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War Is Peace and Other Things the Government Wants You to Believe by Sheldon Richman

The following is a transcript of a speech given at The Future of Freedom Foundation's June 2008 conference, "Restoring the Republic 2008: Foreign Policy & Civil Liberties" held in Reston, Virginia.

Jacob Hornberger: Our speaker this morning, Sheldon Richman, is editor of *The Freeman* magazine, one of the Libertarian movement's most prestigious journals, if not the most prestigious journal. It's published by the Foundation for Economic Education, which is one of the Libertarian movement's oldest organizations. Formerly a senior editor at the Cato Institute, Sheldon has long served as senior fellow at the Future of Freedom Foundation. He contributes a weekly op-ed and a monthly article for our journal, *Freedom Daily*. He's the author of three books, all of which have been published by FFF: *Separating School and State: How to Liberate America's Families*; *Your Money or Your Life: Why We Should Abolish the Income Tax*; and *Tethered Citizens: Time to Repeal the Welfare State*. His articles on a wide range of Libertarian issues have been published by such publications as the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, *USA Today*, *Washington Times*, *Cato Policy Report*, and many others. One of the highlights of my time in the Libertarian movement has been working with this guy as a colleague and a friend. He's been writing for us for some 15 years, and it's a big honor to have his friendship and his association with FFF. The title of Sheldon's talk is "War is Peace, and Other Things the Government Wants You to Believe." Sheldon Richman.

Sheldon Richman: Good morning. Good morning. Thank you very much. The state has to propagate a lot of myths, because if it told the straight truth to us we wouldn't put up with it anymore. So that goes without saying. And, there've been movies-- there's been a lot of fiction, and movies and novels, that try to make this point. I don't know if most people get it. But think about *The Matrix*, for example. There's a great allegory about how states operate. They made it very literal, where they actually created reality by basically hooking people up to these elaborate technological devices and making people, in effect, imagine the reality they want you to imagine. And of course, some people are able to break through. And it's a great story for that reason.

There was a great Libertarian point there, a great symbolic point. And there are other examples. Think of *1984*, how the proles, the great mass of people who just go to work every day, and the whole aim of the government's propaganda effort to them is just to make sure they never pay any attention to what the government's doing. Just let 'em know that we got everything under control. Yeah, there are threats first from, you know, Eastasia, and then there's threats from Eurasia, and it can switch in a moment, mid-speech it can switch, right? The enemy changes. And no one ever acknowledges and says, "Hey, didn't they just change the enemy right there in the middle of the speech?" Because people have been so anesthetized that they don't ever look too closely. And Orwell's great insight was the use of language and the shrinking of the dictionary, so that you couldn't even think about some things because the words had disappeared from the lexicon. And so things were beyond-- outside of our range. So myths and fairy tales, fables are extremely important to the state.

I think back-- I told this story last year, I think, but some people maybe weren't here and didn't hear it. But, and I got this from a Paul Fussell speech, and he's certainly worth reading. We read *Wartime* and his book on World War I, the title of which I forget, but, wonderful deromanticizing of war. And he was in World War II. But he tells a story-- this was in the speech, I don't think it was in the book-- about the first Gulf War, where there was some video that the Pentagon had of helicopter gunships firing down on Iraqis during the first Gulf War, and shearing them in half, I mean, literally. You could see this if you were watching this video. And somehow the existence of the video came to the attention of somebody in the media, and they asked the Pentagon spokesman, I think, "Why don't you release this video to the public?" And I guess the media, this person in the media, knew what was depicted. I don't know if the person had ever seen the video, but knew what it showed. And the Pentagon person said, "Gosh, if we were to release that video to the public, there'd never be another war."

Now, the funny thing is, Fussell found this in a book called something like *The 776 Stupidest Things Ever Said*. There is such a book apparently, according to Paul Fussell. But Fussell's point was, that wasn't a stupid thing. In other words, it didn't belong in the book. It was a rather insightful thing. If people actually saw what goes on, they would be outraged. At least we hope they'd be outraged. I don't know, maybe people are so dumbed down and anesthetized they wouldn't even be outraged by that. But you know, they don't even let us see coffins with flags, so are they going to show video with people being sheared in half by automatic weapons fired from helicopters?

Now, remember the movie *Born on the Fourth of July*? It was the biopic about Ron Kovic. I remember going to that movie, and that was a true story but fictionalized. It was Oliver Stone, and of course Stone likes to mix a lot of nonfact in with the facts, so you've got to do some research later to find out what exactly happened and what didn't happen. But I remember the opening scene of that movie very well. I was living in Northern Virginia at the time, and I saw this in a theater. And you have to assume that if you're living in Northern Virginia and you're in a movie theater, there's probably

some military people in the audience because of where we live-- not far from the Pentagon, for example.

