

Bush Opens Outer Space to Combat

By Karl Grossman

It was issued quietly at 5 p.m. on the Friday before the long Columbus Day weekend, a release seemingly designed to get little notice. But what it involved deserves major attention: a new U.S. National Space Policy that could set the stage for the heavens being turned into a battleground.

For decades, the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 has shaped how nations approach space. Developed by the United States, United Kingdom and Soviet Union — and now ratified essentially by all the world's countries — the landmark agreement sets space aside for peaceful purposes.

But the United States became uncomfortable with the treaty in the 1980s during President Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" program. That discomfort was marked in the 1990s by U.S. opposition to efforts (still ongoing) led by Canada — and including Russia and China — to ban all weapons in space; the treaty only bans weapons of mass destruction.

There were bellicose declarations in the 1990s, too, from the U.S. Space Command speaking of "dominating the space dimension of military operations to protect U.S. interests and investment."

Moreover, as George W. Bush took office, a commission chaired by his defense secretary-to-be, Donald Rumsfeld, spoke of how "in the coming period the U.S. will conduct operations to, from, in, and through space to support its national interests."

Then the Bush administration began revising the U.S. National Space Policy as issued by President Bill Clinton. A front-page, lead article in *The New York Times* last year reported that the U.S. Air Force was "seeking President Bush's approval of a national-security directive that could move the United States closer to fielding offensive and defense space weapons." It told of how one "Air Force space program, nicknamed Rods from God, aims to hurl cylinders of tungsten, titanium or uranium from the edge of space to destroy targets on the ground striking at speeds of about 7,200 miles an hour with the force of a small nuclear weapon."

The new policy does not explicitly declare the United States will now move ahead with such space weapons — but it opens the door.

"Freedom of action in space is as important to the United States as air power and sea power," it asserts in its

introduction. Under "National Security Space Guidelines," it says, "United States national security is critically dependent upon space capabilities, and this dependence will grow." So the United States will "develop and deploy space capabilities that sustain U.S. advantage."

Also, the 10-page policy says the United States "will oppose the development of new legal regimes or other restrictions that seek to prohibit or limit U.S. access to or use of space."

Further, the policy authorizes the use of nuclear power overhead to "enhance space exploration or operational capabilities ... The use of space nuclear power systems shall be consistent with U.S. national and homeland security, and foreign policy interests."

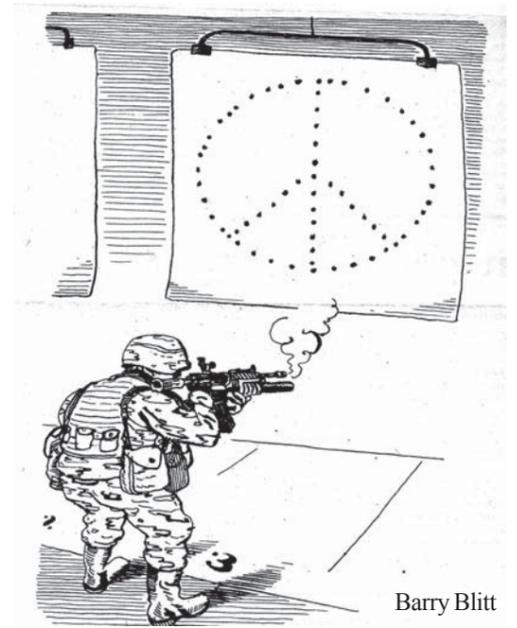
Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, speaks of the document's "provocative language ... This is the kind of talk that will create a new arms race in space, clearly just what the military-industrial complex wants." And, he says, "Bush's new space policy enshrines the rejection of an international treaty to ban weapons in space."

The vision of the Outer Space Treaty — to set aside space as a global commons and to prevent the armed conflict that has marked human history on Earth from extending into the heavens — would be altered by the new U.S. policy.

