

Shadow Facts About Shadow Government

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[War is a Crime](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Military and WMD](#), [Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Tom Engelhardt keeps churning out great books by collecting his posts from TomDispatch.com. His latest book, *Shadow Government*, is essential reading. Of the ten essays included, eight are on basically the same topic, resulting in some repetition and even some contradiction. But when things that need repeating are repeated this well, one mostly wants other people to read them — or perhaps to have them involuntarily spoken aloud by everybody's iPhones.

We live in an age in which the most important facts are not seriously disputed and also not seriously known or responded to.

The United States' biggest public program of the past 75 years, now outstripping the rest of the world combined, is war preparations. The routine "base" military spending, not counting spending on particular wars, is at least 10 times the war spending, or enough to totally transform the world for the better. Instead it's used to kill huge numbers of people, to make the United States less safe, and to prepare for wars that are — without exception — lost disastrously. Since the justification of the Soviet Union vanished, U.S. militarism has only increased. Its enemies are small, yet it does its best to enlarge them. U.S. Special Operations forces are actively, if "secretly," engaged in war or war preparations in over two-thirds of the nations on earth. U.S. troops are openly stationed in 90 percent of the nations on earth, and 100 percent of the oceans. A majority of the people in most nations on earth consider the United States the greatest threat to world peace.

The U.S. military has brought death, terror, destruction, and lasting damage to Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya — and spilling out of Libya into Mali, sparked a Sunni-Shiite civil war in Iraq that has spread to Syria, rendered Pakistan and Yemen more violent and insecure with drone strikes, and fueled violence in Somalia that has spilled across borders.

These facts are well-established, yet virtually incomprehensible to a typical U.S. news consumer. So, if they can be repeated brilliantly and convincingly, I say: the more times the better.

We're rendering the earth uninhabitable, and the October 27, 2014, issue of *Time* magazine includes a section headlined "Why the Price of Oil Is Falling — And What It Means for the World." In reality, of course, it means devastation for the world. In *Time* it means a happy American oil boom, more sales for Saudi Arabia, and a good reason for Russia to rein in its military. Yes, the same Russia that spends 7% of what the United States does on its military. To get a sense of how Russia could rein in that military, here is a [video](#) of a Pentagon official claiming that Russia has physically moved closer to NATO (and put little green men into Ukraine).

Years ago I wrote an [article](#) for TomDispatch called “Bush’s Third Term.” Now of course we’re into Bush’s fourth term, or Clinton’s sixth. The point is that presidential power abuses and war-making expand when a president gets away with them, not when a particular party or individual wins an election. Engelhardt explains how Dick Cheney’s 1 percent doctrine (justifying war when anything that has a 1% chance of being a danger) has now become a zero percent doctrine (no justification is needed). Along with war today comes secrecy, which encompasses complete removal of your privacy, but also — Engelhardt notes — the abandonment of actual secrecy for “covert” operations that the government wants to have known but not to have held to any legal standard.

The White House went to the *New York Times* prior to President Obama’s reelection and promoted the story that Obama personally goes through a list of men, women, and children on Tuesdays and carefully picks which ones to have murdered. There’s no evidence that this hurt Obama’s reelection.

The Bush White House went to the *New York Times* and censored until after Bush’s reelection, the story that the government was massively and illegally spying on Americans. The Obama White House has pursued a vendetta against whistleblower Edward Snowden for making public the global extent of the spying. While Engelhardt tells this story with the usual suggestion that Snowden let us in on a big secret, I always assumed the U.S. government was doing what people now know it is. Engelhardt points out that these revelations have moved European and Latin American governments against the U.S. and put the fear of major financial losses into Silicon Valley companies known to be involved in the spying.

Engelhardt writes that with the NSA and gang having eliminated our privacy, we can now eliminate theirs by publicizing leaked information. At the same time, Engelhardt writes that dozens of Snowdens would be needed for us to begin to find out what the U.S. war machine is doing. Perhaps the point is that the dozens of Snowdens are inevitable. I hope so, although Engelhardt explicitly says that the shadow government is an “irreversible way of life.” I certainly hope not, or what’s the point of opposing it?

Engelhardt notes that the U.S. government has turned against massive ground wars, but not against wars, so that we will be entering an era of “tiny wars.” But the tiny wars may kill in significant numbers compared with wars of centuries gone by, and may spark wars by others that rage on indefinitely. Or, I would add, we might choose to stop every war as we stopped the Syrian missile crisis of 2013.

Engelhardt pinpoints a moment when a turning point almost came. On July 15, 1979, President Jimmy Carter proposed a massive investment in renewable energy. The media denounced his speech as “the malaise speech.” “In the end, the president’s energy proposals were essentially laughed out of the room and ignored for decades.” Six months later, on January 23, 1980, Carter announced that “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.” The media took this speech quite seriously and respectfully, labeling it the Carter Doctrine. We’ve been having increasing trouble with people whose sand lies over our oil ever since.

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