And the opening scene of that movie is a very terrifying scene. I don't know if anybody remembers it, but it's a Vietnam village, and you see the little huts, you see people scurrying around. And you hear gunfire, automatic gunfire, and there's a menacing U.S. helicopter-- I don't know what they were back then, Apaches or something-- shooting people down as they're scurrying, people trying to get away. And it's this just menacing helicopter. The helicopter's big, it's not far off the ground. It is just the scariest thing. And I'm sure that was not fiction. We know that that kind of thing's not fiction.

But all of a sudden the helicopter just explodes. Somebody on the ground had a device, a shoulder rocket launcher or something, and it just blows up. And I have to confess that I was on the verge of bursting into applause when I saw that. I did restrain myself, but that was an automatic, almost an automatic response, because you drop the context, you're not thinking who's who, you're not saying, oh, those are the Americans, those are the Vietnamese, whatever. You're just looking at this menacing machine, you don't even see a human being in the machine, right, the helicopter, firing death upon what looked like villagers running to get out of the way. And I'm sure there were kids in the scene too, there were women. And then you see the threat disappear, go up in a ball of fire, and that's the end of the threat.

And it seems to me the human impulse would be to say, whew, if not to burst into applause. And that's why, I think, they don't want us to see such things. They learned that we saw too much of this during the Vietnam War on TV every night. And that was pre-cable. Now we'd be seeing it, if it was released, we'd be seeing it 24 hours a day. Anytime you wanted you could turn it on and watch the blood and gore of what's going on.

This is where, of course, the military analysts come in that are on the networks and the cable shows. There's a story that made a splash on the front page of the *New York Times* and then basically disappeared. If it wasn't for Glenn Greenwald, we wouldn't really know any of the details of this. In case you don't know the story, if you watch any of these networks and if you have been since we went into-- we-- George Bush, George the Second I call him-- went into Iraq and Afghanistan, the networks and the cable stations have had a parade of these retired generals and colonels, many of them decorated, coming on to give an apparently dispassionate analysis of what's going on. And they'd always have their maps. You've seen them, right? There's a corps of them that you see repeatedly, and then there's maybe a larger group, coming less frequently.

And the *New York Times*, although it did this a few years ago and nobody noticed, had a big article just a couple months ago pointing out that these were not dispassionate, unattached, retired military people, magnanimously coming out of retirement to enlighten the American TV viewer about what's going on with the military aspects of these operations. These were men who were regularly briefed by the Pentagon, not just by the Pentagon, by high-ups including Dick Cheney, or Dick

“Cheeney,” as Chris Matthews calls him, on a regular basis, and they knew that if they were to dissent from the administration's line in giving their dispassionate analysis, they would lose their access to the briefings. That's a very serious punishment for these guys.

Now, I haven't even given the whole story yet. Because that would be bad enough. And losing access is enough of a disincentive for them to fairly toe the line. Maybe there's a little exception here and there and somebody took issue around the edges, but these guys were not letting us know when we were being handed a line by the administration that didn't reflect the facts of what was actually going on there. But what made this even worse was that many of these guys, and maybe almost-- you know, possibly almost all of them, I forget exactly how the *Times* put this-- these guys were either on the boards of defense contractors or were lobbyists who wanted to represent, or did represent defense contractors.

So they had a double incentive to toe the line. Not only did they not want to lose their access, just for the prestige of having the access and money from the networks to be invited back to be dispassionate analysts, they sold this access to their clients and potential clients as a reason to choose them as lobbyists. You go to a defense contractor and say, "I'll lobby for you. Not only do I know a lot of Congressmen because I've been around Washington and I can get into their offices and make your case to them for why your weapon ought to be bought, or whatever, you ought to get the contract, but also I'm getting regular briefings every month or whatever from Rumsfeld and Cheney and all these other people." And if you're in the lobbying business, in the defense lobbying business, that's a pretty good card to play if you want to get business rather than someone else who doesn't have that access. Imagine.

So, they're not going to want to lose such access. Well, think about how corrupt this system is, with the networks being full participants in it. Parading every night on television to the American people these-- and you know how people feel generally about retired military officers. There's a certain respect, maybe even awe, well they're not in uniform of course, they're retired, but it always says, Major General whatever, retired. And they'll be introduced as someone who's been highly decorated, fought in Vietnam, got one of the medals, Purple Heart or whatever. They always recite the credentials, so most people are saying, "Okay, this guy's probably giving me the straight scoop." The networks never let on that these guys had a vested interest and were just really mouthpieces for the administration. It was a page one story, I think on a Sunday in the *New York Times*, and then it was almost never mentioned anywhere.

