

## **Ike's Farewell Speech**

*So, in this, my last good night to you as your President, I thank you for the many opportunities you have given me for public service in war and peace.*

—President Dwight David Eisenhower,

From his farewell radio and television address, January 17, 1961.

As this nation's leadership continues working the American people to get them behind an Iranian invasion—our third invasion in five years—it might be prudent to recall the parting words expressed by the 34th President of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Despite what we are told about the nobility of our efforts in the Middle East and Eurasia, it's not too clear what good is being done.

Our intrigues into Afghanistan and Iraq have yielded, at best, questionable benefits.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has been ousted, but, interestingly, what's back on track is the land's opium production, an industry the Taliban—the supposed bad guys—trashed in their belief that drugs are morally objectionable.

Well, as the Taliban found out: anybody messing with global drug trafficking must be disposed of because such interference is bad for the business in which so many of the world's nations deal, despite all that official talk about a war on drugs.

Our incursion into Iraq is an absolute mess. The country has been destabilized to a degree far worse than it was under Saddam. Its infrastructure was decimated, but--whaddaya know?—look at all the U.S. companies that fell all over each other to grab those big money contracts to rebuild what the military destroyed.

And at the top of the list of U.S. firms were those old reliables: Bechtel and Halliburton.

Which brings us to the warning Ike issued 45 years ago.

He wouldn't dare say such a thing, of course, had he not had one foot out the door, but give him credit, he did in fact seize the opportunity to warn us about the infamous military-industrial complex and the danger it posed to our freedom should it gain the power it so badly sought . . . and apparently has now secured.

Ike's most applicable statements in light of what is going on today are italicized:

Our military organization today bears little relation to that known by any of my predecessors in peace time, or indeed by the fighting men of World War II or Korea.

Until the latest of our world conflicts, the United States had no armaments industry. American makers of plowshares could, with time and as required, make swords as well. But now we can no longer risk emergency improvisation of national defense; we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment. We annually spend on military security more than the net income of all United States corporations.

*This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implication. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.*

*In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.*

*We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.*

Akin to, and largely responsible for the sweeping changes in our industrial-military posture, has been the technological revolution during recent decades.

In this revolution, research has become central; it also becomes more formalized, complex, and costly. A steadily increasing share is conducted for, by, or at the direction of, the Federal government.

Today, the solitary inventor, tinkering in his shop, has been overshadowed by task forces of scientists in laboratories and testing fields. In the same fashion, the free university, historically the fountainhead of free ideas and scientific discovery, has experienced a revolution in the conduct of research. Partly because of the huge costs involved, a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity. For every old blackboard there are now hundreds of new electronic computers.

*The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present and is gravely to be regarded.*

Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite.

It is the task of statesmanship to mold, to balance, and to integrate these and other forces, new and old, within the principles of our democratic system—ever aiming toward the supreme goals of our free society.

*Another factor in maintaining balance involves the element of time. As we peer into society's future, we—you and I and our government—must avoid the impulse to live only for today, plundering, for our own ease and convenience, the precious resources of tomorrow.*

*We cannot mortgage the material assets of our grandchildren without risking the loss also of their political and spiritual heritage. We want democracy to survive for all generations to come, not to become the insolvent phantom of tomorrow.*

The Eisenhower speech may be read at <http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/farewell.htm>.

It may be viewed online at <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article5407.htm>.