



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on September 14, 2014

Follow the Money: War Hawks and the Military Industrial Complex

“Follow the money.” This was the advice given by an informant on how to discover who was behind the Watergate break-in, as portrayed in the 1976 movie *All the President’s Men*.

The suggestion is still sound, and following the financial connection between pro-war pundits and defense contractors reveals relationships between the two that have borne deadly offspring.



From President Obama’s promise to “[degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL](#),” to the ubiquitous appearance of former generals on cable news shows, all calling for a U.S. military response to the alleged threat, the war drums are constantly sounding in the ears of Americans.

One example of the promotion from former brass to send in the armed forces to combat ISIL came from retired Marine General Anthony Zinni, who reportedly recommended putting “as many as 100,000 boots on the ground in Iraq” and using “special operations forces or CIA operatives on the ground there to get detailed intelligence.”

A similar suggestion, highlighted by an article in *The Nation*, is made by retired General Jack Keane who reportedly recommends “‘offensive’ air strikes and the deployment of more military advisers to the region.”

Generals put out to pasture longing for the glory days of battle is not newsworthy, though. What is worth noting, however, is the ties these hawks have to the manufacturers of military materiel.

Consider as evidence of this unholy alliance the case of Jack Keane. *The Nation*, in an article posted September 12 entitled “[Who’s Paying the Pro-War Pundits](#)” by Lee Fang, provides the following synopsis of his practically unreported alliance between war promoter and war goods producer:

Keane has appeared on Fox News at least nine times over the last two months to promote the idea that the best way to stop ISIS is through military action — in particular, through air strikes deep into ISIS-held territory. In one of the only congressional hearings about ISIS over the summer, Keane was there to testify and call for more American military engagement. On Wednesday evening, Keane declared President Obama’s speech on defeating ISIS insufficient, arguing that a bolder strategy is necessary. “I truly believe we need to put special operation forces in there,” he told host Megyn Kelly.

Left unsaid during his media appearances (and left unmentioned on his congressional witness disclosure form) are Keane’s other gigs: as special adviser to Academi, the contractor formerly known as Blackwater; as a board member to tank and aircraft manufacturer General Dynamics; a “venture partner” to SCP Partners, an investment firm that partners with defense contractors, including XVionics, an “operations management decision support system” company used in Air Force drone training; and as president of his own consulting firm, GSI LLC.



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To portray Keane as simply a think tank leader and a former military official, as the media have done, obscures a fairly lucrative career in the contracting world. For the General Dynamics role alone, Keane has been paid a six-figure salary in cash and stock options since he joined the firm in 2004; last year, General Dynamics paid him \$258,006.

With this in mind, it would appear that expansion of the “War on Terror” is less a foreign policy trajectory and more of a marketing tactic of the immense (and ever expanding) military-industrial-intelligence complex and the corps of congressmen that act as salesman staking out new territories for the deadly inventory manufactured by the defense contractors. This expansion of the market makes money, much of which finds its way into the campaign coffers of dozens of influential lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

In fairness to Keane, he’s not the only war-promoting pundit to be lining his pockets with Pentagon contractor cash. The aforementioned Anthony Zinni is in on the deal, as well. Again, as reported by *The Nation*:

Retired General Anthony Zinni, perhaps the loudest advocate of a large deployment of American soldiers into the region to fight ISIS, is a board member to BAE Systems’ US subsidiary, and also works for several military-focused private equity firms.

There are other examples, but the question that is relevant given the bloody result of the recommendations made by these retired generals (thousands of dead American military men and women have been offered on the altar of Pax Americana) is whether the media should feel compelled to disclose the corporate connection between those chosen by producers to opine on the need for combat action against ISIL or any other supposed threat.

Remarkably, one of the country’s most prominent news outlets, the *New York Times*, relies on information provided by the [Institute for the Study of War \(ISW\)](#), an organization with a familiar name as chairman of the Board: Jack Keane.

Consider *The Nation’s* concerns with this incestuous incitement to send American servicemen to die in another unconstitutional, undeclared, unnecessary Middle Eastern morass:

The Times has not mentioned Keane’s potential conflict of interest or that ISW may have a vested stake in its policy positions. The Public Accountability Initiative notes that ISW’s corporate sponsors represent “a who’s who of the defense industry and includes Raytheon, SAIC, Palantir, General Dynamics, CACI, Northrop Grumman, DynCorp, and L-3 Communication.” As the business network CNBC reported this week, Raytheon in particular has much to gain from escalation in Iraq, as the company produces many of the missiles and radar equipment used in airstrikes.

In addition to providing reports and quotes for the media, ISW leaders have demanded a greater reaction to ISIS from the Obama administration. In *The Weekly Standard* this week, ISW president Kim Kagan wrote that President Obama’s call for a limited engagement against ISIS “has no chance of success.”

If we are to retain the freedoms that remain, Americans must read and heed the words of our first president and “father of his country,” George Washington, himself a retired general at the time this statement was made.

First, to avoid the plague of perpetual war, Washington warned against “foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues.”



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Next, Washington declared that a lasting peace comes only from avoiding meddling in foreign armed conflicts and from promoting virtue in the citizenry. A peaceful country, he said, can be maintained only by peaceful people. Washington explained:

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it — It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

Finally, Washington recommends that we avoid at all costs becoming the victim of “tools and dupes” who would destroy liberty:

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy to be useful must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it.

Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

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