The United States sees its potential military supremacy in space — and seeks to take advantage of this. But that's similar to the U.S. attitude in 1945 when we had the atomic bomb and no one else did. It will not take long if space is opened up to war for other nations, notably Russia and China, to meet the United States in kind. We still have an opportunity now to adhere to and strengthen the Outer Space Treaty and, with verification, continue to keep space for peaceful purposes.

Or we can turn the heavens into a war zone and a place for nuclear power and weapons. We are at a crossroads. The policy must not be slipped through quietly. The people of the United States must have a voice and there should be wide public discussion on this fateful decision.

— **Karl Grossman, journalism professor at the State University of New York, wrote and narrated the award-winning TV documentary: "Weapons in Space: The Nuclearization and Weaponization of the Heavens."**



Barry Blitt

Abandoned Missile Launch Site Named for the Gipper?

BISMARCK, North Dakota — Ronald Reagan, who said pollution came mainly from trees, quipped that he had outlawed the Soviet Union and would begin bombing in 5 minutes, and whose cold war administration increased the U.S. nuclear arsenal by 17,000 new warheads, may have an abandoned Minuteman III missile silo and Launch Control Center named in his honor.

On April 19, North Dakota Senate Republicans inserted \$250,000 for a "Ronald Reagan Peace Through Strength Missile Silo Historic Site" in the State Historical Society's budget. Merl Paaverud of the Historical Society said, "When we get people out there to the launch control center, and they go down 45 feet into the ground, their eyes really open up. Part of it is the mystery of what it looks like and what went on down there."

Indeed, the underground launch center — 2 1/2 miles east of Cooperstown — once had control of 10 Minuteman III missiles, each with three 375-kiloton warheads. The Air Force operators had charge of explosive forces equal to 900 Hiroshima bombs, enough power to kill 126 million people.

Uranium Weapons Update ... Belgium, Maine, California, Hawaii, Oregon ...

Belgium Bans Uranium Weapons and Armor

On March 22, Belgium became the first country in the world to ban ammunitions and armor that contain depleted uranium (DU), the toxic, radioactive waste metal used in armor-piercing munitions and armor plate. The ban was adopted by Parliament with unanimous support from across the political spectrum. Although Belgium does not produce or use DU, Brussels is home to the NATO headquarters. NATO forces have repeatedly used DU in war zones, and U.S. shipments of the weapons often travel through Belgium's port at Antwerp. Acknowledging the Precautionary Principle, the deputies agreed that the manufacture, use, storage, sale, acquisition, supply and transit of these conventional weapon systems should be prohibited. The Belgian Coalition to Stop Uranium Weapons and the International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons initiated the effort.

Human Lung Tissue Study Finds DU Cancer Risk

If inhaled, the gas-like uranium-238 that is dispersed when DU shells smash and burn causes substantial damage to DNA, and could cause cancer, according to new research.

In the first study of DU's effects on human lung cells, researchers found that inhalation of DU's toxic, radioactive metallic fumes might cause lung cancer. As the *Guardian* reported May 8, "The study adds to growing evidence that DU causes health problems on battlefields long after hostilities have ceased." Causing such delayed-effect casualties is a crime of war long prohibited by treaty law.

Toxicologist John Pierce Wise, Sr. and colleagues at the U. of Southern Maine in Portland exposed human lung tissue to particles of uranium oxide typically found in DU dust.

"These data suggest that exposure to particulate DU may pose a significant risk and could possibly result in lung cancer," the team wrote in the May 21 issue of *Chemical Research in Toxicology*.

Livermore Lab Seeks Permit to Explode Tons of DU

If it's permit application is approved, the Lawrence Livermore National Lab in California intends to increase the amount of test DU it explodes outdoors.

Over 4 tons of radioactive DU and other toxic heavy metals could be exploded in military tests near Tracy, 21 miles east of Livermore, Calif. in the San Joaquin Valley.

The lab already conducts up to 100 test blasts annually in which an undisclosed amount of DU is used "routinely," according to a February letter sent to Tracy residents by a Livermore site manager. The watchdog group Tri-Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment is working to see that the permit is denied.