As Glenn Greenwald has documented, none of the networks have ever even defended themselves or explained it, or tried to say there's nothing wrong with it. They just let it go away. As I learned from Glenn's blog-- which I highly recommend to people, at salon.com. It's a vital source of information, very well researched-- facts. It's all facts. It's not just him saying his opinions, I think this, I think that. I mean it's so empirically oriented that it's tremendously valuable. According to Glenn, the last I checked, that he's written about this Howard Kurtz, who's the media reporter for the *Washington*

Post and also a media-- he's on CNN, he does a program, *Reliable Sources*. He's about the only person who's mentioned this story on any of the networks, and the fact that the networks have not been talking about it. It was not covered as a story, for obvious reasons. Brian Williams of NBC, anchorman, has never said anything about it on the air, but he does have a blog. And apparently some of his readers goaded him into finally saying something on the blog, not on television, but on the blog. And Glenn reproduced it, reprinted the comment and all that, and it was the lamest excuse you could ever imagine-- like, you know, nobody did any spin on my watch; that was the base of the whole answer. Totally absurd. But this is how we're manipulated.

Now, those of us in this room don't fall for it. We know where to read other things, and we begin with a skepticism, a healthy skepticism. But think of just the mass of the American people who are busy making a living, raising their kids, just worried with the day-to-day stuff, and are not philosophically or ideologically oriented. They are maybe just watching this stuff-- the polls show that people don't think we should have gone into Iraq, or the U.S. government should have gone into Iraq-- and they may think, we need to get out of this in some way. But they're not out in the streets, they're not screaming. And some of it may have to do with this propaganda. That's the only proper word for it. They're being fed on a daily basis that things are going well there.

And you know about the media events-- McCain allegedly walking through a marketplace, totally safe. And we find out it wasn't exactly like that, was it? And you've got to read people like Glenn Greenwald and others to see that. So, it's *The Matrix*, right? I mean, it's like *The Matrix*, just not more metaphorically.

Now one of the great myths we live by, part of the Matrix, is that the state protects us. Protects our freedom, protects us. Government protects us. And Jeff Hummel-- Jeffrey Hummel, who I'm a big fan of, he's a great historian, great economist. I recommend his book on the Civil War, *War between the States*, if I can use a more neutral term-- there are other terms I could use for it, but it would take up too much of my time-- but anyway, *Emancipating Slaves and Enslaving Free Men*; I highly recommend it to you. He makes a point that the truth is actually the opposite. That the state doesn't protect us, we protect the state.

In other words, the people of any country protect the government, anytime the government feels threatened or feels its interests are threatened, and of course, that doesn't have to mean domestic interests-- the U.S. Government being a great example; it has interests all over the world, so this can happen anywhere. But anytime it believes it or its interests are threatened, what does it do? Well, it's on an ongoing basis, it's conscripting our money to protect it and what it sees as its interests. And sometimes it actually conscripts our bodies, our persons. Luckily that's not happening right now, but that has happened before and could happen again, and governments historically have done that.

So, in fact, I think this is a better way to look at things: that the government does not protect us, we protect it and its interests. And of course that changes a lot of things. Put that way, we don't owe it any gratitude, do we? The other thing is, which this group doesn't need to be reminded of, not

only does it not protect us in this kind of a narrow sense I just talked about; it doesn't protect us because it's too busy endangering us. It's too busy meddling around the world, creating dangers to us. Well, how does that fit with the story that the government protects us? You know, this all goes back to Hobbes and the Hobbesian deal we theoretically made many, many moons ago, where we said to Leviathan, "Yes, life in the state of nature is so terrible, so horrible, you just-- we'll give you all the power, all the guns, essentially all the guns. I mean the few handguns we own would be nothing against the state. So effectively we give you all the guns. Just protect us from each other and the state of nature."

And the great political philosopher Anthony de Jasay has now been spending his intellectual life showing that that deal was never literally made, but it was really a fool's deal. Think about what we did. We gave all the power to the Leviathan and effectively got to vote every four years or every two years, which doesn't really change the story very much. We've given all the power to Leviathan for a promise of protection, and we didn't bother to ask back then, who's going to protect us from it and why is that a good deal? Maybe it's better to take our chances in the state of nature. And maybe Hobbes had the state of nature wrong anyway. Locke had a rather better picture of the state of nature. He had inconveniences, not a war of all against all. Maybe that would have been preferable to the deal we cut.

And so this business about it protecting us is something that I think needs some serious rethinking. One of the things that the war boosters, and I have in mind now the radio and TV talk show people on the Right, people like Limbaugh-- the person that Keith Olbermann calls the comedian Rush Limbaugh-- and Hannity, and Laura Ingraham, and all these people. One of the things that they help perpetuate is this idea that America has always been in love with the military. And of course they exude this all the time, that nobody deserves more respect than the military, and people in the military. And even war critics like Keith Olbermann have to always preface their remarks by talking about the great service to the country that the people, say, in Iraq, are performing.

Now I don't understand how you can condemn that war, and Olbermann does this, a little overmelodramatically in my view, but he does, and he's very critical of the Bush administration and the deception and the lies, and at the same time he can hold this idea that the people over there are serving the country. Now I don't even know-- I wrote an article about this recently-- I'm not even sure what people mean by the country. That's too much of a package deal for my comfort. There's too much thrown into that grab bag. And a big part of the grab bag is taken up by the government-- when they say the country, they're thinking the government.

