

May 11, 2020

Archbishop William E. Lori
Office of the Archbishop
Archdiocese of Baltimore
320 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, MD 21201 Fiscal Services

Dear Most Reverend William E. Lori:

We write for the purpose of engaging with the Archdiocese in a conversation about its financial investment practices and policies. We write as members of parishes in the Archdiocese, as parents of children in Archdiocesan schools, and as Catholics seeking to follow the non-violent Christ. The end we seek, directly stated, is to ensure that the Archdiocese and the parishes and schools it supports and guides do not profit from investments in the weapons industry.

To this end, in this letter, we offer a sketch of theological reasons for our stance, a very limited accounting of some of the costs associated with investment in the weapons industry, an outline of our understanding of where the Archdiocese stands vis-à-vis investment in the weapons industry, based on the limited information we have been able to obtain to date, and, finally, our proposals for moving toward the elimination of investment in the weapons industry by the Archdiocese and the parishes and schools it serves.

Theological Reasons

In seeking the end of Archdiocesan investment in the weapons industry, we are compelled by the very being of Christ. The Gospels are replete with instances of Christ healing people, making their bodies whole. Consider, by way of just one example, that marvelous stretch in Luke's Gospel where Jesus, on his way to raise Jairus' daughter, cures the woman with a hemorrhage. (Lk. 8:40-56.) The power that Christ felt go out of him when the woman touched him (Lk. 8:46) was unadulterated life-restorative power. Who would dare posit that lurking also inside of Christ was a power designed for bodily dismemberment and death? This is the power developed in the weapons industry, and it is a power antithetical to the being of Christ, which, of course, through the grace of baptism and the Eucharist, has become our being.

Then there are the words of Christ himself: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Mt. 5:9.) A refrain of these words is picked up by the Church's Magisterium in the following: "The arms race is one of the greatest curses on the human race and the harm it inflicts on the poor is more than can be endured." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., 2329 (quoting *Gaudium et spes* 81 § 3)).

More recently, in this same prophetic vein, Pope Francis has exhorted:

The arms race wastes precious resources that could be better used to benefit the integral development of peoples and to protect the natural environment. In a world where millions of children and families live in inhumane conditions, the money that

is squandered and the fortunes made through the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of ever more destructive weapons, are an affront crying out to heaven.

(Address of the Holy Father on Nuclear Weapons, Atomic Bomb Hypocenter Park (Nagasaki) Sunday, 24 November 2019.) As we suffer through the coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis has written prayers to be said after recitation of the rosary, one of which reads, echoing his earlier exhortation:

Mary Most Holy, stir our consciences, so that the enormous funds invested in developing and stockpiling arms will instead be spent on promoting effective research on how to prevent similar tragedies from occurring in the future.

(Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Faithful for the Month of May 2020.)

In the final theological analysis, investment in the development and stockpiling of arms, i.e., in facilitating the arms race, is a form of idolatry. We cannot simultaneously entrust ourselves to the God who raised Jesus from the dead, while seeking security in financial profit through investment in the manufacture of death-dealing products, which, in their nuclear form, threaten to undo all of God's wondrous creative activity on earth. We must choose.

Costs of Investing in the Weapons Industry

The human, political, environmental, and opportunity costs of the arms race are almost immeasurable. We note just a few. According to the Costs of War Project, at Brown University, at least 800,000 people have died violent deaths as a result of the post-9-11 wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and Pakistan. Of this number, 335,000 were civilians.¹

Weapons manufacturers have profited dearly from these post-9-11 wars and other conflicts. Their war profits cannot be dis severed from the wars' deaths, and their profits cannot be sorted out from the profits of their investors. On August 9, 2018, forty-four Yemeni children, ages six to eleven, were slaughtered when their school bus was struck by a 500 lb. laser-guided bomb made by Lockheed Martin, one of thousands sold by the United States to Saudi Arabia.² The prospect that the deaths of these Yemeni children (or any of the other thousands of child war-victims) are linked forever with the destinies of children attending Archdiocesan schools through chains of investment and profit must be confronted and, going forward, eliminated.

Intertwined with the destruction of human bodies, the arms race works a degradation of political life by providing oppressive regimes with the means to maintain violent control over their populations. According to one recent study, "[t]he U.S. government allows, arranges for, or in

¹ <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>

² <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/war-crimes-united-states-saudi-arabia-yemen/>

some cases even provides the funding for, U.S. weapons sales to 41” countries deemed “not free.”³ One of these countries is Saudi Arabia. Since the killing of the Yemeni children on August 9, 2018, the United States has arranged the sale to Saudi Arabia of \$8 billion worth of military assistance.⁴ The writers of a recent report regarding such sales commented, “confidence that more precise targeting will lead to lower civilian casualties assumes that civilians are not being purposefully targeted – a claim increasingly difficult to substantiate.”⁵ There is no refuge in the principle of double effect, a pillar of Catholic just war theorizing, where the killing agents intend the killing of civilians. The broader point is that the weapons industry (and, regrettably, our own government) has made peace with political oppression. We must not further this moral capitulation through our investments.

