

Wind Turbines, Sausage, and our National Security

There's a well-known [observation](#) that close inspection of how legislation is made, is very much like watching sausage being created. *In both cases it's very unappetizing.*

This process was on display recently with the machinations going on with the annual federal legislation for our military: the [National Defense Authorization Act](#) (NDAA, aka HR 5515). To understand the missed opportunity here, one needs to have a bit of background as to how we got to where we are today.

It would be nice to be able to convey this whole story in a single sound-byte sentence, but that's not possible. If you care about our national security, it is important to understand some related information. Let me summarize it as simply as I can, by identifying the key points, in approximate chronological order...

#1: 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](#)).

#2: Initially Commanding Officers (COs) of affected military facilities voiced their objections, and in most cases the proposed offending wind project was not approved.

#3: This was unacceptable to the powerful wind industry, and some of their well-connected allies. Their plan was to get military base COs basically out of the equation – while simultaneously giving the public the impression that military concerns were being fully addressed. That might seem like a tall order, but we're dealing with expert marketers here. Their end result was to create the DoD [Wind Siting Clearinghouse](#) (2011: during the Obama administration), and it accomplished their two objectives.

#4: The Clearinghouse was all about expanding US industrial wind energy – *not protecting our military or our national security*. The rules and regulations for the Clearinghouse were written to assist the wind industry. If that wasn't enough, the initial people in charge of the Clearinghouse were unabashed wind energy promoters. (Upon retiring, the first head-person was quickly hired as a [wind energy lobbyist](#)!)

#5: Not surprisingly, numerous conflicts continue to exist between wind energy and our military. The public has little awareness of these issues, due to classified agreements, carefully enmeshed in bureaucratic double-speak. The wind industry repeatedly trumpeted that everything was just peachy. For those who didn't bother to closely look behind the curtain, things may well have seemed to be OK.

#6: Following the creation of the Clearinghouse, and the dilution of federal protections, military defenders had to then look for some refuge by enacting state level legislation. Of course the wind lobby has infiltrated state politics as well, so this was no easy solution. That said there have been some major victories – e.g. Texas passing [S277](#), and North Carolina passing a two year statewide moratorium (see [here](#), Part XIII) while they did an investigation of the wind energy military interference issue.

#7: Ultimately the defense of our military, and our national security, is a federal matter. Towards that end, in early 2017 I sent to some key legislators an [outline of this problem](#), which included three simple but effective NDAA solutions to this issue:

- a) substitute a much better word for “mitigate” (like “remediate”) as the current term can easily result in no meaningful changes being made,
- b) require that the developer pay for ALL costs incurred to accommodate them [presently the taxpayer foots the bill for these accommodations – why?], and
- c) broaden the allowable reasons for denying a permit – e.g. include: if the lives of military personnel are put at risk, a base maybe be affected by [BRAC](#), etc.

#8: The [Clearinghouse rules](#) basically say that to reject a proposed wind project, that there has to be substantial proof that it is an “*unacceptable risk to national security.*” (How “national security” is defined has evolved, and is still subject to interpretation.) This has to be then endorsed by the DoD Secretary, etc... In other words, the bar was purposefully set very high, so that it was almost impossible to turn down a proposed wind project. (Note: only [one project](#) out of over [15,000](#) submissions has been so terminated via the Clearinghouse process over many years now.)

#9: One of my three recommendations (see #7-c above) was to reasonably expand the allowable reasons to deny a wind project. For example, if a wind project could be shown to *threaten the lives of our military personnel*, that this (by *itself*, irrespective of the “national security” part) would be an acceptable justification to deny it a permit to be built. The [2018 NDAA](#) (see section 311) improved the wording in this regard from the original 2011 legislation, but [further clarification and more conditions are advisable](#). [For example, military lives could be at risk due to the deterioration of the ROTHF signal from wind energy interference, and the current words do not seem to address that.] This year both the House and Senate NDAA bills, approved improving the Clearinghouse rules, to add *some* words to that effect. *That was encouraging!*

#10: In later July 2018, this change was *removed* from the NDAA conference legislation (see page 1951 of [2019 NDAA](#))! An experienced DC lobbyist told me that he could not recall a single case, *ever*, where an important bill provision agreed to by both House and Senate, was then eliminated from the final conference legislation. The bottom line is that during all this research and negotiation about protecting the military, that *none* of the significant deficiencies of the Clearinghouse process (see #7 above), were fixed.

#11: As an apparent compromise, our legislators added a new last-minute provision to the [NDAA](#): Section 318 (page 179). Basically it authorizes the DoD to engage the National Weather Service (NWS) to do a study about the impact of wind turbines on weather radars and military operations. It seems like the intent here is to convey the impression that legislators are serious about our military safety, and national security.

#12: Of course the devil is in the details. From all appearances, this provision amounts to more delays. Furthermore, nothing in the study will be about protecting the lives of pilots from wind turbine obstructions. Nothing in the study will be about assessing the impact of wind turbines on navigation radar. Nothing in the study will be about protecting the exceptionally important ROTH facility or the military lives impacted by it. Nothing in the study will be about evaluating the military consequences that turbine infrasound has... Lastly, who knows what will happen when the study is finished? In the meantime our military and national security is being compromised.

#13: What's disappointing is that several good reports have already been generated on the study issue. For example, here is a detailed NWS [explanation](#) of the problem. For example, earlier this year the NWS wrote a [blistering report](#) about how wind development in upstate NY was compromising FIVE (5) different important NEXRAD radar facilities! For example, Fort Drum (NY) issued this [official statement](#) about wind energy interference. *What else do legislators need to know?* Oh, they want *more* pertinent studies? How about: [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), [this](#), and [this](#). We already have solid studies. We already know what the problems are *and* what some good solutions are.

#14: The fundamental question is: why would *any* (even small) wind energy degradation of our military and national security be acceptable? The apparent reason that legislators allow this, is that the wind industry has done a superior job in deceiving the public that wind energy is a good thing (i.e. a net societal benefit). *However, the fact is that industrial wind energy is a technical, economic and environmental **net liability**.* Once that understanding is fully absorbed, no reasonable legislator would agree to allow such a detriment to interfere with our military, or national security.

#15: The bottom line here is that the protection of our military (and our national security) is being compromised by powerful special-interest lobbyists — who have undue influence on the government, and our lives. (For more info on that, see [here](#).)

Please contact your federal legislator and insist that the Clearinghouse wind energy siting rules be [fully and properly fixed](#) (*via* the NDAA or otherwise).

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