



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Past Grace, Past Shame

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The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public's money¹

Alexis de Tocqueville

July 29, 2016

Greetings to the leaders in Congress on defense and homeland security appropriations, as listed below. This article is addressed to you.

Senate:

Defense : Thad Cochran (R-MS); Dick Durbin (D-IL)

Homeland Security: John Hoeven (R-ND); Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)

House:

Defense: Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ); Pete Visclosky (D-IN)

Homeland Security: John Carter (R-TX); Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)

Congress is wasting taxpayer money by using funds to bankroll out-of-date projects in many voting districts and states, a practice of which most of us are unaware, yet one that is part of the political process. What is not known to most American citizens is that some members of Congress are ignoring many of the Department of Defense's recommendations on closing or consolidating a number of military bases.

For the past three years, officials at the Pentagon have asked Congress for permission to take stock of how many of the military's vast network of installations across the country have become obsolete and ought to be shrunk or shuttered. The Defense Department, by far the nation's largest and costliest bureaucracy, estimates that it could operate far more efficiently and save billions of dollars each year by shedding as least 20 percent of its real estate.

Yet, year after year, the nearly unanimous response for lawmakers has been: Don't even think about it. They have barred the Pentagon from carrying out a detailed assessment of its properties, because closing useless bases would mean lost jobs and revenue in home districts.² [Yet these facilities could be could be converted into commercial enterprises (a red solution) or green zones (a blue solution).]

¹ " Alexis de Tocqueville," <https://www.google.com/search?sourceid=chrome-syapi2&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8&q=The%20American%20Republic%20will%20endure%20until%20the%20day%20Congress%20discovers%20that%20it%20can%20bribe%20the%20public%20with%20the%20public%27s%20money&oq=The%20American%20Republic%20will%20endure%20until%20the%20day%20Congress%20discovers%20that%20it%20can%20bribe%20the%20public%20with%20the%20public%27s%20money&aqs=chrome..69i57.11980j0j7>

² "The Pentagon's Excess Space," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2015, 10.

The Department of Defense has “some 562,000 facilities worldwide, which collectively take up 24.7 million acres, or nearly the size of Virginia.”³ Below are photos of three examples of discarded or excess assets taken from photos extracted from DOD and Google searches.⁴ The armaments and real estate lie fallow and are become increasingly obsolete, as well as expensive to maintain.

Proponents---politicians---of maintaining the facilities that U.S. generals and admirals wish to remove claim a sudden war in the South China Sea or an unexpected air attack by the North Korean Air Force may necessitate re-berthing these ancient sea and air mariners to preserve America’s freedom. The experts claim otherwise.



Rusting away.



Rotting away.



Not this one. It’s brand new.

Billions of dollars could be saved by the DOD’s recommendations, yet you in Congress (both sides of the aisles) do not have the political pluck to act on these proposals.

Before you and other members of Congress defeat (once again) the Base Realignment and Closure process (BRAC), read *Profiles in Courage*. The book deals with a few representatives of Congress who sacrificed their political careers by going out on a limb for the good of the nation. It provides examples of public servants going against pork barrel pressure.

If you are fearful of losing a pork barrel, then figure out a way to keep the DOD funds in your state or district for projects that are important to America’s military establishment, *as defined by the military leaders themselves*. That way, you can remain in office and also move the nation forward.

As an alternative, consider closing U.S. installations that are located in other countries, and respectfully request these nations to ante up a bit more for their own security. In this way, you would not lose any votes in your next election, and you would encourage our allies to kick in a bit more money to protect themselves from their neighbors. They might even buy their armaments from a factory that employs some of your voters.

³ Ibid.

⁴ I have been criticized for using the first two photos which my critics say represent valuable backup inventories. One reader informed me I was lazy in simply scanning Google for photos that are not representative of my assertions. I respond: Valid points. I did not explain sufficiently why I chose these two pictures. But I still hold to my premise of wasteful use of money. Nonetheless, giving my critics their just due, here is an explanation that perhaps explains my bias: During the Vietnam “conflict,” I served on three WW II era ships. They were sea-worthy, but they were ill-equipped for what was then more modern warfare. In one ship, the engineering department (somewhat) joked that they should be receiving hazardous duty pay for their assignments (watches) in the “boiler room.”

On the other hand, here is another image I obtained by keying-in “closed military bases.”⁵ All is not lost: America’s low- income housing shortage could be addressed. If Uncle Sam can persuade those folks sleeping in cars on the grounds of the nonfunctioning bases to move into the abandoned military buildings, a small dent might be made in a national problem. (The blues could put them up free in the deteriorating sleeping barracks. The reds could charge them rent).



A closed military facility.

Pass the pork barrel? For those in this photograph, they would settle for a bit of pork.

I am reminded of the old saying, which refers to the behavior of Congress on this issue: “Past grace, past shame.”

⁵httpswww.google.comsearchq=mothballed+military+bases&newwindow=1&espv=2&tbm=isch&imgil=lyqfRMm4X5yfSM%253A%253B76zRzSDg_AvjiM%253Bhttp%25253A%25252F%25252Fwww.smh.com.au%25252Ffederal-politics%25252Fpolitical-news%25252Fbid-t

Note from writer: I did a double-take when this picture came up on my search. But then, Google is noted for its accurate depiction and recording of America’s neighborhoods, including my back yard.