

Woke at the Pentagon

by [G. Murphy Donovan](#) (July 2023)



The Fleet's In!, Paul Cadmus, 1934

I don't have time to distinguish between the unfortunate and the incompetent.—General Curtis LeMay, USAF

If **denials** were spuds, the brass on the E Ring could be making potato chips instead of politically correct airmen, sailors, and soldiers.

The Department of Defense and the military branches are now taking fire from all quarters for straying into the political and cultural mine fields now so much a part of the national conversation. Neither Congress, nor the Press, nor the public are taking DOD denials seriously. Abject skepticism is justified if you look at the history of Defense sponsored research on controversial social memes; fads that pander to, if not proselytize for, the progressive political left.

And here we can use the [RAND Corporation](#) in California as the poster child for the many think tanks that underwrite woke generals, political correctness, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity programs at US military installations worldwide. RAND advertises itself as a “non-partisan” non-profit, yet independent observers rate the Santa Monica think tank well [left of center](#).



RAND Corporation was literally created by an Air Corps general in the wake of WWII. Henry Harley Arnold thought that a critical mass of strategic thinkers needed to be kept intact to deal with vagaries of Communism, the Cold War, and nuclear peril.

Ironically, RAND was sited in Santa Monica to put as much distance as possible between “non-partisan” analysis and the politics of Washington, DC. No one at the time saw southern California becoming the literal and figurative “left” coast.

RAND Corporation’s earliest work, sponsored by a newly minted USAF, focused on military and strategic concerns. All of that changed with Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg, a RAND analyst, released top secret analysis (see Pentagon Papers) confirming DOD deceptions about the Vietnam War, collapsing 20 years of administration happy talk.

You could say that 1971 was the year research integrity died in Santa Monica.

The president of RAND was fired and Donald Rice, later to become Secretary of the Air Force, was installed to right the ship. Rice is an iconic example of how the revolving door works inside the Beltway.

Rice prophetically saw the perils of a narrow focus on

strategic analysis—and the hazards of speaking truth to power. Under Rice, research was radically expanded to include a broad social and cultural agenda where all of RAND's *huevos* would not be in one strategic basket.

Subsequently, mother RAND has become one of the wealthiest “non-profit” enterprises in the world; catering to national, state, and foreign government clients worldwide. Inside the Beltway, keeping government clients happy is now much more important, and profitable, than candor or truth on any day of the week.

The Air Force is still a RAND client, and it's no accident that the USAF is the [most woke](#) of all US military services. Not to put too fine a point on it, but RAND brags that it was one of the first American corporations to fund a LGBT club—at taxpayer expense of course.

And RAND is just one of a plague of “non-profit” Beltway bandits, or camp followers, doing social research for DOD. RAND alone has done nearly 100 DEI, or “woke,” [studies](#) for Defense in 25 years. God only knows how much paper is being collectively sold to DOD on the subject. There are more than 1200 think tanks doing research for government agencies at all levels in the US today.

And the political orientation of think tanks like RAND and Brookings is no secret. All that contract social “science” is an extension of the monolithic radical politics at the American school house. Social research at places like RAND gives credibility and academic gloss to politics and partisan policy, good and bad.

And money may be [driving](#) the woke train. Clearly, think tanks like RAND have prospered and grown doing social studies for Uncle Sam. And Santa Monica is so proud of its social impact that it keeps records of woke kills:

RAND's 2010 report [Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy](#) found broad support for the removal of the policy, and few impacts on the readiness of U.S. armed forces; this report is widely thought to have contributed to the repeal of the policy in 2011.

RAND claims that DEI has “few impacts on readiness,” as if Vietnam, Iraq, Syria, and the rout in Afghanistan and shameful retreat from Kabul were military triumphs. All the while, Generals play social engineers and think tanks wade in new revenue streams at taxpayer expense.

Win, win.

Since 1997, RAND's National Security Research Division (NSRD) has conducted over 85 specific [research projects](#) for DOD on the subject of DEI, all at taxpayer expense. The Pentagon has literally been papered by left coast ideological “science.”

Ironically, every study has a specific sponsor somewhere in USAF, the US Army, or DOD. Given the subject matter and number of reports, clearly there are more than a few brass hats who believe that social bottom fishing is the solution to readiness, recruiting, and retention.

The [least woke](#) of the military services, US Marines, have no trouble meeting recruiting quotas and apparently do not need to study the problem to set and maintain standards.

By now, the message should be clear. Fewer and fewer sensible youngsters choose to be woke soldiers, sailors, or airmen. Police forces show similar, if not even more [catastrophic](#), readiness, recruiting, and retention numbers.

Woke is now the DOD equivalent of broke.

There was a time that RAND's NSRD sponsored or hosted the great strategic debates of our time: nuclear weapons,

deterrence, mutually assured destruction, and the like. Today it's pride and queer politics. Surely, Herman [Kahn](#), Bernard Brody, and Roberta Wholstetter are spinning in their graves.

Queer politics, not war, Russia, China, and the global Jihad are now preeminent national security concerns in Santa Monica.

A vestige of Hap Arnold's original vision for RAND survives as Project Air Force (PAF), an institutional cutout with special "assured" funding and classified access. Just a few recent study titles give you a flavor of what is now considered "strategic" at DOD, RAND, PAF and the USAF:

- Talent Management and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Private-Sector Organizations: A Qualitative Review of Promising Practices
- The U.S. Air Force Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Values on Social Media: A Proof-of-Concept Examination of How Air Force-Affiliated Accounts Represent the Service Online
- Benchmarking Demographic Diversity in Air Force Functional Areas Against Near-Equivalent Civilians: The Air Force Occupational Diversity Benchmarking Workbooks

Study reports today seldom have single authors. Like contemporary journalism, RAND reports will often have six or more authors, testifying to the group think applied to political products. Collectively, RAND mandarins take credit for killing the "don't ask don't tell" policy at DOD, demonstrating the fiduciary wisdom of telling woke apparatchiks what they want to hear.

If the subject is DEI, RAND now identifies as the rainbow

Wizard of Oz, the creep behind the politically correct curtain. DOD now [funds](#) sex change surgeries for the troops, at taxpayer expense, a big win for RAND. Clearly, [bottom](#) fishing, literally, in the LGBT demographic is seen as ersatz solution to military readiness, recruiting, and retention woes.

If the subject is DEI, the US Department of Defense is now the fat cat that licks its own troubled genitals. DOD refuses to acknowledge that DEI fads and fetishes might be responsible for the chronic problems with recruitment, retention—and military success.

As if, denial is an argument.

Facts identify with truth. America hasn't won a war conclusively since Japan surrendered. "Woke" is no longer an irrelevant cultural joke.

If the truth be told, not only has RAND strayed from its core post-WWII strategic origins, but RAND has helped the USAF, in particular, and DOD at large, corrupt both roles and missions too—in pursuit of tactical, ephemeral social and scientific fictions.

A Space Force colonel recently wrote a book, *Irresistible Revolution*, on Marxist and related DEI follies and was [fired](#) for his trouble.

Just as the "T" in LGBT is about to collapse the consensus in Queer America, the RAND Corporation is playing Trojan horse at the Pentagon too, creating fissures that Moscow, Beijing, and Mecca are exploiting and [celebrating](#).

If the Wall Street [Journal](#) and Vladimir [Putin](#) can see the rot, why can't we?

[Table of Contents](#)

G. Murphy Donovan is a retired USAF military Intelligence officer, former senior USAF research fellow at RAND Corporation, and former Director of Research & Russian Studies at HQ USAF.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)