What they don't really want us to know is that there is a huge anti-militarist tradition in the United States that was carried over from England. And one of the great books to read on this subject is out of print, but of course in these days of the Internet you can find it, which is Arthur Ekirch's *The Civilian and the Military*, which came out I believe in 1956. Ekirch was a great historian; he's passed away some years ago, taught at SUNY, Syracuse, then I think at George Washington University.

Great old guy. He wrote another great book, his best-known book actually is called *The Decline of Americal Liberalism*, and he's using liberalism in the title there in the Jeffersonian sense. It's a great overview, survey of American history and the decline of libertarianism essentially. Excellent book, and I recommend it to everybody.

And then in this other book, *The Civilian and the Military*, he focuses on military issues and their relationship between the civilian sector and the military. You know, very often the people refer to the president as the commander in chief for the country, which he's not, of course. If anything he's commander in chief of the armed forces, but that distinction, especially from, like I say, the right-wing talking heads like us, maybe they don't even fully understand. Maybe I'm giving them too much credit, but they overlook that distinction and they help convey this message that he's our commander in chief.

Well, the hell he is. He's not; he's not our commander in chief. The most the Constitution gives him is commander in chief of the armed forces, but even there Congress has a lot of powers over the armed forces, despite what John Yoo and all the proponents of the unitary executive theory would have you believe. They make it sound like nobody has any say in this area, foreign policy or military, but the president. These are inherent vested powers and that basically nobody can touch him, and this is total nonsense. I'm no big fan of the Constitution, as, if you remember from last year, I'm a defender of the Articles of Confederation, with my fellow Articlesian, Karen Kwiatkowski. Last year she spoke before me, so she got her plug in before I could on the Articles. So I'm no huge fan of the Constitution, but it's still pretty clear that Congress has a lot to say about foreign policy and the military. It just hasn't asserted itself because they're cowards, they don't want the responsibility. And there was never any need for the War Powers Act if they had just stepped up and claimed the powers that are in the Constitution.

And so, getting back to my main point, there's an American anti-militarist tradition that people are ignorant about, and those who maybe have some glimmer of it would never want to acknowledge, because it goes against their agenda, where the military is on a very high pedestal. Remember when General Petraeus was going to make, not the last appearance in Congress but the one before? That was much awaited. Remember? There was going to be a big report on the surge, and word had gotten out that actually Petraeus's report-- he was not going to write his own report, it was going to get filtered through the White House, and the White House said, "No, no, no, no, Petraeus is writing it." And then he was going to testify before the House and the Senate, and there was all this anticipation. The cable shows were doing wall-to-wall coverage.

Even long before he came to Washington to do the testimony, everybody was talking, "What's he going to say, how is he going to be questioned?" And the one thing you couldn't really say was, "Well maybe we should be skeptical about what he's going to say." In other words, you could not imply that a general would come before the Congress and spin. You can't say this. Hannity went bonkers at the suggestion that a general, a great man, a great American-- they love this phrase, a

great American-- would come before the Congress of the United States and not just give the unvarnished truth. To suggest that he might put some spin on it was heresy. It was sinful to even think this. It was a forbidden thought.

Then of course it came out that Petraeus had told people, not in the very distant past, that he wanted to run for president one day. That kind of took some of the glamour out of it. He was politically ambitious; he may still be. I think his name's at least been mentioned by somebody as vice president, maybe not high up, but I'm sure McCain would have him. But let's remember what Clausewitz, the great Clausewitz, said in his book on war. Basically he said that war is politics by other means, which means generals are politicians in uniforms. And any general is a politician; especially the highest ranking generals are politicians. My gosh, who's the guy that Clinton made head of NATO, ran for president, I can't think of his name, from Arkansas: Wesley Clark. He ran for president, tried to run for president. He's even been mentioned as Obama's possible running mate. That way you get the Clinton people and a military man.

You might remember that Rush Limbaugh also referred to a soldier who was skeptical of the war--- critical of the war-- as a phony soldier. Remember that, he had to back off. He tried to dance away from that, but he had dismissed some soldier who's been a critic of the war as a phony soldier. So any good soldier, any real soldier would be totally loyal to Bush, totally uncritical of the mission in Iraq and Afghanistan, and would never have a negative thing to say.

Well, earlier generations of Americans weren't so trusting of the military, if I could put it somewhat mildly. They harbored a healthy suspicion of it, in fact. It's unappreciated today that anti-militarism colored the American culture for a very long time. And Ekirch is the place to go to read a very good account of this. And while I'm sure there have been good accounts of this written by people who would be considered on the Left, Ekirch would not be considered on the Left. Ekirch is more of what we'd think of as the "Old Right," the "Taft Right." And so you can't even accuse him of having Commie sympathies. There's no way you could lay this on Ekirch. His credentials in that regard are impeccable. So it gives the book even a little more muscle because no one can possibly dismiss the guy as a sympathizer with socialism or whatever. You know the way people get dismissed. Something could be very factually researched and argued, but if you happen to know that a person's sympathy is with somebody on the Left, the Right can easily just dismiss it. You don't even have to consider the analysis of the facts that are laid out because that person doesn't deserve any attention simply because of his own political sympathies. You can't do that with Ekirch.

