

Western States Legal Foundation

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Globalization and the New Arms Race: The Need for a Broader Movement for Peace, Global Equity, and Ecological Balance

As we enter a new century, it appears that we have learned little from the past. Having thus far escaped catastrophe despite a half century on the nuclear precipice, the United States not only is continuing the arms race of the last century, it is initiating a new arms race for the next. At the same time that it is modernizing thousands of nuclear weapons, the U.S. weapons research and development establishment is working to develop new weapons which will operate through and from space, ranging from ground-based ballistic missile defenses for the near term to space-based weapons for the decades to come.

For half a century, the Cold War was invoked to justify both enormous, constantly modernized superpower militaries and international arms sales to their allies and clients. In the post-Cold War world, these enormous armed bureaucracies and their industrial suppliers continue to pursue their own interests: to constantly produce huge quantities of ever more technologically sophisticated weapons.

The continuing race for high-tech military dominance is driven by decisions and actions which are structural rather than conspiratorial. They are expressed in the everyday bureaucratic inertia of government officials keeping budget lines alive, of corporate sales forces and lobbyists angling for the next lucrative round of guaranteed-profit contracts. But it is also apparent that the institutions

which design, produce, and deploy round after round of high-tech weapons are able to command an enormous share of the talent and treasure of the world's most powerful nations because they serve other interests. Military force is most likely to be deployed by the United States where it maintains the access of transnational corporations to raw materials and to markets under conditions which assure a concentration of riches and power unparalleled in human history for a fraction of a percent of the planet's population.

“Counterproliferation:” An Expanding Role for Nuclear Weapons

In the post Cold War period, superpower arsenals have remained on hair-trigger alert. In addition, the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. policy has, if anything, been broadened. Nuclear weapons are seen as having a central role in countering regional adversaries and potential possessors of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including not only nuclear but chemical and biological weapons-- a policy called “counterproliferation.” According to nuclear weapons doctrine statements by the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

As nations continue to develop and obtain WMD and viable delivery systems, the potential for US operations in such a lethal environment increases. In addition to proliferation of WMD among rogue states, proliferation may also expand to include nonstate actors as well...

*Enemy combat forces and facilities that may be likely targets for nuclear strikes include WMD and their delivery systems, ground combat units, air defense facilities, naval installations, combat vessels, nonstate actors, and underground facilities.*²

The U.S. nuclear weapons labs—Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Los Alamos National Laboratory, and the Sandia National Laboratories-- continue to refine the nuclear arsenal to provide weapons which would be more “useful” in a counterproliferation role. As Sandia National Laboratory director C. Paul Robinson noted in his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee on the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, while the national laboratories “cannot create completely new concepts without testing, many previously tested designs could be weaponized to provide new military capabilities,”

... [I]f nuclear weapons emerge as the right answer to deter the use of other weapons of mass destruction in a regional conflict, the nuclear weapons we currently deploy may carry too high a yield and be far too disproportionate a response to be a credible deterrent. Proven designs of lower yield exist that might be adaptable for new military requirements in the future. I believe that such weapons could be deployed this way without the need for nuclear tests.³

One such modification, the B61-11 gravity bomb, already has been developed and deployed without underground testing. The B61-11 is an earth-penetrating bomb with a variable yield, which can be delivered by the B-2 Stealth bomber.

The Next Arms Race: Space Weapons

At the same time that the nuclear weapons laboratories are pushing new military capabilities for nuclear weapons, other elements of the military research and contracting establishment are lobbying hard for a wide range of weapons which will operate through or from space. Ballistic missile defense, already destabilizing because it provides the militaries of other nuclear weapons states with arguments for larger nuclear arsenals, is just one part of a broader missile and space weapons initiative which could lead to a complex new arms race in the 21st century.

U.S. Space Command, responsible for coordinating the space activities of the military, has its own vision of the problems posed by globalization, and of the proper solution:

“Historically, military forces have evolved to protect national interests and investments -- both military and economic. During the rise of sea commerce, nations built navies to protect and enhance their commercial interests....Likewise, space forces will emerge to protect military and commercial national interests and investment in the space medium due to their increasing importance....

