**PART THREE**

**3.6 Making noise**

The distress caused by U.S. military activities, especially the noise and danger from aircraft which carry out dare devil “low flight” and “night landing” missions is significant around bases in Japan. Wilkinson (2001) reports that:

The earliest recorded incident came in August 1987, when a plane on a low- flight mission broke a cable in Nara Prefecture that, fortunately, was used for hauling logs. In August 1995, a woman was thrown from a horse when a low- flying plane passed overhead, and broke a vertebra. In the years since, there have been a series of crashes, but none of them resulted in any injuries to local residents (though there were fatalities among the pilots)...these flights regularly take place in at least 26 out of Japan’s 47 prefectures, showing that the effects are widespread..between 1995 and 1999, there were 42 cases of windows being broken by low-flying jets...however, the central government has shown great reluctance to do anything to deal with the concerns of local residents.

Growing dissatisfaction amongst the public could be witnessed when “the mayors of five cities in Japan that play host to US military airports...issued a document calling for the US to end” the dangerous and noisy practice of night- landings in their cities. Wilkinson believes that, “Opposition to the arrogance of US forces may be on the increase. In both Korea and Japan, there is great opposition to the Status of Forces Agreements.”

However, due to the enormous influence that the reactionary education system and mainstream media have over people’s thinking ability, some observers are pessimistic about the hopes for grassroots democracy and the removal of U.S. bases in the near future.

[The] propaganda seems to be working well. One would be hard-pressed to find any large demonstrations against U.S. bases in Japan by Japanese students or Japanese workers. One can find an active anti-U.S. base movement only in the southern island of Okinawa...Extremely weak trade unions and university student bodies in our country make it very easy for the ruling class to control people. The Japanese, I would say, have politically changed very little since 1868, when the shogun-ruled Edo period ended and the Western- leaning Meiji period began (Asano, 2003).

In contrast to Asano’s pessimism, there are many young people involved in cultural change movements to make Japan a more liberal society. This is an improvement over the subservient behavior of Japanese in 19th century. But his point is well taken. In the build up to the war in Iraq in 2003, the largest anti-war demonstration was estimated to include 40,000 people. In general, the Tokyo peace movement consists of only about 5,000 hard core members in a country of over 127 million people. Though a majority of Japanese say they are anti-war, they have done little to substantively challenge *their* government’s trajectory toward remilitarization.

**4. Environmental impacts in the U.S. and abroad**

As Sergeant Rock (from the comic books) used to say, “war is hell.” At any rate, it creates hell on Earth.

Setting aside the tragic human cost, the environmental effects of the 1991 U.S. led Gulf war were a catastrophe. Landsberg (2003) reminds us of the effects when “the sky over the Persian Gulf went dark for months after Iraqi soldiers set fire to 600 of Kuwait's oil wells and dumped four million barrels of oil into the gulf... The sooty clouds contained half a billion tons of greenhouse gases...Several million birds [including] curlews, plovers, terns, grebes, egrets, [and] spoonbills” who inhabit the regions during parts of the year were severely affected. Most people don’t know that, “The Gulf is one of the world's most important habitats for marine turtles, hosting four endangered species, [and for] otters, dolphins and dugongs which were harmed by the oil spills.”

In the so-called Drug war in Colombia, the U.S. has unleashed highly toxic herbicides meant to kill coca crops, but which have also polluted rivers and contaminated peasant food crops (Gedicks, 2002). U.S. military involvement in the region is having devastating effects on the socio-ecological system and threatens one of the most biologically rich and diverse habitats in the world.

The contamination from U.S. led wars has harmed people, habitats and wildlife in Afghanistan; in Europe and in the Balkans: Serbia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Italy, Austria and Hungary. 12 tons of depleted uranium munitions were used in the 1999 war in Yugoslavia which “caused irreparable damage to the Yugoslavian environment, with agriculture, livestock air and water, and public health all profoundly damaged” (Worthington, 2003). Parenti (2000) cites the testimony of a NATO coalition captain from Spain who criticized NATO’s indiscriminate bombing policy in Yugoslavia:

They are destroying the country, bombing it with novel weapons, toxic nerve gases, surface mines dropped with parachute, bombs containing uranium, black napalm, sterilization chemicals, sprayings to poison the crops, and weapons of which even we still do not know anything. THE NORTH AMERICANS ARE COMMITTING THERE ONE OF THE BIGGEST BARBARITIES THAT CAN BE COMMITTED AGAINST HUMANITY [emphasis added].”