So Ekirch writes, "The tradition of antimilitarism has been an important factor in the shaping of some 200 years of American history." And he points out that this tradition stretches back to England; we inherited it from England, where until the 17th century the militia, not the standing army, provided defense and was unsuited to aggressive war. "Attempts in," according to Ekirch, "England to militarize the political system were met with resistance, as Oliver Cromwell and the Stuart Dynasty were to learn. At the close of the 17th century, when the crown saw the permanent standing army to thwart

the designs of France on the continent, there was intense opposition both in Parliament and throughout the realm." Now Ekirch says that this attitude was carried to the New World, where Americans "were as little inclined as their English cousins to accept the military pattern of life or to spend overmuch of their time in training or preparation. In the colonies subordination of military to civil power became the cardinal principle it was in England."

Ekirch pointed out that in a formal sense service in the militia was mandatory-- in the formal sense. But in reality "the exceptions were so numerous and the training days so few that there was little interruption of normal peacetime pursuits. Colonial militia service thus differed from modern military conscription. And instead of fostering a military tradition, it seems to have had the opposite effect." In other words, rambunctious Americans in that time didn't want to be taking orders from military officers. We were an unruly, rambunctious, individualist people. And that didn't mean we didn't like other people. It wasn't the "rugged individualism." Because if you read Tocqueville in his great book on *Democracy in America*, he talked about how Americans formed associations to accomplish things at the drop of a hat. Anything that one individual or maybe his family couldn't accomplish on their own and then had some general benefits to the community, people set up an association, some kind of club or some kind of organization to accomplish this. So it wasn't that Americans in those days were unsocial, or hermits, or just wanted to live on Ruby Ridge somewhere, never seeing other people. No, they work with other people, it was a voluntary exchange.

So this antimilitarism had no-- you can't go from there to some sort of antisocial feeling at all. So it wasn't just an extension of some sort of desire to be hermits. They just didn't want to take orders, not that they didn't want to deal with people. Now while there was some support for the British War against the French and the Indians in the mid-18th century, the dominant sentiment in the colonies ran against British militarism. And another quote from Ekirch, "Colonial feelings became clear in the outcry that was raised against British notions of a standing army of 10,000 to protect the North American empire. The wisdom of keeping a standing army in North America was questioned immediately by influential colonial statesmen," Ekirch says.

And this is reflected in state constitutions that were being adopted around this time. In Pennsylvania the Constitution declared a peacetime standing army was "a danger to liberty"-- that's my home state so I take some pride in that-- "and ought not to be kept up." That's a quote. All state constitutions contain language subordinating military to civilian authority. The Declaration of Independence criticized the standing army and military independence. The Articles of Confederation, the first constitution, "withheld from Congress the power to create a peacetime army." "The Revolutionary War did not change the American attitude in a pro-military direction," Ekirch reports. When conscription was resorted to, it was not well received.

And those who did don the uniform hardly exhibited the martial spirit. Here's a quote from Ekirch: "Once in the Continental Army the American soldier was often too deeply imbued with revolutionary ideas of individual liberty and equalitarian democracy to take kindly to strict military

discipline." Right on. "This leveling spirit interfered with distinctions in rank, and hindered the development of the officer caste. An even more serious threat to the maintenance of an army was the prevalence of desertion and mutiny among the soldiers." This is during the Revolution. "The extreme hardships and deprivations suffered by the army throughout the Revolution helped to explain the large number of such incidents which occurred in the years from 1777 to 1783. At the same time, the American distaste for organized military life must have been an additional motivating factor in the breakdown of morale and discipline. The reluctance of Congress and the states to provide a more efficient military establishment despite the perilous nature of the revolutionary cause was a continual reminder of the strength of the popular opposition to any concentration of power in the hands of military men." Oh, for those days.

"After the Revolution, this tension continued. The conservative aristocracy that emerged during the colonial period..." and by the way, this is something-- if you want to read more about this, read Merrill Jensen's book, *The Articles of Confederation*, about what was going on in the colonies in the pre-revolutionary period. In Jensen's view there was both an external revolution and an internal revolution. External, of course, was the break from England. The internal was the struggle between two large factions within each of the colonies. There was an elite that emerged through favors from the British crown. In the South they tended to be the planters, the big plantations, and in the North they were merchants. And they had a lot of privileges that they did not want to lose with the Revolution. In fact, they opposed the Revolution originally. They figured the way to keep their favors was to stick with the British Empire.

