

Are we creating a prison-industrial complex?

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In his [farewell address](#) to the nation on January 17, 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower issued a warning that has turned out to be prophetic. He said, “we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex.” The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.” These words were even more significant as they came from a five-star general who had served as Supreme Allied Commander in World War II.

[A recent article from *The Intercept*](#) discussing factors driving prison expansion, hinted at a kind of *prison-industrial complex*. Journalist Amada Abrams noted that architectural firms are often hired to conduct feasibility studies regarding prison expansion even though they have no expertise in criminal justice. They make the case for larger prisons and then are hired to design and build them.

She observed that “Such blatant conflict of interest is occurring in [counties all over the country](#), particularly in rural and conservative areas where local public safety agencies often operate with little scrutiny. These studies rely on thin data to justify spending millions of dollars in public funds. The most significant consequence, though, is that more people wind up incarcerated. As a common industry refrain goes, ‘If you build it, they will fill it.’”