

The Empire Strikes First: Space and World War III

By [Michael Kane](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

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“Let’s think of a world where the U.S. has “death stars” that are going over countries. Do you think other countries are going to accept that?”

— Theresa Hitchens, vice president of the [Centre for Defense Information](#)

China and Russia announced they will be conducting their first ever joint military war games in 2005.¹ World War III is being planned and the U.S. military views space as a battleground to its strategic advantage since it is far and away the front-runner on the final frontier. Immediately after China put their first man in space, Lt. Gen. Edward Anderson, Deputy Commander of US Northern Command, stated that it will not be long before space becomes a battleground.

The *New York Times* reports that the Bush administration plans to issue a national security directive to put forth an offensive space weapons program. There are many opinions regarding the intent, necessity, and feasibility of such a program.

Will this be an economic boondoggle like the \$100 billion wasted on the failed missile defense system? Will it trigger a new world arms race? Russian officials have already come forward with statements that speak to both of these possibilities.² The Air Force has denied that its “focus” is to put weapons in space. They claim their interest is to ensure they have access to space even though the U.S. is far and away the leader in space dominance.

But competition on the final frontier will not be tolerated.

The “counter-satellite operations” program is designed to “target an adversary’s space capability by using a variety of permanent and/or reversible means to achieve five possible effects: deception, disruption, denial, degradation and destruction...”³

The Air Force wants more than access to space. They want to deny real and perceived adversaries all usable access to it. An Air Force document entitled “[The 2004 Transformation Flight Plan](#)” states:

*The ability to deny an adversary’s access to space services would be essential if future adversaries choose to exploit space in the same way the United States and its allies can.*⁴

The Air Force also has plans for space-based weaponry to hit earthbound targets. India’s National Newspaper *The Hindu* reports:

The new weapons being studied range from hunter-killer satellites to orbiting weapons using lasers, radio waves, or even dense metal tubes dropped from space by a weapon known as

“Rods from God” on ground targets. 5

The Air Force’s aim is “Full Spectrum Dominance.”

Full Spectrum Dominance is based upon Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s logic that whoever controls space will dominate earth. This defines the U.S. military goal as fighting war “in, from and through” space. 6

All of this should come as no surprise to anyone who has paid attention to the policies of the Bush administration. In 2002 they removed the U.S. from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty which was specifically designed to ban the militarization of space. There is now no law or treaty preventing the U.S. from putting weapons in space barring weapons of mass destruction. 7

This is quite a significant shift from Bill Clinton’s 1996 policy designed to use satellites for defensive purposes including spy satellite support for military operations, arms control and nonproliferation pacts.⁸ However both the Bush and Clinton administrations refused to negotiate a new space treaty through the United Nations.

The current administration may have plans to place nuclear weapons in space. This would be illegal, but then so was the Iraq war. This administration has shown a tendency to disregard international law whenever and however it sees fit.

One of NASA’s nuclear space programs is “[Project Prometheus](#).” Though not an offensive weapons program, the project was designed for the purpose of having a nuclear powered rocket launch into space. If such a rocket were to explode as the shuttle Columbia did, the casualties, injuries and radioactive poisoning of civilians would be catastrophic.

A nuclear powered rocket system is thought by some to be a solution for shortening the time it would take for a shuttle to reach Mars so that humans could survive the trip. Fortunately NASA’s recent budget proposal cuts \$171 million in funding for Project Prometheus, but the program still has \$260 million for the time being. Now NASA says it plans to “refocus” Project Prometheus on the development of “space-qualified nuclear systems to support human and robotic missions.” 9

Sounds a lot like the original focus. Time will tell.

Bruce Gagnon, who contributed “Mars, the Moon and the Militarization of Space” to *Global Outlook’s* [issue #7](#), recently wrote the following:

For the last several years the Space Command, headquartered in Colorado Springs, held a computer simulation space war game set in the year 2017. The game pitted the “Blues” (U.S.) against the “Reds” (China). In the war game the U.S. launched a preemptive first strike attack against China using the military space plane (called Global Strike). Armed with a half-ton of precision-guided munitions the space plane would fly down from orbit and strike anywhere in the world in 45 minutes. 10

Of course, playing God will become more and more difficult as the contested energy disappears.

Michael Kane’s music can be heard and purchased at: www.csupreme.com

1 "China, Russia Will Hold First War Games," by Joe McDonald, *Associated Press*, 12/13/2004 http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/121704_china_russia.shtml

2 Russia Will Take 'Adequate Measures' if Space Militarized: Ivanov, *Agence France-Presse*, 6/02/2005 <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?F=889997&C=america>

"A Russian reality check on space weapons," by James Oberg, *MSNBC News*, 6/03/2005 <http://msnbc.msn.com/id/8089747/>

3 <http://www.defensetech.org/archives/001384.html>

4 "Pentagon Exercises Focus on Space Control," by Jeremy Singer, *C4ISR*, 2/10/2005 <http://www.c4isrjournal.com/story.php?F=652108>

5 "Bush likely to back weapons in space," by Julian Borger, *The Hindu*, 5/20/2005 <http://www.hindu.com/2005/05/20/stories/2005052001671400.htm>

6 "Military Creating "Rods from God," by Sean Gonsalves, *Cape Cod Times*, 5/31/2005 <http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0531-26.htm>

7 "Air Force Seeks Bush's Approval for Space Weapons Programs," by Tim Weiner, *New York Times*, 5/18/2005 <http://www.commondreams.org/headlines05/0518-02.htm>

8 Ibid

9 "Prometheus, ISS Research Cuts Help Pay for Shuttle and Hubble Repair Bills," by Brian Berger, *Space.com*, 5/12/2005 http://www.space.com/news/050512_nasa_prometheus.html

10 "It's Our Destiny" Bush Seeks Military Control of Space," by Bruce Gagnon, *Counterpunch*, 6/3/2005 <http://www.counterpunch.org/gagnon06032005.html>

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