

“Deep Impact” and the Militarization of Space

Official policy, not science fiction

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Global Research, July 06, 2005

6 July 2005

On July 3, 2005, NASA and its [Deep Impact](#) spacecraft successfully crashed an 820-pound “impactor” into the comet Tempel 1. The force of the 23,000 mph collision, equal to approximately 5 tons of TNT, created a crater the size of a stadium, between two and 14 stories deep.

While the positive scientific and technological aspects of the successful mission have received splashy worldwide attention, scant notice has been paid to the destructive military applications and capabilities demonstrated and suggested by Deep Impact. In light of the weaponization of space that is being [aggressively pursued by the Bush administration](#), all space policy must be examined with these potentially cataclysmic implications in mind.

While some [scoff](#) that such thinking is alarmist, official government policies exhaustively prove that space militarization is not only documented fact, but a top US priority—and the subject of intensive policy making at the highest levels across successive presidential administrations.

In [“Space Corps: The Dangerous business of making the heavens a war zone”](#) (originally published in *Covert Action Quarterly*, April-June 2001), Karl Grossman, professor of journalism at the State University of New York/College at Old Westbury, detailed the critical space military initiatives, citing and quoting from the official documents:

“The blueprint for the U.S. space military program is revealed in the report of the Commission to Assess United States National Security Space Management and Organization. The ‘Space Commission’ was chaired by Donald Rumsfeld, now installed as the Bush-Cheney administration’s Secretary of Defense.

‘In the coming period,’ states the report issued January 11, 2001, ‘the U.S. will conduct operations to, from, in and through space in support of its national interests both on the earth and in space.’

“It is possible to project power through and from space in response to events anywhere in the world,’ it stresses... ‘Having this capability would give the U.S. a much stronger deterrent and, in a conflict, an extraordinary military advantage.’

“The U.S. plans are (also) laid out in documents including the (1996) *Vision for 2020* report of the US Space Command...(which) proclaims the U.S. Space Command’s mission—‘dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment. Integrating Space Forces into warfighting capabilities across the full spectrum of conflict.’

“*Vision for 2020* stresses the role of space in managing the global economy. ‘The globalization of the world economy will continue, with a widening between haves and have-nots’, says the U.S. Space Command. The view is that by controlling space and the Earth below, the U.S. will be able to keep those have-nots in line.”

Grossman also analyzed the US Space Command’s *Long Range Plan* (issued in 1998), a top priority project that involved the investment of nearly 20 man-years and 75 corporations (including Lockheed Martin, Rand, Raytheon, and others), for the development and deployment of space-based weapons. Quoting from the *Plan*:

‘Now is the time...to begin developing space capabilities, innovative concepts of operations for warfighting, and organizations that can meet the challenges of the 21st century...space power in the 21st century looks similar to previous military revolutions, such as aircraft-carrier warfare and the Blitzkrieg...The United States will remain a global power and exert global leadership.’

“The *Long Range Plan* then continues on”, wrote Grossman, “for more than 100 pages for ‘Control of Space,’ ‘Full Spectrum Dominance’, ‘Full Force Integration’, ‘Global Engagement’”.

Another knowledgeable observer of space militarization is Bruce K. Gagnon, Coordinator of the [Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space](#) (their blog [here](#)).

In “[Mars, the Moon and the Militarization of Space](#)”, Gagnon reported on the Bush administration’s ramped-up space policy, which includes the deployment of nuclear power and systems in space ([Project Prometheus](#), Nuclear Systems Initiative), a return mission to the moon, the establishment of bases on the Moon, and an aggressive program for the colonization of Mars.

In a recent piece, “[Bush Seeks Military Control of Space](#)” (June 2005), Gagnon covered the Bush administration’s new national space policy that will “give the Pentagon the green light to move toward deployment of offensive weapons in space. The new directive could allow deployment of lasers in space; attack vehicles that descend on targets from space; killer satellites, which would disrupt or destroy other nation’s satellites; and tungsten rods fired from space platforms that would gather speeds of over 7,000 mph and be able to penetrate underground targets.”

Questioned specifically about the Deep Impact mission, Gagnon offered this incisive view:

“First, we know that NASA routinely says these days that all of its missions now are dual use—military and civilian at the same time. So, what might this mission be doing of military value? One obvious thing is testing the capability to identify a ‘target’ in space and then direct a space projectile to hit the target object from a certain distance while traveling at great speed. This technology would certainly be useful as the Pentagon develops the hit-to-kill mechanisms necessary for ‘missile defense’, or more importantly, for anti-satellite weapons.

“A second aspect of the mission that needs attention is developing the technology to hit a planetary body that NASA suspects might contain precious mineral or resources that could be mined in the future. This mission will gauge a crater and in NASA’s words ‘reveal pristine material beneath’. NASA is doing major work these days developing technologies and

locating possible places to mine the sky.

“NASA scientist John Lewis lays all this out in his book *Mining the Sky: Untold Riches from the Asteroid, Comet, and Planets*. In a Congressional study called *Military Space Forces: The Next 50 Years*, author John Collins talks about the need to develop the military space technology that will allow the US to control the shipping lanes on and off the Earth in the coming period, so the aerospace industry can control who is able to mine the sky.”

Space is not only the ultimate military “high ground”; it is the frontier for pillage and colonization, and the battleground for coming superpower conflicts with China and other rivals.

“The prospects for eventual profit and control of the new space frontier are too high to be left to chance”, observed Gagnon. “Clearly, since the end of World War II, the US military has been planning and is now vigorously developing space technologies that will give them control of the pathways on an off the planet Earth. Just as the Spanish Armada and the British Navy were created to protect their ‘interests and investments’ in the new world, space is viewed today as open territory to be seized for eventual corporate profit.”

Did any of these nightmarish realities cross the minds of the NASA scientists as they wildly celebrated the successful Deep Impact blast of July 3, 2005, or those who watched the event unfold on television screens and through their telescopes?

The acceleration of space militarization, pushed by Bush administration, has raised appropriate alarm, among those who know. In addition to the [Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space](#), the [Union of Concerned Scientists](#) is opposing the Bush space agenda, and taking its case for treaties prohibiting space weapons to Congress and the United Nations.

To again quote Gagnon, “the United Nations, to their credit, created the Moon Treaty and the Outer Space Treaty as ways to circumvent the war-like tendencies of humankind as we step out into the cosmos...but the US appears to be heading in the opposite direction by creating enormous danger and conflict with the current Nuclear Systems Initiative that will expand nuclear power and weapons into space—all disguised as the noble effort to hunt for the ‘origins of life’ in space. [Similarly, the Deep Impact project is also being lauded for “origins of life” research breakthroughs.—LC] Only a lively and growing global debate about the ethics and morality of current space policy will save us from igniting the harsh fires of Prometheus in the heavens above us.”

Unfortunately, as noted by [Grossman](#), these Promethean fires may already have been ignited:

“U.S. military leaders have been blunt in describing U.S. plans to make war in, from and into space, as General Joseph Ashy, then commander in chief of the U.S. Space Command put it in 1996:

‘It’s politically sensitive, but it’s going to happen. Some people don’t want to hear this, and it sure isn’t in vogue, but—absolutely—we’re going to fight *in* space. We’re going to fight *from* space, and we’re going to fight *into* space,’ Ashy told *Aviation Week & Space Technology*.”

Special thanks to Bruce Gagnon, Coordinator of the [Global Network Against Weapons and](#)

[Nuclear Power in Space](#), for his assistance and views.

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