

MY TURN

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Airforce in New Mexico, Colorado: Two questions

The US Air Force has waltzed out an old skeleton in a new dress. Well, not exactly; and this one's hardly dead on arrival.

Ten years ago the proposition was giant bombers screaming over the treetops on a 20-mile slice of New Mexico, from Questa to the Colorado line — arguably the most picturesque and wild areas in the Sangre de Christos.

I was there in Taos at the military's public feedback discussion and watched the fervent reaction to this perceived threat on our land of enchantment — watched an auditorium full to overflowing, with moving speeches from Native Americans, the original caretakers of the land, impassioned Hispanic men and women, erudite anglos, and even some guy who looked like he'd walked in from the mesa, waving his staff at the sky and proclaiming in a language he must have been given by the displaced prairie dogs.

Then I watched the military spokesman shut his mouth with a tight little smile and retreat with his tail between his legs.

Having learned from their embarrassing rejection and having moped at the officers club for a decade, the generals are back with a new and, I must admit, smoother come on.

This time it's CV-22 Ospeys and C-130 airplanes — efficient death-dealing machines to be sure, yet cute by comparison to bombers with wingspans the size of football fields; and the practice field has been expanded to include most New Mexico and a big chunk of Colorado.

As the generals strategized, the public outcry this time — except for a handful of stanch resisters who might as well be shouting into a barrel — has been little more than a compliant whimper. Most people don't seem to be aware, or perhaps, care the planes are coming. Who knows why?

It could be the latest, more potent social pacifiers: Medical marijuana; the advent of the phone and our mass abdication to tenting into virtual space; the punishing recession and eminent finality of 2012; or a generation of kids grown up under Bush and raised by parents on antidepressants.

In any case, the military machine is rolling in smoothly.

The state of New Mexico has already provided water rights and significant financial incentives to the Air Force to support this project — this in a period of record budget shortfalls with hundreds of teachers and civil servants laid off.

This level of government/ military financial collusion before even starting an environmental impact statement and with minimal public input suggests the deck is stacked and it's already a done deal.

The generals' needs are quite explicit and haven't changed from a decade ago when they were pitching bombers. They want the use of mountains similar to the ones in Afghanistan to practice their attacks on (in this case complete with villagers living in villages without electricity).

I have only two questions.

When the generals have had their way with us with their cute little Ospeys and C-130s, will we still have the temerity to spurn their advances two years from now when they come back with their monstrous bombers? Because, whether it's two years or four or six, they will be back with their bombers.

Not accepting no for an answer, no matter how loud someone yells it, is the M.O.

we require of our warriors and pay them to act out, and the generals obviously want these mountains for their war games, regardless of the two-leggeds and four-leggeds that live here —forget about enchantment and the maiden who says no only once.

Question two I should not have to ask, but I will for those who have been napping. Why would we be initiating a longterm, multi-billion dollar training project geared toward the war in Afghanistan, when our commander-in-chief, President Obama, the intelligent, easygoing guy we voted in, has proclaimed we are getting out of Afghanistan? Could our generals be going off on their own — doing the rogue thing in their own country?

Do they contradict themselves? Very well then, they contradict themselves. They are large.

But don't take my word for it. To learn the facts, you can type Peaceful Skies into your search engine at www.peacefulskies.org, and call Cliff Bain at (575) 776-8486 to find out what you can do. And please, call your government.

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