Parenti’s conclusion, which offers a good summary of the social and environmental effects of modern warfare:

[there is] no justification for bombing fifteen cities in round-the-clock raids for over two months, spewing hundreds of thousands of tons of highly toxic and carcinogenic chemicals into the water, air, and soil, poisoning agricultural fields and rivers, maiming and killing thousands, exposing millions to depleted uranium, and obliterating the productive capital of an entire nation.

**4.1 Toxic pollution**

Relying on government reports, Savage (2000) found that the U.S. military “produces nearly a ton of toxic pollution a minute...500,000 tons of toxics annually -- more than the five leading chemical companies combined” (p. 5). With the recent arms build up in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., this amount of pollution must be rapidly increasing as well. The U.S. military budget is expected to nearly double from mid 1990 levels of spending to reach $451 billion per year by 2007 (Chossudovsky, 2002). On November 24th, 2003, President Bush signed a military spending bill of $401 billion (“Bush signs,” 2003).

The toxic legacy left over from the Cold War in 1990 included “more than 17,484 military sites in violation of federal environmental laws” in the U.S (Savage). The military is a huge consumer of energy, for example, “a conventionally powered aircraft carrier consumes 150,000 gallons of fuel per day. In less than an hour’s flight, a jet launched from it’s flight deck consumes as much fuel as a U.S. motorist uses in two years.” There is also the widespread problem of the military’s underground chemical and fuel tanks leaking and contaminating aquifers. In one case drinking water that was tested had toxins at 10,000 times the level that was considered safe by government.

Needless to say, the monstrous expenditures that go for military uses could instead go toward environmental protections and restoration. A pittance of a few million dollars a year could go a long way toward protecting Africa’s magnificent elephant populations (when the wide ranging elephants are protected, numerous other species gain protection as well). Talk of “sustainable use” of endangered wildlife species by hunters and wildlife traders is disingenuous given the vast resources that are wasted on war preparation and battle. One can only imagine the solutions that could occur if funds were appropriately used toward a sustainable energy policy; reducing global warming, deforestation and desertification; assisting environmental refugees; and restoring the world’s dying oceans, to name but a few of our planet’s urgent needs.

U.S. military pollution occurs in the context of the capitalist industrial system, which, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), dumped “7.1 billion pounds of hazardous compounds into the air and water in the United States in the year 2000” (Malkan, 2003). This amount is just the tip of the toxic ice berg since this datum was volunteered by “only a subset of industries.” Whitaker (2003), also relying on EPA data offers a different statistic (perhaps referring to global pollution levels) and states that “almost 6 trillion pounds of chemicals are released into the environment each year. Some of these inevitably make their way into our bodies via the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink.” The carcinogenic and immunity-impairing effects of pollution on human and non human organisms has been well documented. Whitaker, a medical doctor notes that the human “liver undergoes subtle trauma every day” as the body’s “primary organ for detoxification,” this organ processes every poison that people “eat, drink and inhale.” In addition to human suffering, pollution is a major contributor to medical costs in the U.S.

The health of communities around the world is being damaged by the environmental practices of the U.S. military. Day after day, the Department of Defense (DoD) and defense-related agencies are undermining the basis for life on the planet by their toxic dumping; production, testing, and battlefield use of munitions; air and water pollution; hazardous waste generation, transport, and disposal; military assault training operations; bombing and live fire training; and nuclear propulsion and warhead production, to name only a few of their deadly habits...The country's largest polluter-- the U.S. military-- and the rest of the federal government are completely or partially exempt from basic environmental, public safety, and worker protection laws and regulations. These exemptions, plus lax or nonexistent enforcement of laws that do apply, have helped produce a slew of environmental catastrophes at military bases, defense- related facilities, and battlefields across the U.S. and around the world (Taylor & Hunter, 2001).

The foremost NGO in the U.S. that addresses the issue of military pollution is the *Military Toxics Project Environmental Health Coalition (MTP)* (2001):

Every day the health and safety of our communities are under assault. It is constant. It is unrelenting. It is not the work of a foreign government or secret terrorist society. It is the result of hazardous and polluting operations of our own U.S. Military...Military exemptions from laws and lax enforcement by regulatory agencies have produced over 27,000 toxic hot spots on 8,500 military properties.

