

“War is a racket...in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.”  
--Major General Smedley Butler

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Soldiers are promised honor in exchange for their courage. They are told they will become heroes. They will be defending the lives of innocent people from the cruel barbarians determined to rob them of their freedom.

We who send soldiers off believe they are the brave guardians of our democracy. We admire their determination, their patriotism, their brotherhood, and, most of all, their courage to do what the rest of us don't have the strength to. We, the brothers and mothers and daughters and neighbors of those who fight are convinced that it's all worth it. They are dying for good reason. They are killing for something important.

Yet, we do not know what war is. We do not watch young men die, nor listen to the haunting cries of the wounded. We have never wondered which breath will be our last. We have never killed a stranger just as terrified as we are. It is only those few men, fighting overseas, who see war through their own eyes. They come home scarred and traumatized with nothing but their memories of war to occupy them.

In the end, what is war? Who comes to benefit from it? Is it the winning side, celebrating sweet “victory” from hospital beds and the graves of their comrades? Is it those whom they defeat, whose land they have pillaged and destroyed and left in smoldering ruins? Is it the dead, knowing they were killed with years of love and life ahead of them? Is it those of us at home, who watch our loved ones return in flag-draped coffins? Is it the young men who became killers in the name of honor and courage and freedom?

Major General Smedley Butler defined war as “something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people.” I believe we, the people of a warring nation, have been deceived. We pay from our own pockets for the deaths of our sons and our fathers and the sons and fathers they kill along the way. While we hope and pray for our loved ones' safe return, a powerful few watch and wait. They are the ones who know war, and they are the ones who come to benefit from it. They are blinded by money and greed; they see in dollars and profits. To them, a plummeting bomb means pay raises or year-end bonuses. They will sell their weapons to anyone at anytime, for the language of money sees no boundaries.

We, the people of a warring nation, have had enough. Let us call upon our courage, and our honor, and our patriotism, to wean the powerful few off our hard-earned dollars. In the words of Smedley Butler: “to hell with war.”