

MISSILES & MAGNOLIAS REVISITED: The South at War 2005

Executive Summary

It has been over three years since the Institute for Southern Studies and *Southern Exposure* magazine released “Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War,” an in-depth report analyzing the South’s disproportionate ties to the U.S. military. The 2002 study found that, more than any other part of the country, the U.S. South was the region most tied to, and impacted by, the “war on terror” and growing U.S. intervention abroad.

Since our last report, the nation has seen the onset of the war on Iraq and the ensuing U.S.-led occupation. Now, after three years, new findings by the Institute for Southern Studies indicate that, more than any other region in the United States, the South continues to be shaped and influenced by the nation’s military and booming war economy. According to our 2005 analysis:

The South continues to supply a disproportionate number of recruits to our nation’s armed forces

- 35% of active-duty U.S. military personnel come from the South, according to an analysis of Department of Defense data
- 51% of active-duty U.S. military personnel based in the continental U.S. are stationed in the South
- Four of the top five states nationally for stationing troops are in the south: Virginia, Texas, North Carolina and Georgia
- Of the top 15 states where those serving in the military are born, the South accounts for 7, almost half.

The South has been highly impacted by the loss of soldiers in both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars

- Of the U.S. troops that have died in Iraq, 38% were based in the South
- 47% of the troops that have died in Afghanistan were based in the South

The South remains disproportionately tied to military contracting and production

- An analysis of defense-related contracts reveals that 32% of the military contracts granted in 2005 have gone to companies in the South, led by states rich in defense production such as Virginia and Texas

Southern politicians continue to be some of the nation's leading war hawks

- 58% of Southerners in the U.S. House and Senate scored in the bottom one-fourth of a scorecard by Peace Action, a yearly roundup detailing the voting record of every Member of Congress on crucial issues of war and peace, such as funding for the occupation of Iraq, arms sales, and support for the United Nations.

Clearly, the South remains – as a recent state advertising campaign in North Carolina claims – the “most military-friendly” area of the country. The South’s economic, political and cultural ties to the military have also made it uniquely dependent on military expansion, and made the region especially vulnerable to the hardships of war.

Note: For this study, the Institute defines the South as the following 13 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

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Introduction: The South and War

In 1938, when President Roosevelt commissioned a report on the economic health of the U.S. South, his researchers came up with sobering results: “The low income belt of the South is a belt of sickness, misery and unnecessary death.” The South, the report concluded, was “the nation’s number one economic problem.”

Just six years later, Donald Nelson, Chair of the U.S. War Production Board, studied the South and came to a different conclusion. The South had “rubbed Aladdin’s lamp” of economic prosperity, Nelson exclaimed, and was poised to enter “the vanguard of world economic progress.”

What changed between these two assessments of the South’s fortunes? In short, the Second World War – a watershed moment for the expansion of U.S. geopolitical influence as well as the rise of Southern economic prowess.

The South had long had a reputation as a military-friendly region, but World War II cemented the South’s central role in the war economy. Since then, the South has steadily grown as the most critical region to what President Eisenhower called the “military-industrial complex.”

Driven by a growing economic dependence on the military dollar, today the South is the region where the military leaves the greatest economic, political and cultural imprint. But how closely are the South’s fortunes tied to the military? And what are the impacts, both in terms of economic stimulus and dependence, as well as the inevitable hardships caused by war?

In 2002, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and resulting U.S. military buildup, the Institute for Southern Studies released an in-depth analysis of the South’s ties to the military, “Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War.” Through analyzing thousands of pages of Department of Defense documents, campaign finance reports, and historical and economic analysis, a clear picture emerged: the South remained the region most tied to, and impacted by, the country’s growing military infrastructure.

To use just one measure: according to the Institute’s analysis, from 1996 to 2002 every region in the country had seen an increase in the flow of military contract dollars. But no region grew as fast as the South: the region’s defense contract base mushroomed by 83%, compared to 62% in the West, 31% in the Midwest and Central Plains, and just 9% in the Northeast.

Three years later, the country’s military entanglements have expanded, including the massive 2003 deployment for the Iraq war. The troubled yet continuing U.S. presence in Iraq – which has

included extended tours of duty for military personnel, and the establishment by military contractors of “enduring bases” in the country – has ensured an ongoing role for Southern troops and industry. Given this new reality, the Institute decided to revisit the questions explored in “Missiles and Magnolias,” and investigate the South’s unique military ties.

Where Do Troops Come From?

The South has long provided more than its share of military recruits for the nation’s wars, and the current makeup of the U.S. armed forces is no exception. Factors such as high rates of poverty, limited economic options for young adults, and the region’s conservative political culture have contributed to the region’s reputation as a reliable source of military personnel.

In the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the resulting “war on terror,” the South’s role as a disproportionate provider of military recruits continued. In 2002, Institute research found that although the South represented just over 30% of the nation’s population, the region supplied over 42% of the nation’s troops. (“Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War,” *Southern Exposure*, 2002).