Since the 1970s, of the 70 laws passed to protect “environmental, worker protection, and public safety,” the nation’s largest polluting governmental agencies, the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy, have remained largely exempt from accountability by means of “direct exemption, sovereign immunity, the Unitary Executive doctrine, and the use of Executive Orders.” MTP calls for immediate compliance by all U.S. government departments to the Clean Water Act; the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act; the Clean Air Act; the Oil Pollution Act, the Noise Act; the Atomic Energy Act; the Occupational Safety and Health Act; the Emergency Planning and Community Response Act; the Coastal Zone Management Act; and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Note that MTP’s demands were made prior to the post 9/11 U.S. military build up and the vigorous rollback of environmental protection laws pushed for by the Bush eco-outlaws. Kelly (2003) finds that the post 9/11 military spending boom “represents a bonanza for defense contractors like Northrop Grumman” but a possible “increase in toxic emissions...particularly in communities surrounding the thousands of plants involved in defense manufacturing nationwide.”

In one example, a Boston University epidemiologist “studied the incidence of cancer in Concord” from 1980 to 1989 and “found that the cancer incidence” there was “double that in other areas” in Massachusetts. One the other side of the country in Los Angeles there is “the largest defense manufacturing complex in the nation.” It is likely that increased military production in the post 9/11 era will occur “without much regulatory scrutiny or public notice.”

Aerospace companies also use exotic metals, such as beryllium, because it is light, strong and flexible, qualities needed in a wide range of aircraft components, such as bushings, thermo-couplers, gyroscopes, and x-ray windows...Workers exposed to beryllium have developed immunological lung disorders, as have family members exposed to the metal when carried home on work clothing. Hexavalent chromium is a carcinogen and many solvents used in the defense industries cause nerve system disorders...and cancer.

It is also reported that “asthmatics who number about 5 to 7 percent of the general U.S. population...are more numerous among some segments of the population, such as children and African Americans.” As Bullard (1990) discovered in his classic study on environmental racism in the Southern U.S., that,

Black communities still suffer from institutionalized discrimination. Discriminatory practices occur at various levels of government and affect the location of polling places, municipal landfills, and toxic-waste dumps...Black communities and their inhabitants must defend themselves against hostile external forces that shape land-use decisions and environmental policies.

In addition to the environmental degradation that is endured by communities of color, minorities, and other economically deprived groups in the U.S., Hoffman (2003) has forcefully documented the potential (some say inevitable) nuclear catastrophe that awaits all of America if the issue of an aging and malfunctioning nuclear industry is not unflinchingly addressed. For example, a terrorist attack on a vulnerable nuclear power plant could cause a radioactive accident of unimaginable proportions. The U.S. military itself is heavily involved in nuclear power production. Hoffman’s fact sheet reports that:

1) Nuclear waste grows by about 100 tons every day around the world.

2) Each 1000 Megawatt nuclear reactor produces about 250 lb per day of High Level Radioactive Waste (HLRW).

3) There are about 430 nuclear reactors around the world, some of which are smaller than others, but some of which are undoubtedly also less efficient. In addition to HLRW, every day these reactors produce about 400 tons of the so-called Low Level Radioactive Waste (LLRW), which is really just HLRW, diluted.

4) There is no such thing as low level radioactive waste. It's all dangerous.

5) If one reactor produces 1/8 of a ton per day of HLRW, then 400+ reactors produce at least 50 tons a day.

6) Most of the rest of the waste comes from military reactors. There are hundreds of them, and they may or may not be more efficient than commercial reactors. Also, there is a lot of "scrap" created during the life of a reactor, such as the reactor pressure vessel, which is highly irradiated and certainly not considered low level radioactive waste.

7) There is no known scientific method for the safe storage and disposal of nuclear waste. For the past half century, scientists have been assuring us a solution to the nuclear waste problem would be coming soon. But the fact is, it's an unsolvable problem because nuclear waste destroys any container you put it in on an atomic level.

**4.2 Undermining environmental protection laws**

There is now voluminous evidence that the Bush administration is not only “ignoring America’s increasingly polluted environment” but has successfully rolled back many of the environmental protections that began in the late 19th century (“Bush budget,” 2001). From the establishment of national parks during that era, all the way up to the 1970’s with the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a flood of laws that were passed to protect public health and endangered species, Bush’s reckless policy comes at a critical time.