Of course, the political costs of the arms race are not limited to the Middle East. On February 17, 1980, Saint Oscar Romero wrote to President Jimmy Carter imploring him not to send military aid to El Salvador: “your government’s contribution, instead of favoring the cause of justice, will surely increase injustice here and sharpen the repression that has been unleashed against the people.”⁶ A few weeks later Saint Romero was assassinated. Over the ensuing years, over his protestations, the United States poured millions in military aid into El Salvador, plunging it deeper into a civil war, the destabilizing reverberations of which are being felt today at our border.

The environmental costs of the arms race cannot be overlooked. According to the Watson Institute, the U.S. Department of Defense is the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world. Between 2001 and 2017, the United States military emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases. (For comparison, the United Kingdom emits 360 metric tons each year.) By one account, if the United States military were a country, its fuel usage alone would make it the 47th largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world, sitting between Peru and Portugal.⁷

The ultimate environmental affront of the arms race is the very real specter of nuclear annihilation.⁸ Pope Francis has now declared that not only the use but the mere possession of

³ David Swanson, *20 Dictators Currently Supported by the U.S.* (March 16, 2020) (excerpted at <https://worldbeyondwar.org/50-oppressive-governments-supported-by-the-u-s-government/>). The countries were deemed “unfree” by Freedom House (<https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores>).

⁴ <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2019/07/29/us-senate-allows-arms-sales-to-saudi-arabia-sustaining-trump-vetoes/>

⁵ Center for International Policy, *U.S. Arms Sales to Saudi Arabia: The Corporate Connection* (https://static.wixstatic.com/ugd/fb6c59_7fa031bf808544b69083470227cc59fb.pdf)

⁶ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/global-issues/latin-america-caribbean/el-salvador/upload/Letter-to-President-Carter-onMilitary-Aid-to-El-Salvador-1980-02-17.pdf>.

⁷ <https://theconversation.com/us-military-is-a-bigger-polluter-than-as-many-as-140-countries-shrinking-this-war-machine-is-a-must-119269>

⁸ <https://www.wjperryproject.org/about-the-project>

nuclear weapons is immoral: "The use of atomic energy for purposes of war is immoral, just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral....We will be judged on this." (Address of the Holy Father, Peace Memorial (Hiroshima) Sunday, 24 November 2019.) It is inconceivable that investment in the production of more nuclear weapons could be deemed moral. As our brothers and sisters in the Kings Bay Plowshares 7 embrace incarceration in protest against the immorality of nuclear weapons, we should, at the least, embrace divestment from companies that profit from their maintenance and production.⁹

Finally, it is important not to lose sight of the opportunity costs of investing in the weapons industry. Considering just the nuclear weapons industry alone, the missed opportunities are staggering. "Over 16,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world's arsenals costing \$100 billion annually – funds that could instead be used to reverse climate change, eliminate poverty and address other social and economic needs." (A Nuclear-Weapon-Free World: Our Common Good, Joint statement of legislators and religious leaders organized by Mayors for Peace, Religions for Peace and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.) That is \$1 trillion dollars over the course of ten years, \$280 billion of which could feed malnourished people in the world for ten years, \$200 billion of which could build 100 million houses, \$100 billion of which could build 400,000 hospitals and clinics, and the list goes on.¹⁰ As our nation struggles with shortages in the fight against the Coronavirus, it is especially painful to observe that the United States' share of the annual nuclear-weapons cost, \$35 billion in 2019, could purchase 35,000 ventilators, 300,000 intensive care unit beds, 75,000 doctors' annual salaries, and 150,000 nurses' annual salaries.¹¹

Archdiocesan Investments

According to the Archdiocese of Baltimore Investment & Endowment Policies for Parishes and Schools ("Investment Policy.") One of the policy objectives stated in the Investment Policy is to "Provide parishes and schools with multiple investment options." The Investment Policy includes "a list of funds available for all types of investments."

