

About Hell's Bottom

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officer Leslie Groves orchestrated the Manhattan Project, which began in 1942 and culminated in the Atom Bomb. But, as history would have it, ushering the whole of humanity into the Atomic Era wasn't his most destructive contribution. A year before he blueprinted the Manhattan Project, Groves was at the helm of an enterprise that's responsible for more damage than the A-bomb. In 1941 he spearheaded the construction of the largest office building ever planned¹, a construct that's facilitated violence the world over, ever since.

It grips the American psyche and reigns supreme in the international arena. With limitless resources and unmatched hubris, it presides over clandestine megaprojects and unchecked violations of international law. It is an indiscriminate mass poisoner^{2,3}, a peerless institutional polluter⁴, and a wholesaler⁵ of lethal weaponry. It administers experiments whose impacts are so far-reaching they are measured in geologic time units⁶. It is the Pentagon.

But how did the Pentagon achieve worldwide predominance in the span of an average human life? This is an important question without a simple answer. To address it we must converse with history, and in so doing we stand to uncover truths about the present.

Before it cemented itself as an unassailable aspect of American culture and influence, an assortment of dissidents and watchdogs interpreted the Pentagon as an inescapable outgrowth and essential instrument of capitalism. Their analyses are educationally indispensable and morally significant, but neglected and obscured. Hell's Bottom is a compendium of their research.

The homepage links to accessible summaries of texts, and introductions to resources, that have in common three characteristics: one, they critique the Pentagon under one of its modalities; two, they date before 2000; and three, they are discerning. Updates and edits are bound to occur sporadically.

Senator J. W. Fulbright observed⁷ in 1970 that the "complacent acceptance of things military is one of the most ominous developments in modern America". Glorified militarism has, fifty years on, corroded our collective moral compass. American civilians, insulated from the grisly realities of combat and saturated with pro-war messages^{8,9}, mistrust principled dissent more than hawkish national security narratives. Leveraging this social psychosis, the Pentagon — i.e., one of the wealthiest organizations in the world — uncontestedly pickpockets each and every taxpayer, each and every year, to the tune of thousands¹⁰. Hell's Bottom serves to combat the historical erasure and selective omission that enable U.S. militarism.

About 'Hell's Bottom'

The first casualty of the Pentagon was an impoverished neighborhood nicknamed 'Hell's Bottom'¹¹. People lived there before it was swiftly razed to make way for the Department of Defense headquarters. Unless we curb the material and immaterial power of the Pentagon, we all risk going the way of Hell's Bottom.

Why Hell's Bottom

Noam Chomsky spells out the *why* in the introduction to his book *Turning the Tide*.¹²

We live entangled in webs of endless deceit, often self-deceit, but with a little honest effort, it is possible to extricate ourselves from them. If we do, we will see a world that is rather different from the one presented to us by a remarkably effective ideological system, a world that is much uglier, often horrifying. We will also learn that our own actions, or passive acquiescence, contribute quite substantially to misery and oppression, and perhaps eventual global destruction.

But there is a brighter side. We are fortunate to live in a society that is not only rich and powerful — and hence, as any student of history would expect, dangerous and destructive — but also relatively free and open, perhaps more so than any other, though this may change if the reactionary jingoists who have misappropriated the term ‘conservative’ succeed in their current project of diminishing civil liberties, strengthening the power of the state, and protecting it from public scrutiny. For those who are relatively wealthy and privileged, a very large sector of a society as rich as ours, there are ample opportunities to discover the truth about who we are and what we do in the world. Furthermore, by international standards the state is limited at home in its capacity to coerce. Hence those who enjoy a measure of wealth and privilege are free to act in many ways, without undue fear of state terror, to bring about crucial changes in policy and even more fundamental institutional changes. We are fortunate, perhaps uniquely so, in the range of opportunities we enjoy for free inquiry and effective action. The significance of these facts can hardly be exaggerated.

So, why not Hell's Bottom?

- 1 It remained the largest office building in the world through 2022:
https://web.archive.org/web/20220615112800/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_office_buildings
- 2 https://web.archive.org/web/20230606025252/https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/hamilton_0.pdf
- 3 <https://web.archive.org/web/20250105200906/https://www.propublica.org/article/military-pollution-open-burns-radford-virginia>
- 4 <https://web.archive.org/web/20230719213015/https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/Pentagon%20Fuel%20Use%2C%20Climate%20Change%20and%20the%20Costs%20of%20War%20Revised%20November%202019%20Crawford.pdf>
- 5 https://web.archive.org/web/20230821151943/https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/2303_at_fact_sheet_2022_v2.pdf
- 6 https://web.archive.org/web/20230610013828/https://www.geosociety.org/GSA/Publications/GSA_Today/GSA/GSAToday/science/G538A/article.aspx
- 7 <https://archive.org/details/pentagonpropagan00fulb>
- 8 <https://web.archive.org/web/20230601213824/https://previous.ncra.ca/dspProgramDetail.cfm?programID=279390>
- 9 <https://archive.org/details/operationhollywo00robb/mode/2up>
- 10 <https://web.archive.org/web/20230606120512/https://www.nationalpriorities.org/pressroom/articles/2023/04/19/ordinary-americans-subsidize-military-industrial/>
- 11 <https://web.archive.org/web/20221124083248/https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/building/5004/>
- 12 <https://archive.org/details/turningtideusint00chom>