Evidence indicating the Earth is right now undergoing climate change, the ecological importance of large wilderness habitats such as ANWR [Alaska], and other environmental scientific findings - many by government scientists - [is] being systematically ignored and/or edited from official government documents (“Bush-Cheney,” 2001).

The Super fund toxic waste cleanup program that had been given priority by the federal government after the Cold War has now become bankrupt. This will force “regular taxpayers to shoulder the financial burden for toxic waste cleanups” (“Super fund Trust,” 2003). “The bankruptcy of the Super fund trust fund marks a dramatic shift in toxic waste cleanup policy. The Bush Administration is letting polluting industries off the hook again...” Well established laws such as the Clean Air Act are also under attack from presidential campaign contributors in the energy industry. Bush recently “dropped enforcement actions against dozens of coal-fired power plants that were under investigation for violating the Clean Air Act and allegedly spewing thousands of tons of illegal pollution into the air” (Shogren, 2003). Yet another astonishing outrage is the U.S. threat to renege on one of the most successful and important international environmental treaties on record, the Montreal Protocol, which was ratified to revive the Earth’s vital ozone layer (Lean, 2003). In a report from a top U.S. environmental organization, the *Earth Island Institute* highlighted the litany of threats made by the Bush administration to the world’s endangered wildlife (“Congress is poised,” 2003). Among laws that are in the cross hairs are the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The U.S. Navy has long been seeking an exemption to their use of powerful sonar devices (LFAS) which have been known to severely disrupt the behavior and health of marine mammals. The usual rationale of national security and the war on terror are given as blanket reasons for gutting what have been highly successful measures for protecting whales, seals, dolphins, and a myriad of other endangered species.

Another symbol of the long history of Western ecological imperialism, is the archaic practice of safari hunting (“Bush Endangered,” 2003). Bowing to pressure from lobbyists in the safari hunting, zoo and exotic wildlife trade industries, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has sought to eliminate trade bans for more than 500 endangered species. Advocates of wildlife consumption claim to support the practice of “sustainable use” whereby proceeds from the harvesting of animals nominally help pay for conservation. However, a large coalition of wildlife protection groups state that this measure would be “fundamentally incompatible” with the Endangered Species Act and “could lead to the extinction of any of more than 500 species around the world. Turning species into commodities will only increase the slaughter and encourage illegal trade and poaching."

To bolster the de-regulatory onslaught, the Bush administration is using archaic legal precedents to attack groups such as *Greenpeace*. The pretext of fighting terrorism is used to justify such draconian moves, but in reality this a means to further the agenda of logging companies (Horrock, 2003). In a case where illegally harvested mahogany logs were entering the U.S., Greenpeace protesters boarded the vessel to witness the crime. However, the tables were turned when the Ashcroft justice department charged Greenpeace with the serious offense of committing “conspiracy.” Under the obscure ruling which blatantly infringes on the spirit and intent of the U.S. Constitution, Greenpeace may lose it’s tax exempt status and be forced to report it’s activities directly to the government.

For useful analyses of all the Bush administration environmental attacks and rollbacks, see the *Forests.org* website and their comprehensive database: http://forests.org/america/

**4.3 Depleted uranium**

“Nuke the evil scum, it worked in 1945!” -- pro-war activist (Worthington, 2003)

“The United States is the largest generator of DU in the world, with a stockpile of 700,000 tonnes and growing” (Stapp, 2003). The U.S.’s use of so-called “depleted” uranium weaponry has been well documented since it was first used in the Gulf war in 1991. The issue re-emerged into the mainstream with the U.S. led bombing of Yugoslavia when many coalition force troops were exposed to DU particles and became sick, and some died. To date, the U.S. has used DU on a large scale in wars in Iraq in 1991 and 2003; Yugoslavia in 1999; Afghanistan in 2001 - 2002; and in training exercises in various parts of the world such as in Vieques, Puerto Rico and in Okinawa, Japan.

Mackay (2003) notes that the use of DU in the war against 17 million Iraqis in 2003 was a deliberate violation of “a United Nations resolution which classifies the munitions as illegal weapons of mass destruction [since] DU contaminates land, causes ill-health and cancers among the soldiers using the weapons, the armies they target and civilians, leading to birth defects in children.” The U.N. claims that “Cancer appears to have increased between seven and 10 times and deformities between four and six times” due to their use in first Gulf war. Estimates of the amount of DU that was used in the first Gulf war range from 320 to 1000 metric tons. The U.K. Atomic Energy Authority reported that, “some 500,000 people would die before the end of this century, due to radioactive debris left in the desert” of Iraq.