In the following three years, the South’s role in supplying troops has continued as military commitments have expanded in Afghanistan and Iraq. Our analysis of 2005 data from the Department of Defense finds that 35% of current active-duty U.S. military personnel were born in the South, slightly higher than the region’s share of the population.

Of the 15 states where the greatest number of military recruits were born, the South accounts for 7, almost half. Just five Southern states – Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia – are the home state for almost 250,000 of those serving in the military today (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Top Southern States Where Troops Are From (2005)	
State	Troops
Texas	98,724
Florida	50,840
Georgia	35,044
North Carolina	32,956
Virginia	31,623

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, August 2005

These findings are consistent with other recent reports about which states have provided the most troops. For example, a 2005 report by the American Friends Service Committee analyzing Army enlistments for fiscal year 2004 (October 1, 2003 – September 30, 2004) finds young adults in the South to be disproportionately represented in the Army’s ranks.

Of the 16 states in the country where recruiters enlisted the greatest share of the state's 17-24 year-old population, seven are in the South: Alabama, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Louisiana, Texas, and North Carolina (*PeaceWork*, American Friends Service Committee, July 2005).

Where Are Troops Based?

During World War II, national leaders rapidly set up military bases in the South not only to support the war effort, but also in an attempt to provide economic stimulus to the poverty-stricken region. The South quickly became home to dozens of military towns, which have grown to exert a strong economic, political and cultural influence in the region.

In 2002, at the beginning of the post-9/11 military build-up, the Institute found that 56% of the troops based in the continental United States were based in the South. ("Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War," *Southern Exposure*, 2002).

After three years of war, the South's dominant position as the primary region where military personnel are stationed hasn't changed. According to current data, 51% of active-duty U.S. military personnel based in the continental U.S. are stationed in the South.

Four of the top five states nationally for stationing troops are in the south: Virginia, Texas, North Carolina and Georgia (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Top Southern States Where Troops Are Stationed (2005)	
State	Troops
Virginia	134,741
Texas	109,285
North Carolina	92,226
Georgia	67,176
Florida	66,503

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, August 2005

The South's dominance in military bases isn't likely to be affected by the Pentagon's recent announcement that it intends to close or re-align hundreds of installations, including over 30 major military bases, around the country. In fact, while dozens of states are slated to lose substantial numbers of personnel under the proposal forwarded to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) commission in May 2005, Southern bases actually stand to grow as a result of the first round of closures in 10 years.

According to a May 2005 analysis of the BRAC realignment plan by the Institute for Southern Studies, while the Pentagon calls for net cut of 26,000 military and civilian personnel at U.S.

bases, the South stands to gain a net total of 15,500 positions at over 50 bases that will grow in stature. Five of the top 10 states in base growth are located in the South: Georgia, where military and civilian base jobs will expand by 7,423; Texas (6,150); Arkansas (3,585); Florida (2,757); and Alabama (2,664). (“Base Closings and the South,” Institute for Southern Studies, May 2005). The BRAC will finalize its recommendations in early September, 2005.

Who Suffers from War Casualties?

Given the South’s dominant role in supplying and stationing troops, perhaps it is not surprising that the South is the part of the country most affected by military casualties, especially in losing troops that had been stationed in Southern military bases.

An analysis of U.S. troops who have died in the Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001 reveals that a disproportionate share have been based in the U.S. South. Of the over 1,800 U.S. troops who have died in Iraq, 38% were based in the South. An even greater share of those killed in Afghanistan – almost half, 47% -- have been military personnel who were stationed in the South (See Table 3).

TABLE 3: The Death Toll	
Top Military Bases in the South Suffering Troop Losses in the Iraq War	
Base	Deaths
Fort Hood, Texas	146
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina	117
Fort Stewart, Georgia	67
Fort Campbell, Kentucky	62
Fort Bragg, North Carolina	60

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, August 2005

The mid-Atlantic Southern state of North Carolina has been especially affected by the military operations of the last three and a half years. The state’s unique military ties has inspired an advertising campaign declaring North Carolina “The Nation’s Most Military-Friendly State,” and brought President George W. Bush to Fort Bragg in June 2005 for a national televised address to boost flagging support for the Iraq war.

According to a June 2005 analysis by the Institute, “North Carolina Shoulders Greater Share of War Burden,” the state’s growing involvement in foreign wars is not coming without consequences:

- Of the over 1,930 U.S. troops that had been killed in Iraq and Afghanistan by that date, more than 230 have been based in North Carolina – over 12% of the nation's war fatalities, or nearly one out of eight U.S. soldiers killed overseas.