....Although unlikely to be challenged by a global peer competitor, the United States will continue to be challenged regionally. The globalization of the world economy will also continue, with a widening between “haves” and “have-nots.”⁴

A main concern of U.S. military

technology planners is that some of these “have not” nations may place chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons on missiles, which could cause substantial casualties to U.S. expeditionary forces protecting “national interests and investments” around the world.⁵ Space Command’s response to this is ballistic missile defense and the weaponization of space:

“Development of ballistic missile defenses using space systems and planning for precision strike from space offers a counter to the worldwide proliferation of WMD.”⁶

A few decades from now, if the space weapons advocates have their way, this “precision strike” capability, will include weapons ranging from a space-based laser to a “common aero vehicle”, a maneuverable re-entry vehicle “*capable of dispensing a variety of munitions against ground targets to include WMD storage sites, C2 [command and control] facilities, maritime forces and massed ground forces.*”⁷

The Air Force Space Command, Strategic Master Plan states that

“Achievement of our vision end state will provide the NCA [National Command Authority] with a new array of political and military options in the course of evolving crises. The ability to halt an enemy’s operations within hours, minutes, or even seconds, rests with providing a prompt, global, conventional strike capability. The far-term addition of an SOV [Space Operations Vehicle], combined with CAV [Common Aero Vehicle], will provide warfighting forces with improved and more flexible conventional strike capabilities. Moreover, space-based directed energy weapons systems, such as the SBL [Space-Based Laser], will offer US and Allied

forces revolutionary air superiority and global attack advantages in speed, range and response time over all terrestrial systems. The SBL capability for rapid global strike against space and airborne targets will give the US a formidable military advantage. The combination of SBL, along with SOV assets delivering the CAV, provides a complete range of prompt, global, conventional strike options to the future NCA.”⁸

Whose Future?

If the nuclear weapons and space power advocates are successful, the beginning of the 21st century will be remembered as the beginning of a new arms race, both on earth and in space— if there is anyone left to remember. It is up to all of us to decide whether we want our vision for the future to be the endless quest for military domination, or the use of our position as the wealthiest society in history to begin the search for global economic equity and for a way of life which can sustain both humanity and the natural world.

Abolition of nuclear weapons and preventing the continued race for high technology military dominance most likely will not be possible unless accompanied by major changes in the way that the United States government uses military force, and in its relationship with the large, concentrated economic entities whose interests are served by U.S. foreign and military policy. The dramatic mass mobilization in Seattle against the World Trade Organization and in Washington, D.C. against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank is a manifestation of widespread discontent with an international order enforced in no small part by U.S. arms, suggesting that the time is right to begin making these connections.

What Can We Do to Get a Real National Debate about Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and an End to High-Tech Arms Racing?

There are no easy answers to this question. Our political process has failed badly to address these issues in a serious and comprehensive way, and ordinary citizens acting alone have little voice in forums dominated by huge, entrenched institutions and concentrated wealth. But if you care about this issue, you are not alone. And when we act together with thousands and then millions of

others, ordinary people can make themselves heard. In 1995, groups seeking a truly international approach to nuclear weapons issues, not tied to the national security policy of any individual state, founded the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons. In five years, the Statement issued by Abolition 2000 has attracted over 2000 endorsing organizations in more than 90 countries, including over 450 organizations in the United States. In October 1999, a number of the U.S. Abolition 2000 groups launched the US Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, part of the Abolition 2000 Global Network.

To get involved, contact the Western States Legal Foundation or reach the Abolition 2000 Global Network at its international clearinghouse, housed at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, 1187 Coast Village Road Suite 121, Santa Barbara, California 93108-2794; (805) 965-3443; Fax (805) 568-0466, Web address <http://www.abolition2000.org>. **For information about efforts to stop the emerging arms race in space, contact the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space**, PO Box 90083, Gainesville, Florida 32607 USA Phone: (352) 337-9274 Web address <http://www.globenet.free-online.co.uk/>.

NOTES

1. United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Doctrine for Joint Theater Nuclear Operations," Joint Pub 3-12.1 (February 1996), p.I-3.
2. *Id.*, p. viii.
3. Statement of C. Paul Robinson to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, October 7, 1999.
4. U.S. Space Command, *Vision for 2020* (unpaginated, 1997)
5. The threat to the territory of the United States posed by weapons of mass destruction in the hands of alleged "rogue states" (now re-named in official parlance "states of concern," in a creatively Orwellian synthesis of euphemism and demonization) is at best controversial (see, most Recently, Elaine Sciolino and Steven Lee Myers, "U.S. Study Reopens Division Over Nuclear Missile Threat," *The New York Times* (Web edition), July 5, 2000).
6. U.S. Space Command, *Vision for 2020* (unpaginated, 1997)
7. Air Force Space Command, Strategic Master Plan FY02 and Beyond February 9, 2000, 6.2.2 Mid-Term (2008-2013)
8. Air Force Space Command, Strategic Master Plan FY02 and Beyond, February 9, 2000, 6.2.3 Far-Term (2014-2025)