Nothing compares to the astronomical cancer rates and birth defects suffered by the Iraqi people who have endured vicious nuclear chastisement for years. U.S. air attacks against Iraq since 1993 have undoubtedly employed nuclear [DU] munitions. Pictures of grotesquely deformed Iraqi infants born since 1991 are overwhelming. Like those born to Gulf War I vets, many babies born to troops now in Iraq will also be afflicted with hideous deformities, neurological damage and/or blood and respiratory disorders (Worthington, 2003).

Professor Doug Rokke, ex-director of the Pentagon's depleted uranium project and one of the most knowledgeable and outspoken critics of DU, accuses the U.S. of committing a “war crime” every time it is employed in battle. His case rests on a foundation of international law (Mackay). According to the U.N., laws that were breached by using DU include: “the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the Charter of the United Nations; the Genocide Convention; the Convention Against Torture; the four Geneva Conventions of 1949; the Conventional Weapons Convention of 1980; and the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907.” Rokke has noted of DU contamination, “These consequences last for eternity. The half life of uranium 238 is 4.5 billion years” (“The war,” 2003).

In the Iraq war of 2003, it is estimated that 200 tons of DU were released during combat (Stapp, 2003). In contrast to Gulf war 1991 where most munitions were exploded in desert regions, this time numerous missiles containing DU were fired into the populated capital city of Bagdad.

The “Christian Science Monitor” took a Geiger counter to parts of Baghdad that had been subjected to heavy shelling by U.S. troops. He found radiation levels 1,000 to 1,900 times higher than normal in residential areas where children were playing nearby.

In addition to the harm inflicted upon civilians, Dr. Rokke has investigated and exposed the connection to *Gulf War Syndrome* among thousands of U.S. military veterans and in wars since then.

Dr. Rokke confirms that the Pentagon lies about DU dangers and is criminally negligent for neglecting medical attention needed by DU-contaminated vets. He predicts that the numbers of American troops to be sickened by DU from Gulf War II will be staggering. As they gradually sicken and suffer a slow burn to their graves, the Pentagon will, as it did after Gulf War I, deny that their misery and death is a result of their tour in Iraq (Worthington, 2003).

Of course, these tragic events should come of no surprise since the murderous thugs of the Bush administration and those Republican and Democratic party members who either openly cheer or spinelessly support war consider America’s sons and daughters in the National Guard (a unit meant for domestic crises, not foreign adventures) and other branches of the military to be nothing more than cannon fodder.

**4.4 Undermining global security**

Sterngold (2003, April) notes that after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack’s in the U.S., the Bush administration began a severely “unilateral approach to international disputes” which has helped to undue the post WWII “global arms control and disarmament movement.” According to a U.N. official who worked to extend a non-proliferation treaty, “There is a general feeling that the disarmament machinery is just not working.” In regard to such treaties, it should be noted that the signing of a treaty shows that in principle a country agrees with its content whereas the more important ratification process means that the legislative body of a government has passed it into law. The following points illustrate Bush administration’s moves to undermine global security.

1) Abrogation of the 1972 Anti- Ballistic Missile Treaty.

2) Non ratification of the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty which had been signed by President Clinton.

3) The United States has rejected an inspection and verification program for the biological weapons treaty, saying it is not stringent enough.

4) Resistance to the creation of a treaty that would “prohibit weapons in outer space and to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons” in space.

5) Resistance to the space treaty which would impede the U.S.’s desire to use “lasers on satellites as part of a missile defense.”

6) Opposition to “efforts to ban the use of land mines.”

 7) Signing of a nuclear missile reduction treaty which only temporarily decommissions such weapons while failing to permanently remove them from operations.

Building upon this reactionary agenda, the Republican led congress has paved the way for an agreement which “will reverse a decade of self-imposed restraint on the development of so- called battlefield nuclear weapons...make nuclear exchanges more likely” and spur regional nuclear arms races (Sterngold 2003, November).

Finally, the U.S. recently “has regained the capability to make nuclear weapons for the first time in 14 years and has restarted production of plutonium parts for bombs” (Vartabedian, 2003). This is a striking move toward re-proliferation of nuclear weapons after a decade long lull in weapons production. Even after “the toll of environmental damage from bomb production became known...the government is now spending about $6 billion annually on the nuclear weapons complex, 50% more than it did during” the Cold War period.