When the break-- when Revolution looked inevitable, they did come over to the revolutionary side. But then they wanted a strong national government so they could recreate the privileges. It was the people who we later called Anti-Federalists who wanted Revolution from the beginning and did not want a strong national state after the Revolution. And this was a tension and struggle as vigorous as anything you can think of. So it was not just outward against the British; it was internal as well. So the conservative aristocracy that emerged during the colonial period wanted a strong central state with a powerful army. The radical liberals, the other side, wanted a decentralized power structure and a militia. These are people that did not like what the Constitutional Convention produced in 1787. A standing army was anathema. Its potential for domestic oppression was too well known, and this was made clear when Congress in 1783 began studying the question of a permanent force.

"The idea of any sort of regular army in peacetime at once met with strong opposition in Congress," Ekirch writes. James Monroe and Richard Henry Lee, who are both Anti-Federalists, warned of the dangers to liberty. And Benjamin Franklin, who was not an Anti-Federalist but apparently good here, worried that a soldier's training made him accepting of war. He worried about that. In 1783 former officers, revolutionary officers, set up what was known as the Society of the Cincinnati. It was set up as an honorary organization, in honor of the services of the officers.

According to Ekirch, almost at once the society was criticized as an attempt to establish the former revolutionary officers as a hereditary aristocracy. There's a public distrust that even these officers getting together and setting this up as a society, because they thought this is the beginning of an elite class, and they feared for their liberty. You know, remember eternal vigilance? They actually took that seriously back then, eternal vigilance.

And when Jefferson said in the Kentucky Resolutions that the proper attitude of a free people toward the government is one of jealousy, not confidence, these guys-- you know, he was reflecting what the people of his time felt: not to trust in confidence, but jealousy. In other words, jealousy, like what's it going to take of mine? Namely, how safe is my liberty with this thing around? That was the proper attitude.

Can you imagine someone going on Fox News and talking this way? Would he even get a sentence out before being interrupted? Of course not. And he wouldn't be invited back. There was a huge protest against-- according to Ekirch, "The volume of protest soon reached impressive proportions protesting the Society of Cincinnati." Look that up in Wikipedia sometime. Well, we know that at the Constitutional Convention-- I've got to watch my time here-- the Constitutional Convention, the Anti-Federalists, the antimilitarists, did manage to get some protections in; not everything, but they at least divided up the powers. Congress is supposed to have the power to declare war. Remember that quaint notion? And it was the only one that could raise the money. Right? The president couldn't do that. The president just-- his power kicked in once we were at war, and then he was the commander in chief of the armed forces. So some good stuff, not all of it, but some good stuff got into the Constitution in this regard.

But some of the Anti-Federalists would not sign on. And George Mason was described as being for clogging rather than facilitating war, but for facilitating peace. And Mason refused to sign or support the Constitution. Madison, who of course was the Father of the Constitution and in my book a hero of American history, at least understood the danger of war and the power to make war. And famously he said, "In time of actual war great discretionary powers are constantly given to the executive magistrate. Constant apprehension of war has the same tendency to render the head too large for the body. A standing military force with an overgrown executive will not long be safe companions to liberty." He goes on and on about this. He understood the danger of the war. He also called it the one offense that contains the germ of all the other offenses: taxation, debt, all this other stuff, growth of government generally.

Anyway I wanted to bring this to your attention because it's important that we know that earlier Americans had this attitude to the military, which has been almost totally forgotten. Even in the Federalist Papers, Madison, Hamilton, and Jay felt they needed to sell the Constitution as containing this antimilitary sentiment because most people shared it. But unfortunately, once they got into power, they sort of forgot about it. and Ekirch writes, "After the Constitution was adopted, its staunchest supporters readily forgot the interpretation of the document that they had offered in the heat of the

struggle for ratification.” Never forget that: the Federalist Papers are these venerated documents, right? Everybody bows down to the Federalist Papers. Great political philosophy, great writing. I studied them in school in a class that was related to rhetoric, not political philosophy. They were used as great examples of persuasive writing. It was ad copy.

Let's never forget these were newspaper articles selling the Constitution. And when the soap company tells you their soap is the greatest, all of us, by the time we get to age 13 or something, know that that may not be the literal truth because of course they would say that. They sell the soap. They make the soap. So keep this in mind when you hear talk about the Federalist Papers, that they were trying to sell something. And as Merrill Jensen pointed out, the men who wrote the Declaration of Independence were not the same men who wrote the Constitution. So when they promised the public that there was-- that the Constitution reflected their antimilitarist feelings, that was-- they were selling it. And as Ekirch points out, and Jensen points out, and others point out, once the Constitution was ratified, and that was behind them, they then behaved in some different way. Luckily the public sentiment and the pressure of the Anti-Federalists were still able to keep things in rein for a while, but then that faded and the nationalists more and more had the free rein.

