

Some Basics about the DoD and Industrial Wind Energy

Over the last several years, industrial wind energy interference with military operations has become a very contentious issue. On the one hand the wind industry claims that there is no problem, as they say that the [DoD Clearinghouse](#) process does a superior job of protecting military operations and our national security. They have had an intensive marketing campaign (e.g. [this](#)) to promote this perception.

It is our contention that this unsurprising industry position is inaccurate, and the facts listed below are an outline of the reasons why. There is irrefutable evidence that industrial wind energy has caused consequential interference with military operations, which (in effect) has resulted in a deterioration of our national security. The conversation should move beyond the industry's unsupportable tobacco-like position of denial, to a serious discussion about what can and should be done about it.

Separately one could ask: if the DoD Clearinghouse process has done such an exemplary job, then why have so many legislative attempts to address wind energy-military conflicts been necessary? The wind industry's stock answer is that these are simply efforts by wind energy opponents to undermine wind energy. What has happened in Texas is a clear refuting of that straw-man argument.

By the wind energy industry's own [admission](#), Texas is *by far* the number one state regarding wind energy implementation. In fact Texas has about three times the wind energy that the #2 state has. So any claim that Texas is an anti-wind state, or run by wind opponents, is simply without basis.

Yet in mid 2017 Texas was the first state to pass a law ([S277](#)) that effectively prohibits new wind energy development from being within 30± miles of a military facility. If there is any question about the support this measure had within military communities, see this [article](#). Clearly, if the DoD Clearinghouse process was fully protecting military operations, no such legislation would have been necessary.

Other current federal legislative responses to wind energy military interference are: **a)** US Senate [S.201](#) [30 miles setback], **b)** US House [H.R.403](#) [25 miles setback], **c)** US House [H.R.649](#) [50 miles setback]. Additionally in 2017 the North Carolina legislature passed a very reasonable [law](#) (Part XIII): a two year statewide wind energy moratorium to give the state time to thoroughly study the military conflict issue.

When objective citizens closely examine the wind energy industry's main contention – that the DoD Clearinghouse is doing a superior job of protecting the military – it is quite clear that this is inaccurate. Here is an outline of pertinent facts:

Fact 1: US Military people follow orders from their superiors. It is a rarity that active military personnel even question such orders.

Fact 2: In the unusual situation where active military officers question orders, it is an internal matter which is almost never made public. They don't air their dirty linen.

Fact 3: Public statements from the military, on *any* topic, are almost always carefully vetted and sanitized. One objective is not to reveal any military vulnerability.

Fact 4: Regarding wind energy, the military has been told by the wind industry that such projects are an economic benefit to local host communities. The specific objective of this tactic is to purposefully further constrain military people from speaking up about a wind energy problem they are experiencing – as military facilities are very reluctant to be the cause of a financial hardship to their host civilian community.

Fact 5: Typically, public statements from the military come from communication staff (PR people) – even when the matter is highly technical.

Fact 6: In the exceptional circumstances where an active duty military officer speaks out about a technical issue, they are simply expressing their own personal opinion – and not the official position of the military.

Fact 7: Much better experiences have been had by asking *retired* senior military officers to comment on politically sensitive issues, like wind energy. Since they are no longer protecting a career, such retired people are usually much more candid than are their active duty counterparts. Here is an [example](#) of such a group.

Fact 8: The person in charge of the US military – the Commander-in-Chief – is a civilian. In addition, and even more importantly, that civilian is a *politician*.

Fact 9: That means some of the Commander-in-Chief's directions and orders given to the military will inevitably be about promoting that politician's political agenda.

Fact 10: A key question is: what happens when the Commander-in-Chief's political agendas are in conflict with what is in the best interest of protecting the country?

Fact 11: When it comes to industrial wind energy, the answer is that (up until recently) *political correctness* has taken priority over *national security*.

Fact 12: There has never been a scientific assessment that has concluded that industrial wind energy is a net benefit to the military.

Fact 13: There also has never been a scientific assessment that has concluded that industrial wind energy is a **net societal benefit**.

Fact 14: On the contrary there is considerable research from independent experts that industrial wind energy is a technical, economic *and* environmental liability.

