

Remarks for Jan 15

David Swanson

I am a fan of the entire Merchants of Death tribunal and every one of the concluding recommendations and probably a few more. I've been asked to speak about recommendations 2 and 3.

Recommendation #2 is a recommendation to us, that we divest ourselves and work to compel the divestment by all from stock holdings in Lockheed Martin, Boeing and RTX/Raytheon and in any companies doing business with General Atomics, and also that we work to first prohibit members of the U.S. Congress from owning stocks in weapons companies, and second to prohibit anyone from owning stock in weapons companies. A further or simultaneous step, I think, could be to prohibit manufacturing or possessing weapons, a step the U.S. government committed to arriving at together with the rest of the world when 55 years ago it ratified the treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, requiring it to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament."

We might need a combination of international action and intense public pressure to prohibit profiteering by Congress, if we're going to get Congress to prohibit its own corruption. And we might have to bring the media outlets and stink tanks into line first.

Divestment campaigns, as elaborated at worldbeyondwar.org/divest, can be tremendous tools of education, of organizing, and of impacting the death merchants. Some have had success in compelling cities or universities to divest from short and long lists of weapons companies, for example using a regularly updated list of the 20 largest, or a list of those profiting from a particular war. Any such list includes the three we're after. These campaigns can also connect issues, such as war and climate, and divest from two interlocking types of evil at once. They also serve to build up our capacity for shaming the profiting from mass killing that has been perverted into more a subject of pride than shame.

This week, the U.S. Secretary of State took a break from shipping weapons to a genocide in Gaza to claim he's spotted a genocide in Sudan. But he made no mention of the U.S.-made weapons doing much of the killing in Sudan. President Biden, whom I fully intend to sell the Brooklyn Bridge someday, has accepted the word of the UAE that it will cease arming the war, so that the U.S. can go on shipping weapons over without any scruples.

We can also divest from some subcontractors of the biggest weapons dealers. The F-35 is made with parts from around the world -- and just as it is assembled all over the United States for political reasons -- this may also be for political reasons. But it means that divestment can be a global effort as well.

Recommendation #3 is to prohibit any member of Congress, member of the federal government, or member of the military from accepting any employment, compensation, or having any other relationship with any corporation manufacturing, servicing or selling weapons for at least 5 years after they leave the government. This locking of the revolving door would work wonders. I wouldn't mind if it also spun the other way, to the 5 years before government. I wouldn't even mind if it included during government: no so-called campaign funding, no lobbying, no bill writing, no provision of office staff, and no relationship with office staffers either, or with spouses -- no funding of inaugurations either.

While the revolving door is so common as to be non-shocking, I think its prohibition should be named the Cheney Law in honor of the former vice president, whose blatant profiteering opened new horizons for the corrupt in Washington.