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- Over 100 Army soldiers and 120 Marines from North Carolina bases had died in the two conflicts. Thirty-five of the troops that had died in Iraq were born in North Carolina.
 - Over 2,200 of the Army's 82nd Airborne, based at Fort Bragg, were deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The division had seen over 40 soldiers killed and 450 injured in the two wars.
 - North Carolina had sent one of the largest detachments of National Guard troops to Iraq: deployment peaked at 6,000 in January 2005, the largest mobilization for the state since World War II. With the return of the National Guard's 30th Heavy Separate Brigade, the deployment stood in July at 2,700.
 - The North Carolina presence in Iraq will remain significant for the foreseeable future: The Pentagon recently announced that 7,500 to 8,000 members of Fort Bragg's 18th Airborne Corps will be deployed early next year to take over day-to-day operations in Iraq. They will replace the 3rd Corps from Fort Hood, Texas in directing the Multinational Corps-Iraq.

Where Do Military Contracts Go?

In addition to military bases, during World War II President Roosevelt steered a growing share of military production and contracts into the South, leading to an explosion of new industry. Shipyards, aircraft plants, textile factories, ordnance plants – all became part of a booming war economy that was to permanently change the political economy of the region.

Today, the South continues to attract a disproportionate share of military industry. In the Institute's 2002 analysis, 43% of prime military contracts went to operations in the South. Significant contracts at the time included major outlays for Lockheed Martin facilities in Georgia and Texas, as well as Halliburton Co.'s 10-year, no-bid LOGCAP contract for logistical support for the U.S. Army.

An analysis of military contracts granted in 2005 indicates that the corporations headquartered in the South and/or carrying out operations in the South continue to attract a greater share of military contracts than other parts of the country. Of the prime contracts awarded by the Department of Defense from January 1, 2005 to August 20, 2005, 32% have gone to companies in the South, led by contract-rich states such as Virginia, Texas, Florida, Georgia, and Alabama (See Table 4).

TABLE 4: Top Southern States with Military Contracts, 2005

State	Contracts
Virginia	163
Texas	115
Florida	73
Georgia	34
Alabama	31

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, August 2005

It should be noted that these figures don't include contracts that have come from outside of the Department of Defense for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. For example, billions of dollars in contracts have been awarded through US AID for "reconstruction" projects in Iraq, including many from the South, such as Texas-based Halliburton/KBR and the North Carolina-headquartered Research Triangle Institute. By some estimates, up to a third of "reconstruction" contract funds have been diverted to security firms, many of whom have also had Southern ties, such as DynCorp (Virginia), Custer Battles (Virginia), and Blackwater International (North Carolina).

Who Are the Political Forces Behind War?

Given the South's disproportionate economic and personal ties to the military – as well as the region's conservative political climate – perhaps it's not surprising that many of the driving forces behind war and military expansion in Washington, D.C. also come from the South.

As the Institute noted in its 2002 report, the Southern Congressional delegation "has developed a reputation for unflinching loyalty to the defense industry." Five of the top 10 congressional recipients of campaign contributions from defense interests in the 2001-2002 election were Southerners. In turn, Southern politicians have established a pro-military voting record that ensures military investment in the region. A report by Peace Action disclosed that in 2000, fully 62% of senators in the South voted 100 percent for expanding military operations, while only 53 percent of their colleagues did so.

Three years later, little has changed. According to the most recent Peace Action scorecard, in 2004 58% of Southerners in the U.S. House and Senate scored in the bottom one-fourth of the watchdog group's yearly roundup of votes on foreign policy. The analysis included ratings of votes on funding for the occupation of Iraq, arms sales, and support for the United Nations.

The impact of pro-war Southerners in shaping foreign policy is clear in today's Washington leadership, dominated by two Texans (George W. Bush, President, and Tom DeLay, House Majority Leader) and a Tennessean (Bill Frist, Senate Majority Leader), who have developed among the most pro-war voting records in Congress.

Conclusion

Although the scope of U.S. military ventures has expanded since the Institute's 2002 report, the South's central role in the politics and economics of war hasn't changed. As this report shows, the South's stake in U.S. global engagement remains enormous, creating a direct and personal link for many Southerners to issues of military spending and foreign policy. It's also clear that as long as the South is the heart of the U.S. military, it stands the most to gain – and the most to lose – from the fortunes and misfortunes of war.

THE AUTHORS

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THE INSTITUTE

The **Institute for Southern Studies** is a non-profit research and education center based in Durham, N.C. The Institute's Peace and Security Program (formerly the Southern Peace Research and Education Center), launched in 2002, has become a leading resource for journalists, policy-makers and advocates in the South and country.

The Institute also publishes *Southern Exposure*, which has earned a national reputation for its in-depth investigations and unique coverage of Southern issues. *Southern Exposure* is a recent winner of the George Polk Award for Magazine Reporting and honors from the National Press Club, Society of Professional Journalists, and White House Correspondents' Association.

For more information about the Institute, or to order copies of "Missiles and Magnolias: The South at War" (2002) or "Missiles and Magnolias Revisited: The South at War 2005" (2005), please contact:

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