

## Security Policy Working Group: Recent Successes

[Back to Previous Page](#)

The Security Policy Working Group (SPWG), formed in the summer of 2002, is a collaborative policy research consortium. ECAAR is one of the founding members, along with the Center for Defense Information (CDI), the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), the National Priorities Project, and five other organizations and individuals. The group seeks to “reshape security policy in the United States and to broaden and deepen the public discourse on what constitutes true security in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. We emphasize multilateral, cooperative approaches that lessen the need for, and use of, military force.” The project is managed by the Proteus Fund, a public foundation funding programs that “expand access to [US] democracy with the goal of building and strengthening the social justice movement.”

Over the past few months, the SPWG and its constituent members have achieved some notable media and collaborative successes. On October 19th, SPWG hosted a Washington, DC press briefing on the effect of recent military operations on the US armed forces. Moderated by Carl Conetta of the Project on Defense Alternatives, the panelists were Lawrence Korb, a senior advisor at CDI, James Fallows of The Atlantic, Pat Towell of CSBA, and Col. Douglas Macgregor (ret.). The panel warned that the US military is severely overstretched. “We have focused our attention on everything other than what counts... [we need to strengthen] a robust, capable force, [find] ways to reduce the overhead, and convert it into something that’s inherently joint,” MacGregor said. Reporters from the Washington Post, New York Times, USA Today, Newsweek, Gannett News Service, Business Week, Army Times, and Talk Radio News Service attended the standing-room only event, which was shown twice on C-SPAN. Enter “Security Policy Working Group” into the search engine of <http://www.c-span.org>, and the entire briefing can be seen on a PC.

Two other SPWG members, the Arms Trade Resource Center and the New School’s Graduate Program in International Security, sponsor the “Economics of Security in a Post-9/11 World” study group, which meets monthly in New York City. This group is a follow-on effort from ECAAR Board member Ann Markusen’s study group on defense issues at the Council on Foreign Relations. Meetings have resumed after a summer break. At the first autumn session, “Economic and Budgetary Aspects of the War on Terror,” SPWG members David Gold and Cindy Williams made presentations. Both these authors will be familiar to readers of ECAAR NewsNetwork. For more information on the study group, make sure to sign up for ECAAR’s monthly electronic newsletter, NewsNotes, or visit <http://www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/study/index.html>.

SPWG’s Winslow Wheeler, known to defense reform insiders as “Spartacus,” is a fellow at the CDI and a former staffer to Senator Pete Domenici. His book *The Wastrels of Defense: How Congress Sabotages US Security* (Naval Institute Press) has just appeared. One reviewer remarked: “[It] should be required reading for every member of the House and Senate, though it may be impossible to shame the shameless.” This book is recommended reading for all ECAAR members; it is available from Amazon.com for \$19.11.

ECAAR, working with fellow SPWG member the National Priorities Project and with Women’s Actions for New Directions (WAND), has recently submitted a grant proposal for a project to study the return on various types of federal investment, comparing the rate of return for military spending with other forms of government expenditure. If the project is funded, ECAAR will undertake the economic research and WAND and NPP will be responsible for grassroots and political lobbying work based on the results.

See <http://www.funder.org/spwg> for more information on the Working Group.

[Back to top](#)

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