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Ways the pentagon uses our treasure

Mary Ann McGivern | Mar. 18, 2011 NCR Today

As part of my own Lenten reflection, I?m writing about some of the weapons systems that the General Accounting Office has identified as boondoggles. Today we are looking at robots, drones, sensors, smart bombs and other types of artificial intelligence.

It is sort of like what Paul tells the Ephesians: These are things we have not seen and cannot imagine. So far we have spent about 15 billion on them. The initial estimate was $92 billion but now it?s gone up to $340 billion.

Because of this huge increase in estimated costs, future expenditures are unclear. *The New York Times* notes that some expensive communications systems have been replaced in the field by a simple, secure Web-based tool.

Research, both military and commercial, is certainly on the hunt for artificial intelligence. Particular to the budgetary and economic debates of the moment is their role in job creation.

These systems are capital intensive, that is, they utilize few skilled workers. The panels or motherboards that guide them are generally assembled by unskilled workers, young girls with small agile fingers who live in Mexico, Indonesia and China.

Additionally, the Pentagon drains skilled labor from commercial ventures, offering high wages and interesting problems to engineers and scientists who might otherwise be perfecting windmills, solar reflector pools and photovoltaic cells. These unmanned systems and communications tools pose terrific theoretical and practical challenges. They drain our investment capital as well as our skilled labor.

Again I ask myself and you, dear reader. Where shall we place our treasure? Wherein lies our security?

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