

# The Kill Chain

## The Militarization of North American Life

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I live in Bath, Maine, where Navy *Aegis* destroyers are built. These ships are fitted with so-called ‘missile defense’ systems that the Pentagon is today using to help surround Russia and China. Few people in my community, including some activists, are interested in where these ships go (places like Jeju Island in South Korea.) It’s not popular to raise these questions – especially when Bath Iron Works is the largest industrial employer in our state.

Today, weapons are the number one industrial export of the United States. And when weapons are your number one industrial export, what is your global marketing strategy for that product line? What does it say about the soul of our nation when we have to keep selling weapons and killing people in order to provide jobs?

The manhunt for the Boston Marathon bombing suspects offered the public a window into the stunning militarization of our nation. During that incident the entire domestic surveillance/military response system was field-tested and culminated in the dramatic closing down of an entire urban centre. We have become an occupied nation. For the past 30 years, police departments throughout the US have benefited from the government’s largesse in the form of military weaponry and training.

Obama has announced that 30,000 drones will be flying around the US in the coming years. Thirty-seven states have applied to host one of six military drone test sites planned across the country. Much debate has begun in local communities about whether police should be required to have warrants before they can snoop on us

with drones. Should domestic drones be allowed to carry weapons?

More than 500 aerospace companies are eager to develop this new drone market across the US. The drone industry lawyers say we have nothing to fear – that all we have to do is ask local police and they will be transparent about their drone use.

Infrared and radio-band sensors used by the military can peer through clouds and foliage and can even detect and hear people inside their homes. During the last few years of the US military occupation of Iraq, drones monitored Baghdad 24/7, turning the entire city into the equivalent of a convenience store crammed full of security cameras. This technology is being brought home to control us.

There is a \$2 billion, 1-million-square-foot facility being built by the National Security Agency outside Salt Lake City. It's a phone, fax, email, data storage and analysis warehouse called Utah Data Station – everything about the facility is secret. It is scheduled to open this summer.

Today, drones buzzing over Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Mali are 'flown' by pilots back in the US at places like Creech Air Force Base, Nevada or Hancock Air Field, New York. This is possible because the military satellites in orbit link the pilot to the drone in 'real time' – split-second – time. Space Command downlink ground stations, spread around the globe, help to relay those signals. The Pentagon brags that this high-tech warfare increases 'the kill chain'.

In a way, you could call the military satellites the 'triggers' that make the drones work. These satellites allow the military to see everything, hear everything, and to target virtually every place on the planet.

In June 2012, the second flight of the new military space plane (X-37) touched down at Vandenberg Air Force Base after 469 days in orbit. This unmanned super drone is a first-strike attack system, part of the Global Strike doctrine now underway at the Strategic Command. In annual computer war games at the Space Command, set in the year 2016, the Pentagon launches a first-strike attack on China's nuclear forces and this new military space plane is the first weapon used. It's called the 'successor' to the recently retired space shuttle, which was paraded through the streets of Los Angeles in late 2012. Some 400 trees were cut down to prepare its red carpeted path to a waiting museum. It is the perfect symbol of our worship of the gods of metal. Technology trumps nature.

A friend in Maine has a son who recently spent a year in Afghanistan; my friend worried every day. His son was then sent to Germany and he could breathe a sigh of relief. The son thought about getting out of the military but there are no jobs. The Army offered him a sizeable re-

enlistment bonus and he took it.

In the US today, 57% of every federal discretionary tax dollar goes to the Pentagon to fund the cancerous war machine. Our communities have become addicted to military spending. There is virtually no money for anything else these days as we witness austerity cuts in social programs like so many other nations around the globe.

Colorado Springs, Colorado headquarters of the Air Force Space Command, has 357,000 people living there, and 47% of the population work for the military industrial complex. The aerospace and military production industry in Alabama is a major job provider as well. Huntsville, Alabama now calls itself the 'Pentagon of the South'.

In 1950, the US Army moved former Nazi, Wernher von Braun, and his team of 100 German rocket scientists to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville to create the US space programme. Von Braun and his team also took over NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and helped ensure that the 'civilian' space programme came under military control. The Nazi rocket team brought 'culture' to Huntsville by creating the local symphony and ballet. They lived on a hill overlooking the town.

Was there an ideological contamination that came with these Nazi scientists? One can easily note the similarity between the Nazi slogan *Deutschland über alles* and the Space Command logo that reads 'Master of Space'.

By the way, California is currently the number 2 recipient of Pentagon spending in the nation. The Republicans and Democrats now work together to ensure an endless flow of war money into their states. They understand that it's the only game in town anymore for creating jobs. Both parties get nicely rewarded with campaign donations from the weapons industry.

An activist friend in Halifax, Nova Scotia is now organizing weekly protests outside a shipyard in her community that has begun building expensive new warships for the Canadian Navy. The funding for warship building has necessitated cuts in human needs programs. 'Progressive' political parties are going along with this largest military appropriation in Canada's history because of the jobs issue. The ships will be used by NATO to control the melting Arctic Region on behalf of big oil.

The Pentagon says that our role in the US under corporate globalization of the world economy will be 'security export'. We won't have conventional jobs making products useful to our communities. Instead, we will build weapons for endless war and send our kids overseas to die for the oil corporations.

A couple of years ago, I heard that the department store had a new kids

clothing line so I went to see it in a nearby town. Military uniforms for young boys were on the racks – the message ‘this is all you can ever be’. It’s youth mind colonization.

The military industrial complex has become the primary resource extraction service for corporate globalization and is preparing the future generations for their dead end street. In the US, approximately 40 per cent of all scientists, engineers and technical professionals currently work in the military sector. This is a colossal waste of talent and intellectual resources as we face the coming reality of climate change.

Due to the fiscal crisis across the nation, engineering, computer science, mathematics, astronomy and chemistry departments in colleges and universities have become increasingly dependent on Pentagon funding. At the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque there are ‘top secret’ areas on campus these days.

The Defense Alliance in St. Paul, Minnesota seeks to expand the weapons industry’s presence in higher education, and among its members are military contractors such as Lockheed Martin and General Dynamics. The Navy granted the University of Minnesota’s Center for Transportation Studies \$150,000 to look into improving tracking, surveillance and intelligence communications systems. In 2011, the University of Minnesota reported the Pentagon was trying to ‘restrict’ the open publishing of research resulting from a military-funded project. This indicates quite clearly that the Pentagon is not really trying to further the state of education but, instead, views the students and faculty as nothing more than military production workers doing classified work.

The militarization of everything around us is a spiritual sickness. Lakota holy man Lame Deer talked about the green frog skin – the dollar bill – and how the white man was blinded by his love for the paper money. His spiritual connection to the Mother Earth was broken.

Abolitionist Frederick Douglas reminded us that power concedes nothing without a demand; it never did and it never will. When it comes to our current dark evil economic system, called militarism, we should be talking about its conversion and the jobs that would result from that transformation. Good jobs can be created by home weatherization, building rail systems, creating a solar society, and hiring unemployed workers to plant town and city organic gardens. As we transform our industrial base we lessen the impact of the military machine on our lives and help deal with our major environmental crisis. There is no other way to pay for such a redirection without massive cuts in the war machine budget now.