But this time the House and Senate conferees are going further than that. The report contains language that pushes the US as close to an actual authorization for the use of force against Iran as we can get. The Report “...asserts that the U.S. should be prepared to take all necessary measures, including military action if required, to prevent Iran from threatening the U.S., its allies, or Iran’s neighbors with a nuclear weapon and reinforces the military option should it prove necessary.”

This kind of language just emboldens Iran’s enemies in the region to engage in increasingly reckless behavior with the guarantee that the US military will step in if they push it too far. That is an unwise move for everyone concerned.

This Conference Report contains increased levels of foreign military aid, including an additional half-billion dollars in missile assistance to an already prosperous Israel and some \$300 million to help an increasingly prosperous Russia control its chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons. And Russia does not even want the money!

Overall, this authorization will give the president even more money for military activities next year than he requested. At a time when the news has been dominated by reports of our budget crisis, the “fiscal cliff,” and the “need” to increase taxes on Americans, Congress is foolishly spending even more on the military budget than the administration wants! I suppose that is what counts as a reduction in the language of Washington.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this, and all future, reckless and dangerous military spending bills that are destroying our national security by destroying our economy.