

NARMIC

At the height of the Vietnam War in 1969, peace activists affiliated with the American Friends of Service Committee¹ organized National Action/Research on the Military-Industrial Complex², a scrappy fact-finding collective that probed the U.S. War Machine for two decades before disbanding in 1990. The founders of NARMIC sought to counterbalance the state-of-the-art research component of the Military-Industrial Complex. They labored to supply the anti-war movement with “carefully researched and clearly communicated”³ information pertaining to the Military-Industrial Complex^{4,5}. In their own words, NARMIC was run “by a staff of young researchers who work[ed] at bare subsistence wages” and were “strongly motivated... to provide concerned citizens (and especially the people of the peace movement) with reliable information and analysis which will better equip them to work in their own communities on specific projects aimed at countering effectively the growing intrusion of militarism and war in American community life”.⁶ In fact, their work was referenced not only by peacemakers but also on occasion by such institutions as the New York Times⁷ and United Nations⁸.

The group compiled and published books, guides, reports, lists, and documentaries pertaining to the ‘defense’ bureaucracy. NARMIC staff also offered training and support to independent researchers. “Students investigating Pentagon research on campuses, housewives boycotting consumer goods manufactured by war industries, ‘Doves for Congress’ campaign workers, peace organizations of all varieties, professional groups and trade unionists [went] to NARMIC for facts and [consultation] on how to best carry out projects.”⁹ Moreover, the organization curated an archive of “over 40,000 documents and a computerized database”¹⁰.

NARMIC maintains files not only on the top 100 war contractors, but also on many other companies, universities and institutions engaged in weapons research, production of weapons for counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam and elsewhere, and production of strategic weapons systems. NARMIC maintains files on military strategy and overseas involvement, domestic counterinsurgency, weapons systems (including chemical and biological) and U.S. Government agencies involved in the MIC. This data bank consists of clippings, articles, research notes, official reports, interviews and independent research findings. NARMIC subscribes to the publications and directories of the military organs and aerospace corporations not generally circulated outside the MIC itself. Through subscription to a nationwide computerized service for the aerospace industries, NARMIC is able to get up-to-date information on military contractors, new weapons systems and defense marketing directions.¹¹

I encountered NARMIC for the first time at the Interference Archive¹² in New York, where I scanned a pamphlet of theirs, namely *The Central American War: A Guide to the U.S. Military Buildup*¹³. As it turns out, they were not only prolific, but sophisticated in their methods and comprehensive in the scope and depth of their coverage. NARMIC distributed widely materials such as the slide show *Automated Air War*¹⁴. As part of a series under the heading *The Military-Industrial Atlas of the United States*, they issued *The Defense Department’s Top 100*¹⁵, a map of

America's 100 richest 'defense' firms in terms of contract awards. *Jobs, Security, and Arms in Connecticut*¹⁶ comprises 68 pages reviewing impacts and aspects of military spending in the state. Ranging from technical literature to educational materials, NARMIC's output exceeds what can be enumerated here. Thankfully, much of their work has been archived in its electronic¹⁷ and physical^{18,19} form. Not for better but for worse, NARMIC's records are less pertinent to history than the unfolding events of today.

- 1 <https://web.archive.org/web/20240112022310/https://afsc.org/>
- 2 <https://web.archive.org/web/20221124035322/https://www.afsc.org/sites/default/files/documents/What%20is%20Narmic.pdf>
- 3 *NARMIC* p. 2
- 4 <https://web.archive.org/web/20231026174542/https://news.littlesis.org/2017/10/24/researchers-against-the-war-machine-the-story-of-narmic/>
- 5 https://web.archive.org/web/20240110201409/https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKidR_BTUrU
- 6 *NARMIC* p. 5
- 7 <https://web.archive.org/web/20211120185620/https://www.nytimes.com/1971/05/18/archives/fbi-said-to-urge-use-of-boy-scouts-as-informers.html>
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- 10 <https://web.archive.org/web/20231026173940/https://archives.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/repositories/8/resources/7780>
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- 12 <https://interferencearchive.org/>
- 13 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NSnDkHNYvPgayYm8gnsQdIon2aHvY5BW/view?usp=sharing>
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