Fact 15: There has been several years of conflict between military operations (in the US and elsewhere) and industrial wind energy. There have been multiple types of conflicts, ranging from [tall structures obstructing low-level flight paths](#), to [weather](#) and [navigation](#) radar interferences, to specialized cases (like deteriorating the important [ROTHR facility](#), and having [infrasound compromise sensitive military equipment](#)).

Fact 16: The [DoD Clearinghouse](#) process came about because the wind energy industry complained to federal politicians that there was too much variability and uncertainty regarding the issue of resolving of these wind energy interferences with the military.

Fact 17: The wind energy business made wind energy promotion a political issue by appealing to their federal political supporters. There were no well-connected lobbyists representing the public (and defending the military) when the laws were passed regarding the DoD Clearinghouse (see [32 C.F.R. Part 211](#)). [See my note at end.]

Fact 18: The primary objective of the wind industry was to get wind energy project approvals out of the hands of local base commanders (COs), and under the control of higher level DC people. The lobbyists know well that the higher they go, the more political it gets. They are confident that they have control of high level politicians.

Fact 19: The wind industry succeeded in creating the DoD Clearinghouse. They made sure that the authorizing legislation was primarily designed to benefit the wind energy business – *not* to protect our military or national security. They could now say that wind developers “were in full compliance” with the rules – *that they wrote*.

Fact 20: The also unsurprising end-result was that legislators and wind energy lobbyists spin the new Clearinghouse process as being a military (and public) benefit – even though that was not the primary objective of the effort, and there is no legitimate proof of that assertion.

Fact 21: Also due to the inordinate influence of wind lobbyists, the DoD Clearinghouse process is premised on the unproven, unscientific assumption that wind energy is **net societal benefit**. Note that at no point in the DoD process is there any assessment of the merits of the proposed wind project (e.g. like a cost/benefits analysis).

Fact 22: The two initial key people assigned to startup and run the DoD Clearinghouse process ([Dr. Dorothy Robyn](#) and [David Belote](#)), were wind energy sympathizers. For example, this *USA Today* [article](#) says that he was known during his DoD Clearinghouse days as: “Never saw a wind farm I didn’t like Belote.”

Fact 23: Upon retirement, and what might be considered an award for their support, both of those two key people have been hired by wind energy related organizations (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Fact 24: The Clearinghouse rules for wind project's review are very narrowly defined. This was a primary objective of the wind industry, whose lobbyists wrote the bill: they did not want a variety of military conflicts to be the basis for denying a project.

Fact 25: Essentially the only wind project that can be denied by the Clearinghouse process is one that is a *major national security threat*, that has not been *mitigated*.

Fact 26: Everything about this critical Clearinghouse criteria is subjective, and designed to promote wind energy – at almost any cost.

Fact 27: For example, what exactly is a “major national security threat”? This was so much in question that it was redefined in [2017](#) (Section 311) – but it's still a subjective decision ultimately determined by the politician who is the Commander-in-Chief.

Fact 28: Despite the “major national security threat” words, there have been cases where a proposed wind project *did* pose a “major national security threat,” and the Clearinghouse still approved the wind project. A very good example of this is the NC [Desert Wind](#) (aka Amazon) project.

Fact 29: Likewise, what exactly constitutes “mitigation”? This is a key weasel-word purposefully inserted by wind energy lobbyists. Mitigation absolutely does NOT mean “resolved” or “fixed.” It also becomes a subjective decision ultimately determined by the politician who is the Commander-in-Chief.

Fact 30: Despite the “mitigation” assurances, there have been cases where there the Clearinghouse accepted totally inadequate “mitigation” on the part of the wind developer. An excellent example of this is the NC [Pantego](#) wind project.

Fact 31: Another significant matter is: *who pays for the “mitigation” of the conflicts that a wind energy project causes?* Essentially all of these costs are typically borne by the US taxpayer. Why shouldn't the extremely profitable wind business pay for the military to buy new equipment, change their operations, etc. when it is being caused by them in the first place? That the taxpayer is on the hook is further evidence of the success the wind energy lobbyists had in writing this very wind-favorable legislation.

