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**U.S. SPENDS MORE
IN 5 HOURS ON
THE MILITARY THAN IN
5 YEARS ON HEALTH CARE**

The US War Machine

US behavior in Iraq demonstrates once again the need to cut US military spending. The US is too prone to warfare, too quick on the trigger. I did not approve of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and I applauded the world boycott of Iraq as a means to deal with it. The US nonetheless rushed into war with unseemly haste, using diplomacy largely to create time to deploy forces rather than solve the conflict.

The US use of force rather than diplomacy in Iraq, moreover, is not an isolated instance. We have been at war directly or indirectly (through local forces) for much of the latter half this century: in Korea, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Iran and Iraq. In addition, we have actively intervened in the internal politics of nations throughout the globe, using economic power or the threat of force to do so. To me the reasons for this are apparent: we are an economic empire (like the Aztecs) and our rule, as in all empires, ultimately rests on force. Arms, moreover, create their own logic of use. We must periodically test our weapons in battle, just as architects must realize their constructions in space.

Our government, of course, justifies its actions through appeals to American ideology and through the creation of personified demons. Such ideology need not be consistent, provided the demon-adversary is made evil enough. Thus, President Bush, who violated the sovereignty of Panama to deal with the personified evil of Noriega, attacks Saddam Hussein (Hitler, no?) for violating the sovereignty of Kuwait. The fact that Noriega had been on the US payroll while engaged in his presumed drug trafficking or that Saddam Hussein had received US economic and moral support after violating the sovereignty of Iran is conveniently forgotten.

I am concerned about the US war machine both as a citizen and as an anthropologist. As a citizen I am distressed by the destruction sent in my name and the chauvinism around me (I am sick of the "crazy-Arab" stereotype). I am concerned for American democracy, as the government cynically controls information and manipulates the people ("collateral damage," indeed!). I am concerned by the military distortion of our national budget, in which we are willing to spend considerable sums to kill people but not to deal with poverty, homelessness and other social ills. I am concerned, moreover, because militarism has contributed to the increasing shift of wealth away from the poor and into the hands of the rich.

As an anthropologist I am concerned because the US arsenal has been deployed primarily against the nonindustrial world, the world which I love and study.

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