



Commentators and Experts Outed as Shills for Corporate War Profiteers

Ever wondered why, in the ramp up to the newest U.S. military intervention, certain “experts” pop up on nearly every news channel? The answer is as easy as it is expected.

Findings in [a recent study by the Public Accountability Initiative](#) reveal that 22 of the traveling quorum of “expert commentators” have strong ties to the military-industrial complex. Although these people were described by the media as “experts” on at least 111 occasions, their associations with defense contractors were mentioned only 13 times.



Stephen Hadley, national security advisor to President George W. Bush, is the focus of much of the report. In the days when a possible military strike on Syria was being discussed constantly on television news programs, Hadley was on TV almost as much as commercials, appearing on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and Bloomberg TV.

Remarkably, during these dozens of interviews, not a single mention was made of Hadley’s current position with Raytheon, manufacturer of the Tomahawk missile, the weapon most often mentioned as the means the United States would use to punish the Assad regime.

Beyond his role as director at the mega-contractor, Hadley also reportedly “owns over 11,000 shares of Raytheon stock, which traded at all-time highs during the Syria debate.”

In the Public Accountability Initiative’s summary of its report, the organization explains:

The report offers a new look at an issue raised by David Barstow’s 2008 Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* series on the role military analysts played in promoting the Bush Administration’s narrative on Iraq. In addition to exposing coordination with the Pentagon, Barstow found that many cable news analysts had industry ties that were not disclosed on air.

Of the 22 television commentators and the 111 times they were touted as foreign policy “experts,” the report found that there were “varying types of conflict of interest.”

Most of the time, the conflict involved “industry ties that pose significant and direct conflicts of interest.” Although a few of the experts had less obvious relationships to corporate war profiteers, every one of them had, the report found, “a financial interest in continuing heightened levels of US military action abroad.”

A smaller subsection of the consultants included in the study had no industry ties, as such, but they were connected in demonstrable and direct ways to the Department of Defense, an obvious conflict of interest when it comes to questions of military operations.

Not surprisingly, during their appearances on news broadcasts, nearly all the experts supported a



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military strike on Syria. The report summary indicates that of those who advocated for military intervention, most “framed the decision as an issue of national security.”

Apart from Stephen Hadley, the following individuals all shilled for opening Syria as the newest market for their military-industrial bosses. From the report summary:

Jack Keane has strongly supported striking Syria on PBS, the BBC, and Fox News. Though Keane is currently a director of General Dynamics, one of the world’s largest military services companies, and a venture partner of SCP Partners, a defense-focused investment firm, only his military and think tank affiliations were identified in all sixteen appearances.

General Anthony Zinni (shown) has expressed support for military action in Syria during three appearances on CNN and one on CBS *This Morning*, and has been quoted in the *Washington Post*. Though a director with major defense contractor BAE Systems and an advisor to defense-focused private equity firm DC Capital Partners, only Zinni’s military experience was considered relevant by the media outlets interviewing him all five times.

Frances Townsend has appeared on CNN’s *Anderson Cooper 360* six times strongly favoring action in Syria. Though Townsend holds positions in two investment firms with defense company holdings, MacAndrews & Forbes and Monument Capital Group, and serves as an advisor to defense contractor Decision Sciences, only her roles as a CNN national security analyst and member of the CIA and DHS advisory committees were revealed in all six appearances.

The defense industry didn’t rely solely on individuals as surrogates. The report also highlights the television appearances of seven think tanks that provided “independent analysts” calling for immediate intervention in the Syrian civil war. Again, they all had vested interest in corporations that would reap substantial financial benefit from bombing Syria.

According to the summary of the report, “These think tanks were cited 144 times in major US publications from August 7th, 2013 to September 6th, 2013. The Brookings Institution, Center for Strategic and International Studies, and The Institute for the Study of War were the most cited think tanks from our dataset.” Here is the Public Accountability Initiative’s breakdown of the duplicity of these “commentators.”

Experts with The Brookings Institution were cited in 31 articles on Syria in our dataset, more than any other think tank. Brookings is an influential think tank that is presented in the media as an independent authority, yet it receives millions in funding from the defense industry, including \$1-2.5 million from Booz Allen Hamilton and \$50,000-\$100,000 from Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Palantir Technologies. Brookings Executive Education’s Advisory Council Chair, Ronald Sanders, is a Vice President and Senior Fellow at Booz Allen Hamilton.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies was cited in 30 articles on Syria. CSIS has ample individual connections to the defense industry through its advisors and trustees, including CSIS Senior Advisor Margaret Sidney Ashworth, Corporate Vice President for Government Relations at Northrop Grumman, and CSIS Advisor Thomas Culligan, Senior Vice President at Raytheon. CSIS President and CEO John Hamre is a director for defense contractor SAIC.

Analysts representing The Institute for the Study of War were cited in 22 articles on Syria in our dataset. One such article by former ISW Senior Research Analyst Elizabeth O’Bagy was cited by Secretary John Kerry and Senator John McCain during congressional hearings in their effort to



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justify intervention. ISW's Corporate Council represents a who's who of the defense industry and includes Raytheon, SAIC, Palantir, General Dynamics, CACI, Northrop Grumman, DynCorp, and L-3 Communication.

Finally, given their century-long influence over the foreign policy of the United States and the fact that its members have occupied every significant post of power in the federal government from the Oval Office on down, the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and its A-list roster of representatives pressed the White House to push the button, sending defense contractor inventory into Syria.

The Public Accountability Initiative report provided the following description of the CFR's foreign policy posture:

The Council on Foreign Relations claims over 4,700 members and boasts many celebrity and high profile members among those ranks including Brian Williams, Fareed Zakaria, Angelina Jolie, Chuck Hagel, and Erin Burnett. Its prominence lends it a gravitas that obscures substantial conflicts of interest.

Beyond providing mouthpieces to the mainstream media, the CFR has a corporate membership program that includes billions in defense contracts. Corporate CFR members include "Booz Allen Hamilton, DynCorp, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, Palantir." The report found that "each company paid between \$30,000 and \$100,000 for varying levels of access to CFR's experts and directors."

The moral of the story is that next time you see an "expert" on one of the ubiquitous TV news programs, or the next time one of the hosts of those shows pretends to be a disinterested journalist simply in search of the truth, you should check their bank accounts for sizable deposits from defense contractors who demand a return on their investments.

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