Okay, let me stop with that part of it. And since I have to wind down, I want to close on this idea that the government protects us and that the government is sort of all wise and would only be acting in the interest of the American people. I want to close with a quotation, which I then will explain a bit after reading it.

"It's easy for them to provoke and bait this administration. All they have to do is send the Mujahideen to the farthest point east to raise a piece of cloth on which is written Al-Qaeda in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses without their achieving for it anything of note other than some benefits for their private companies. So they are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy. That being said, when one scrutinizes the results, one cannot say that Al-Qaeda is the sole factor in achieving those spectacular gains. Rather, the policy of the White House that demands the opening of warfronts to keep their various corporations busy, whether they be working in the field of arms, or oil, or reconstruction, has helped Al-Qaeda to achieve these enormous results. And so it appears to some analysts and diplomats that the White House and they are playing as one team toward the economic goals of the United States, even if the intentions differ."

Okay, this is a very revealing quotation. And if someone were to say this, they'd be denounced, of course, as a hater of America, pointing out that there's almost a tacit alliance, not explicit, between the administration and Al-Qaeda. Obviously not. That's not the point here. They say for different intentions. But it's as if they were in an alliance, and anything Al-Qaeda does becomes justification, or anybody claiming to be Al-Qaeda. Right? I mean, they don't have to be Al-Qaeda. Anything they do is a new pretext for the administration to exercise power because they have this perfect justification, protection from terrorism.

By the way, I'm waiting for the day when some group does something somewhere and claims they're Al-Qaeda, and Bin Laden goes into court and sues over trademark, saying, "They're not Al-Qaeda." Hey, we have standards to keep up. They're a bunch of amateurs and we resent them using our brand name and we're suing. And I'm waiting for this to happen any day now, because anybody who-- can anybody say they're Al-Qaeda?

Now, by the way, I didn't tell you who said this statement. I changed some of the pronouns. Every word said they, it was really we. That was a statement by Bin Laden, 2004. I have a feeling Bin Laden-- and I'm no fan of Bin Laden, obviously-- but he has some insights that haven't yet-- well, maybe they have filtered to the administration, and they can't afford to admit them to us. But he at least sees that we-- not we, Bush and the crowd up there or not far from here-- have let themselves-- because they benefit from this-- have put themselves in the position where Bin Laden can call the shots. Right? Because anything he does, they can then use to say, this is why we need to exercise more power. So that gives him quite an initiative. Boy, somebody allegedly uses a gel or thinks about using a gel to blow up an airplane, and suddenly we can't have gels on airplanes anymore. So who's calling the shots here?

I remember when they accused Ron Paul of taking his marching orders from, what was it, the terrorists or Al-Qaeda? Remember somebody accused him of that? Who really is taking the marching orders from Al-Qaeda? It's the administration, because it serves their purposes to do that. There was a book written years ago-- well, the title was apt, but it wasn't actually about what I'm going to say-- called *Indispensable Enemies*. And I always thought that applied in the Cold War. Right? The Russian ruling elite and the U.S. ruling elite needed each other because they just played off each other. You know, there was a reason for taxes, and regulations and conscription at one point, and all kinds of things going into Vietnam. And they needed each other. We thought of them as adversaries, but they actually needed each other. And I think there's very much something here. Again, I'm not saying that they're in communication with Al-Qaeda and saying, "Hey, why don't you do this so we can have more power?" But, you know, there's this alliance of convenience, and Bin Laden seems to understand it. I think it's extremely interesting that he would understand this.

Well, you know, we often hear-- I'm going to close on this note-- we often hear, and Obama says this. I was going to say a lot about Obama. I have some great quotes from Obama. Alex covered some of it yesterday, but my time doesn't allow me to get into it. But one of the things he likes to say, and the critics of the war like to say-- and it's not a war, you know. Are we at war? Do you feel like you're at war? No. The U.S. government has invaded and occupied a foreign country, two foreign countries-- That's not war. I mean, our society's not threatened. We're not going to be overthrown. The government's not going to be replaced. We're not at war. But some of the critics of the war, the non-radical critics of the war, like to say that Iraq was a distraction from the War on Terror. Right? What do they call it, the GWOT, was a distraction. And Barack Obama says this: we need to get back to the, you know, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, and not be distracted. And I disagree

with all this. I think the whole War on Terror is a distraction from the real war, from the real war that we ought to be waging. And here I'm using war metaphorically, not in the military sense. But by that I mean the war on the ruling elite, and their policy which has gotten us into this fix to begin with. So I will end on that note. Larry?

Larry: Yeah, maybe you can hear me anyway. Yeah, Sheldon, I thought it was interesting that you were bringing up this point about the-- first of all, there was an attribution I was hoping you'd pass on to people. I think Storing is a good source for all these: *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*. And as accompanying that, I don't know if Karen Kwiatkowski mentioned that last year but he's a really good source of this. But...