Initial research into this list of funds reveals that several of them contain sizeable holdings in the weapons industry. Take, for instance, the T. Rowe Price Blue Chip Growth Fund. This Fund has \$2.7 billion invested in the production of military and nuclear weapons, with holdings in Boeing Co., Northrop Grumman Corp., Honeywell International Inc., and L3Harris Technologies Inc.¹² Consider also the Dodge & Cox International Stock Fund, which has \$1.58 billion invested

⁹ <https://kingsbayplowshares7.org/>

¹⁰ <http://www.nuclearweaponsmoney.org/handbook/introduction/>

¹¹ <https://www.newsweek.com/one-year-us-nuclear-weapon-spending-would-provide-300000-icu-beds-35000-ventilators-salaries-1494521> <https://www.newsweek.com/one-year-us-nuclear-weapon-spending-would-provide-300000-icu-beds-35000-ventilators-salaries-1494521>

¹² <https://weaponfreefunds.org/fund/t-rowe-price-blue-chip-growth-i/TRBCX/weapon->

in the weapons industry, with holdings in Mitsubishi Electric Corp. and Fujitsu Ltd.¹³ The BlackRock Equity Dividend Fund has \$707 million invested in the weapons industry, with holdings in BAE Systems PLC, General Electric Co., Lockheed Martin Corp., Northrop Grumman Corp, and Raytheon Co.¹⁴ All of the companies identified above are listed among the world's major weapons manufacturers.¹⁵

The Investment Policy lists one socially responsible fund, the Christian Brothers Balanced Fund (CBIS). According to an interview from several years ago with the director of Catholic responsible investing at CBIS, the fund has a weighting system by which companies are sorted by scores. "For example, nuclear weapons and land mines are more negatively weighted because they kill indiscriminately," and companies that have been screened out from the fund include "General Electric Company, Raytheon Company and Lockheed Martin Corporation."¹⁶ It is not clear whether the CBIS fund is truly a weapons-free fund.

The limited information we have been able to gather generates several questions. Some of these questions include the following. Has the Archdiocese ever undertaken to determine the extent to which any of the funds in the Investment Policy have holdings in weapons manufacturers? Has the Archdiocese ever undertaken to determine how much money is invested by the Archdiocese and parishes and schools in weapons manufacturers, at least the major weapons manufacturers?¹⁷ Has the Archdiocese ever considered using and offering only funds that exclude all weapons manufacturers, of which funds there are literally scores, including several with a Catholic identity?

Additional questions arise. Does the Archdiocese have any policy addressing investment in the weapons industry? Has the Archdiocese analyzed the listed funds for compliance with USCCB guidelines regarding investment in arms production?¹⁸ The USCCB guidelines include the following:

The Conference will, therefore, avoid investment in firms primarily engaged in military weapons production or the development of weapons inconsistent with Catholic teaching on war (e.g., biological and chemical weapons, arms designed or regarded as first-strike nuclear weapons, indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction, etc.).

¹³ <https://weaponfreefunds.org/fund/dodge--cox-international-stock/DODFX/weapon-investments/FSUSA0096D/FOUSA02TGA>

¹⁴ <https://weaponfreefunds.org/fund/blackrock-equity-dividend-k/MDDVX/weapon-investments/FSUSA001M1/FOUSA00DOE>

¹⁵ https://weaponfreefunds.org/funds?dsc=false&ff=Catholic+Investor&q=catholic&screen=all&srt=grade_weapons

¹⁶ <https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/catholic-investing-changing-times>

¹⁷ https://www.divestfromwarmachine.org/divest_list

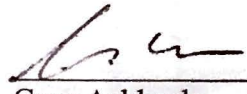
¹⁸ <http://www.usccb.org/about/financial-reporting/socially-responsible-investment-guidelines.cfm>

Going Forward

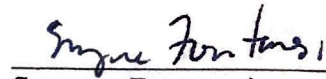
We ask for the opportunity to meet with you and members of the Archdiocesan Fiscal Services Division to discuss the matters raised herein. In preparation for our meeting, we would welcome any feedback regarding our understanding of the Archdiocese's practices and policies regarding investment in the weapons industry. To the same end, we would appreciate any publicly available information pertaining to the investment portfolio of the Archdiocese, inclusive of investments by parishes and schools under the auspices of the Archdiocese.

As is readily apparent, many of the decisions that go into developing the investment practices and policies of the Archdiocese are of profound theological and moral import. On certain matters, such as those discussed in this letter, we believe that the decisions provide important teaching and preaching moments and should be the subject of wide dialogue within the Archdiocese. It is our hope that the Archdiocese would use the occasion of making the changes we seek to develop in the faithful a deeper commitment to the non-violent Christ and, in Christ's name, to say, with Saint John Paul II, "NO TO WAR"! (Address of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps, 13 January 2003).

We look forward to hearing from you in response to our letter. Please respond to Jeff Ross, 515 Collins Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21229; jross50@hotmail.com; 443-690-6872.



Gary Ashbeck



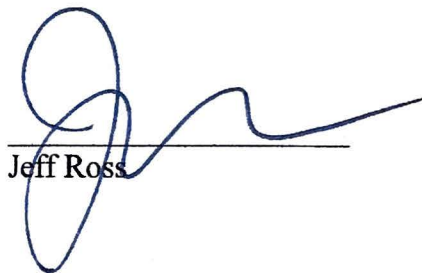
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cc: Mary Pat Stoval, Director, Archdiocesan Finance