

Keep War, Environmental Degradation and Profit Out of Space

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The 21st Century nuclear arms and developing outer space arms races, which began under Obama and are increasing under Trump, are going to be something the world has never seen before. They are a bonanza for weapons makers, the Pentagon budget and capitalists in space. They will create a less secure world, a greater wealth divide, a tattered safety net and new, more dangerous forms of war.

Last week, the United States increased the risk of nuclear war by [deploying](#) “low yield” nukes. While this sounds friendlier than planet-killing “thermonuclear missiles,” it is a step toward the [US preparing for a “limited” nuclear war](#). The US has been [withdrawing from nuclear weapons treaties](#) and the risk of nuclear war is now counted in seconds rather than minutes. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved the Doomsday Clock to [100 seconds to midnight](#) given that nuclear weapons are on hair-trigger alert.

The US is escalating the arms race because it sees its hegemonic military and economic power weakening. Rather than respond by seeking to work with other nations in a peaceful approach with a foreign policy based on diplomacy, it is seeking continued domination by escalating a new, more dangerous arms race. This will be the most expensive arms race in history. China and Russia, as well as other nations, will not allow the United States to upgrade nuclear weapons and dominate outer space militarily without responding.

This is a quixotic effort to hold onto unipolar power when the rest of the world is seeking a multi-polar world where large governments and small governments have influence in the direction of global policies.



The US Space Force

The new US Space Force is the first new military service in more than 70 years since the establishment of the US Air Force in 1947. [General John Raymond is the first general of the space force](#) and the newest member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The creation of the [Space](#)

[Force received bi-partisan support](#) with 188 Democrats voting yes in the House and overwhelming Democratic support in the Senate in the passage of the newest National Defense Authorization Act.

The Space Force is turning the heavens into a war zone. This sixth branch of the US Armed Forces is being put in place in violation of a 1967 treaty signed by virtually all nations on earth. The Outer Space Treaty, formally the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, is a treaty that is the basis of international space law.

The treaty prohibits the placing of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in space. It limits the use of the Moon and all other celestial bodies to peaceful purposes only and establishes that space shall be free for exploration and use by all nations and that no nation may claim sovereignty of outer space or any celestial body. It treats space as a global commons.

The US falsely claims that it needs the Space Force because Russia and China are developing weapons in space. In fact, China and Russia are seeking to expand the treaty to include a prohibition of all weapons in space. The US has been fighting the proposed Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) treaty in the United Nations that would update the 1967 treaty.

If the US proceeds with an Outer Space Force, it will destroy the vision of keeping space for peace. In response to the US' plans to militarize space, which have been developing since President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative or [Star Wars](#), other countries have said they will be expanding their weapons arsenals in order to defend themselves.

The weapons industry is already taking resources from urgent environmental and human needs. The [world spends nearly \\$3 trillion a year on military expenditures](#), with the US driving 79% of the globe's weapons trade according to the State Department's [World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers report](#). The US exported four times more arms around the globe than the next nine countries combined, \$143 billion annually. The new 21st Century arms race being propelled by the United States will increase this spending on weapons.

Arms exports by country

Ten largest arms exporters for the period 2007 to 2017

Country	Share of Total	Average Annual Exports 2007-17 (USD)
United States	79.5%	\$143.2B
Russia	5.4%	\$9.7B
France	2.3%	\$4.1B
United Kingdom	2.0%	\$3.6B
Germany	2.0%	\$3.6B
China	1.6%	\$2.9B
Italy	1.1%	\$1.9B
Israel	0.9%	\$1.7B
Sweden	0.7%	\$1.3B
Spain	0.7%	\$1.3B

SOURCE: World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfer (WMEAT) 2019 from the U.S. Department of State, CNBC calculations. Arms transfer values in constant U.S. dollars. Values include only trade among countries covered by WMEAT and unspecified or multinational entities.



Controlling Access to Space for US Corporate Interests

[The Vision for 2020 Report, by the United States Space Command](#) begins with: “US Space Command — dominating the space dimensions of military operations to protect US interests and investments. Integrating Space Forces into warfighting capabilities from across the full spectrum of conflict.” The motto of the US Space Command is “the US must be the master of space.” The slogan appears on the patch on their uniforms as well as over the entryway to the Space Command Headquarters in Colorado Springs, CO.

In a 1989 book, [Military Space Forces for the Next 50 Years](#), Congress said the US must control the pathway so we can control access for corporations, and governments. By dominating space, rather than being a global commons controlled by all the nations of the world, it will be controlled by the United States with tremendous profits for US corporations.

Dominating space militarily is about protecting the profits from mining the resources of outer space. [Corporations are developing](#) for the purpose of mining asteroids and [the moon](#) for platinum-group metals, which are rare on Earth but are extremely important in the manufacture of electronics and other high-tech goods. The potential is barely understood, the [resources in just the inner solar system are nearly infinite](#) compared with those on Earth. Just one large metallic asteroid such as [16 Psyche](#) is thought to contain enough metals to last humans for millions of years at current consumption rates. The potential is massive. [Planetary Resources](#) has compiled a database—[Asterank](#)—of over 600,000 asteroids that might represent mining targets.

[Issues in Science and Technology](#) reports there are a wide variety of space resources “that include solar power beamed from space, minerals, metals, gases, rare earth elements, helium 3 (as a fuel for nuclear fusion power generation), and materials for space manufacturing (the fabrication of goods in space). Yet ordinary water is the focus of most serious near-term development efforts. Water, when split into its constituents, hydrogen and oxygen, provides the most efficient chemical rocket propellants known. Water is also necessary for human settlement.”

The privatization of space travel is developing hand in glove with the militarization of space. Much of the research and development for space exploration has been paid for by the US

taxpayer, but private corporations will profit. [Issues in Science and Technology](#) reports that government investment in mining infrastructure provides a tipping point to attract private investment. Space resources will be developed through public-private partnerships, which often means the taxpayer pays the costs while private corporations profit. They report that “in November 2018, NASA awarded nine Commercial Lunar Payload Services contracts to industry for the development of lunar transportation and delivery-related capabilities.”

International governance is not keeping up with the economic development plans of the US and other nations. There is no international authority that provides an oversight function for the exploitation of space resources. Some countries including Russia and Belgium have urged the restriction of commercial development until such time as a binding international legal framework is developed. However, the US is moving forward with laws that create property rights for commercial development, and now is rushing forward with a space military force. [New policies and laws](#), as well as international governance, are urgently needed, but the US is blocking progress in these areas while moving forward to dominate space.



From, the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, Bruce Gagnon, Organizing Notes

What We Can Do

Bruce Gagnon of Global Network Against Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space [told us on Clearing The FOG Radio](#) that the Achilles Heel of this is the tremendous cost. The cost is so large that we cannot imagine the breadth of it. The Pentagon describes this as the largest industrial project in world history. One rocket launch costs hundreds of millions of dollars.

Gagnon tells us that Space News said the funding source for outer space weapons and development will be entitlement programs — Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid as well as what remains of the safety net. Popular movements must demand funding for social needs, fixing environmental degradation and responding to the climate crisis instead of funding for space wars. Updating and expanding the Outer Space Treaty also needs to be an issue that is raised by movements as it will impact every issue we are working on.

Our goal must be that no country, corporation or individual can control the global commons

of space. We must keep the bad seeds of war and environmental degradation for corporate profit out of space. To achieve these goals the people must educate and organize to challenge the profit interests of the aerospace industry, weapons industry and those who seek to profit from exploiting space resources. That will be the focus of the [No War 2020 conference](#) in Ottawa this May.

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