Sheldon Richman: And I meant to mention this with the Anti-Federalist-- the Federalist Papers. Who reads the Anti-Federalist Papers? Go out and read them. You can find paperbacks, you can find big, beautiful volumes. You can find them online. You don't have to spend a penny. Read the Anti-Federalists.

Larry: Yeah, Storing has a good introduction on what the Anti-Federalists are for, and then he has that, I think, nine-volume set.

Sheldon Richman: That was an introduction to his big thing, and then they broke it out as a paperback, which is only about this thick.

Larry: Which is an easy read, too. There was another point, too. You were mentioning how the Pentagon depends on these outbursts from Al-Qaeda to keep them running. What's interesting is if you look at the-- maybe you can comment on this-- if you examine the comments of Bin Laden, he appears to understand the relationship between the American government against its people with respect to the Founders, just as in a way Ho Chi Minh did in Vietnam, and Ho Chi Minh was a great admirer of the Framers of the Constitution and constantly spoke about it. And I sometimes wonder if these people didn't understand the antagonism between the centralized government and the people more than we do.

Sheldon Richman: Well, it probably has been in their interest to pay attention to that sort of thing because they are-- again I hope no one is interpreting anything I'm saying as sympathy for anybody that goes off and kills innocent civilians. Okay? I shouldn't have to say that. I will say it just because, you know, this will be on YouTube, or C-Span, or whatever. Not C-Span, but I want to make that clear. I shouldn't have to say it, but you do. Unfortunately you've got to say this. But they do pay attention to those things, because they're trying to often drive a wedge between the people and their government. And, you know, when polls are taken in the Muslim world about what they don't like about the U.S., it's not the American people that they say they don't like. It's very consistent. They don't like the U.S. foreign policy.

I recommend that you read an article that's on the cover of Cato's policy report, I guess it would be the May/June issue, by Justin Logan. He's got some very good quotes from a very prominent pollster in the Middle East-- polls, you know, Middle East people all the time. It's very clear:

they don't dislike America. They don't dislike "our freedom." You know, my line about Bush and the business about our freedom is, "They hate us for our freedom and we're going to remove that cause of hatred." So they've been pretty efficient in doing that, right? So anyway, we don't have too much time, so get in as many as we can.

M1: Thank you, Sheldon, great talk. You mentioned the video of the helicopter shredding somebody in half earlier, and you suggested that if the military were to release it then it would be being played on repeat by our media system. And I think that our media system has plenty of horrifying clips of plenty of war crimes. I mean, there are plenty on the Internet. Or not necessarily war crimes, but just gruesome, terrible footage of war. But they choose not to, to a large degree. I think there's one particularly striking example, maybe you've heard about it, could comment on it. Amy Goodman, from *Democracy Now*, that's where I got this from, she was talking about it. But I'll get to the point. On CNN, you know the CNN International, when they're talking about the fall of the Saddam Hussein statue, which I'm sure you'll all remember because they did play that on repeat, at the exact same time on CNN and CNN International-- CNN you just see the statue going down; CNN International the screen's split. On half of the screen you see the statue falling down. On the other half of the screen you see, you know, wounded people, women crying with, you know, blown-up babies and that sort of thing. And I think that's just a really great intentional example to my point, which is well known. What do you think about that?

Sheldon Richman: Well, I guess part of your point is that people outside of the U.S. get a much clearer view of what's happening than the people in the U.S. This goes hand in hand with what I said earlier in my remarks about the military analysts. You know, Noam Chomsky has long pointed out that we don't need to have a directly controlled press in this country, directly controlled media. I mean, they toe any administration line, whoever it happens to be, much more loyally and strictly than it would be if we had a state newspaper like in the old Soviet Union. We don't need that here because the-- I know the conservatives get mad about this because they're talking about the liberal media, but look at what they did in the run-up to Iraq. The *New York Times*, the newspaper they hate the most, the *New York Times* was slavishly, Judith Miller in particular, talking about the Web as a mass destruction and the dangers that-- you know, all the dangers to us.

Alex mentioned yesterday, now thankfully you can go online and read papers from all over the world and get a much straighter scoop because they don't give the deference to the U.S. government the way the U.S. media do. The U.S. media are terrified of losing their access. It's just like with the generals not wanting to lose their access. Look how they treat guests on all these news talk shows. There's never any tough questioning. Watch *Hardball*. There's a joke: "*Hardball*, it's not even softball." I think you can get a concussion from a softball, but nobody's going to get a concussion from the questions that Chris Matthews throws at these guys. It's because they want the person to come back next week, and they won't do it if they don't like the way they were treated. The deference is just unbelievably sickening. It's hard to watch. Sometimes I just totally swear off it and say I'm not

watching it anymore. And my wife says, "Good. Finally. I don't want you to watch it anymore. Let's watch *Top Chef*." But you know what? A week later I'm back. I need help. I need an intervention. And I'm out of time. Thank you very much.