Fact 32: Everything about the entire Clearinghouse process is subjective, *and* designed to promote wind energy – at almost any cost.

Fact 33: As further evidence of the porosity of the Clearinghouse process, consider that in some [FIFTEEN THOUSAND](#) wind energy-military cases submitted for formal review, only [one](#) wind energy project has been turned down!

Fact 34: Note that there was initially no wording in the Clearinghouse process that specifically allowed a wind project to be rejected on the basis that it put the lives of military personnel at risk. That came about as the wind lobbyists who wrote the federal legislation made sure that this was excluded from the process – as it would introduce too much “uncertainty” into wind energy approvals.

Fact 35: Note that the Clearinghouse process is NOT allowed to turn down a wind project on the basis that it just undermines the mission or operational readiness of a particular military facility. Although the words were tightened (and improved) in the [NDAA for 2018](#) (passed in 2017), there is still ambiguity in this regard.

Fact 36: Note that the Clearinghouse process is NOT allowed to turn down a wind project on the basis that a military facility would be more susceptible to a [BRAC](#) closure or transfer. This occurred as the wind lobbyists who wrote the federal legislation made sure that this was excluded from the process – as it would introduce too much “uncertainty” into wind energy approvals.

Fact 37: It is indisputable that during the [BRAC](#) process that bases that have their mission or operational readiness compromised for *any* reason, are at the top of the list for some or all of their mission to be reassigned elsewhere. Since it is national in scope the Clearinghouse has no consideration, or concern, as to whether a wind energy project might result in a military base being combined with another facility, or moved to another state.

Fact 38: Please read the [Military Report](#) for more details of some sample actual cases where the military (and our national security) were undermined due to industrial wind energy interference, and an explanation of other relevant background material.

Fact 39: Please read this [story](#) about a recent Navy study that concluded that wind energy absolutely can cause military interference.

Fact 40: *Download* and then carefully read this marked-up May 2013 [DoD report](#) to see what DoD says about their own process. It clearly states that the DoD Clearinghouse procedure is NOT a “wind energy permitting process.” Most significantly, the DoD Clearinghouse stamp-of-approval is **NOT a verification that the proposed wind project will not have serious safety, mission and operational readiness impacts on nearby military bases!**

Note: the regulations for the Clearinghouse are periodically reviewed and updated (which is commendable). In 2017 Congress made changes to the Clearinghouse rules (via the [2018 NDAA: Section 311](#)). Although there were marked improvements here (esp as to the definition of what constitutes “an unacceptable risk to national security”) these changes do **not** eliminate the serious deficiencies with the Clearinghouse process.

The following are still major concerns, that are easy to rectify, and at no cost:

- 1) *Mitigation* is still a significant weasel word in this law. It should say *remediation*. This is an extraordinary loop-hole that needs to be immediately closed.
- 2) There is still no specific requirement that ALL remediation costs be borne by the wind developer. This is critically important, as it makes no sense that changes the military makes to accommodate a wind developer *are paid by the taxpayer!*
- 3) It is an unreasonably high hurdle that to deny a wind project: proof that it is an “unacceptable risk to national security” is necessary. ANY adverse impact on the mission or operational readiness of a US military facility (or on our national security) should be acceptable grounds to deny a wind project a permit.

[This exceptionally high bar is premised on the assumption that a wind project is a net societal benefit – *yet there is no scientific proof that this is actually the case!*]

Here is [comprehensive analysis](#) of the current Clearinghouse rules, and ten (10) specific recommendations for meaningful improvements.

These deficiencies expose very serious liabilities in the current Clearinghouse rules – which should be fixed ASAP. It comes down to one question: are the Clearinghouse rules going to continue to be about promoting wind energy, **or** are they going to change and be primarily about protecting our military and national security?

Hopefully wind energy lobbyists will not be able to again convince federal legislators voting on the NDAA that wind projects should be given top priority.

Once the public (and our representatives) understand the above facts, they should not be susceptible to the wind industry’s marketing claims that the DoD Clearinghouse process is an objective and thorough assessment and resolution of any wind energy interferences with military facilities and our national security.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

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8/2/18