



Written by [John and Nisha Whitehead](#) on August 5, 2026

America Reaps What Trump Sows: The Price of Policing the Globe

What goes around comes around.

That is the terrible law of blowback.

When the United States bombs another country, threatens its government, kills its people, occupies its territory or attempts to dictate its future, the consequences do not remain safely contained thousands of miles away.

They come home.

They come home in [flag-draped coffins and shattered military families](#). They come home in [retaliatory attacks on American bases](#) and embassies. They come home through terrorist plots, cyber sabotage, [disrupted shipping lanes](#), [higher energy prices](#), [depleted weapons stockpiles](#), and [trillions of dollars in debt](#).

They come home through [hacked water systems](#), [vulnerable power grids](#), heightened domestic surveillance, militarized police and government demands that the American people surrender still more freedom in exchange for the promise of protection from dangers the government itself helped create.

This is blowback.

Blowback isn't just about war. It's about the consequences of the rash, heedless and heartless decisions made every day by the actors of the American police state — and the fact that it is “we the people” who will be paying the price for those terrible decisions for years to come.

President Trump's war with Iran is only the latest reminder that no government can bomb, threaten and police the world indefinitely without eventually bringing the consequences home.

For months, [the Trump administration has lurched between war and threatened war](#), massive bombing campaigns and aborted strikes, demands for surrender and claims that peace is imminent.

There appears to be no coherent plan for ending the conflict.

There is, however, a mounting bill — and it will be paid in American lives, American dollars, American security and American freedom.

This is what happens when a government appoints itself judge, jury, executioner and police officer to the world.

The government creates enemies faster than it can kill them.

It destabilizes one country, then uses the resulting chaos to justify intervening in another. It bombs in the name of peace, occupies in the name of freedom, surveils in the name of security, and retaliates



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against retaliation in an endless cycle of violence that serves the war machine while leaving ordinary people everywhere less safe.

We have seen this before.

Every president promises that the next military intervention will be limited, targeted, necessary and decisive. Every president promises that overwhelming force will restore order. Every president assures us that the experts know what they are doing.

Yet the wars continue, the enemies multiply, the costs rise, the Constitution contracts, and the American people are left to cope with the consequences.

The blowback from Trump's wars may not look like the blowback from wars of the past.

Retaliation may not arrive in the form of a missile — it may arrive through a computer terminal connected to a [small-town water plant](#).

In recent days, [hackers reportedly targeted water and wastewater systems in at least seven states](#). More than 30 community water systems in Minnesota were attacked, while additional systems in Michigan were compromised. Pumps were disrupted. Remote-control systems were accessed. Some communities temporarily lost normal operations.

Officials reported no contamination and no resulting threat to public health.

We were fortunate this time. But what happens next time?

Although Iran is [suspected of plotting attacks on water and energy infrastructure nationwide](#), the Trump administration has rejected suggestions that the recent cyberattacks were retaliation for the war.

Whether or not Iran is behind these cyberattacks, the warning could not be clearer: in an age of networked infrastructure, the battlefield is everywhere.

It is the water treatment plant. The electrical grid. The hospital. The bank. The airport. The communications network. The family car. The phone in your pocket.

That is the danger of pouring America's resources into policing the globe while neglecting the systems on which ordinary Americans depend at home and leaving the homeland dangerously exposed.

Every country bombed, every government threatened, every civilian population terrorized, and every community reduced to rubble creates new grievances, new enemies and new reasons for retaliation.

That retaliation does not always come from another army.

It comes through terrorist cells. It comes through lone actors radicalized by images of dead children and destroyed cities. It comes through hackers probing water systems, electrical grids, hospitals, banks, transportation networks and communications systems.

It comes through attacks on American troops, embassies, ships and businesses.

It comes through oil shocks, disrupted trade routes, depleted military stockpiles, emergency appropriations, and still more national debt.

Blowback carries a staggering price tag — and the war profiteers are not the ones expected to pay it. The American people are.

War spending is bankrupting America.



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The military-industrial complex profits from every deployment, every missile launched, every weapon depleted and every new enemy created.

Meanwhile, the politicians claim there is never enough money to secure vulnerable water systems, modernize the electrical grid, repair collapsing infrastructure, provide affordable health care, or protect communities from disasters here at home.

This is the economic face of blowback: the government spends trillions of dollars making enemies abroad, then pleads poverty when asked to protect the American people from the consequences.

Talk about fiscally irresponsible: the U.S. government is spending money it does not have on a military empire it cannot afford while leaving the country it is supposed to defend dangerously exposed.

The consequences are not merely financial.

Decades of bombing, occupation, drone killings, regime change and support for brutal governments have also fueled rage against the United States.

The 9/11 attacks were blowback. The [Boston Marathon bombing was blowback](#). The [attempted Times Square bombing](#) was blowback. The [Fort Hood shooting was blowback](#).

Every new threat becomes a justification to turn America into a battlefield — militarizing the police and treating the American people like suspects and enemy combatants — while paving the way for more surveillance, more secrecy, more military equipment, more emergency authority and fewer constitutional restraints.

As I make clear in my book [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) and its fictional counterpart [The Erik Blair Diaries](#), a nation that abandons the rule of law abroad will eventually find that the rule of law has little power to restrain its government at home.

This, too, is blowback: unchecked power, diminished freedom and a government that ceases to serve its people.

About John & Nisha Whitehead:

Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. His latest books [The Erik Blair Diaries](#) and [Battlefield America: The War on the American People](#) are available at www.amazon.com. Whitehead can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org. Nisha Whitehead is the Executive Director of The Rutherford Institute. Information about The Rutherford Institute is available at www.rutherford.org.



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