The Tracy Press reported that Army munitions director Col. Jim Naughton told a 2003 press briefing on DU, "The Iraqis tell us, 'Terrible things happened to our people because you used it [DU] last time.' Why do they want it to go away? They want it to go away because we kicked the crap out of them." The use of hundreds of tons of DU by U.S. and UK

forces in their 1991 bombardment is blamed by Iraqi doctors and others for the sharp increase in cancer and birth abnormalities across southern Iraq.

U.S. Military on Oahu Island Lied About DU

Some Hawaii residents are calling for Governor Linda Lingle to sign a bill requiring tests for DU in the soil near Schofield Barracks on Oahu Island.

In 2006, a company conducting clean up operations at the barracks on Oahu discovered DU used in the early 1960s. Prior to that the Army had denied any use of DU in Hawaii.

A public relations officer for the U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii, told *Hawaii Today*, "Army policy prohibits the use of depleted uranium ammunition in training." But Cory Harden, a Mountain View resident who supports the new law is skeptical. "They

haven't told us the truth in the past, so why should we believe them now?" Harden said, adding that the Army denied it used DU until it was discovered on Oahu.

DU Testing for Oregon's National Guard Veterans

Oregon's House of Representatives on May 3 unanimously passed HB 2832-A, which orders the state's Director of Veterans Affairs to assist returning veterans in obtaining screenings and treatment for DU contamination.

The bill also creates a task force to study the effects of DU and Gulf War Syndrome. A tandem measure passed out of committee in the state Senate and a floor vote is pending.

Similar testing mandates have become law in Connecticut and Louisiana and are being considered in Minnesota.

Train Watch Alerts Nation (Continued from cover)

construction. Dairyland Power Cooperative took over in the early 70s.

Decommissioning the reactor will cost at least \$84.6 million, according to Dairyland, an amount that already exceeds the available public funds (\$72.2 million) set aside for the project. The site isn't expected to be nuclear free, if ever, until 2026. Dairyland's member-owners pay \$5.5 million a year



Photo by George Nygaard

From left: Gail Vaughn, Andrew Gilbert, Bonnie Urfer, Guy Wolf and Kay Turner in front of the shut-down La Crosse Boiling Water Reactor May 4. Contaminated parts of the defunct reactor are being shipped to private dumps across the country.

for security, maintenance and monitoring of the waste, all without benefit of electricity. The lesson? The price of nuclear power is unlimited and incalculable.

Dairyland plans to store its waste fuel on-site. Mr. Christians was not concerned about the potential flooding of the prospective dry cask storage site. He explaining that the five or six casks needed for the fuel rods would be raised on gravel pads.

In 1993, the Mississippi rose 49.6 feet above normal and six feet above the old record set in 1973. The river remained at flood stage for over two months. Flood water disabled a major water facility in Iowa and left 200,000 people in Des Moines without drinking water. Transportation and industry along the Mississippi was disrupted for months. Damages to river transportation in the region was the worst ever incurred in the U.S. Over 1,000 of the 1,300 levees designed to hold back flood waters failed. Over 70,000 people were displaced by the floods. Nearly 50,000 homes were damaged or destroyed and 52 people died. Over 12,000 square miles of productive farmland were rendered useless. Damage was estimated between \$15-20 billion. If Dairyland and the NRC could control the rain and water, gravel pads alongside the Mississippi might work to keep the waste fuel storage casks dry.

I asked Roger Christians, "If you knew then what you know now about nuclear power, would Dairyland have made the decision [to buy the system for \$1] in the first place?"

He said, "No."

From May 19 to the 24th, I was just up the road from the reactor with cameras, binoculars and a phone, reporting on the preparations for shipment to Barnwell while John LaForge alerted the press from the office. I was relieved by Jim Johnson, a volunteer from Des Moines, Iowa. Jim stayed for four days and still the reactor core hadn't moved. Finally, on May 31, the shipment left for South Carolina. Although Dairyland claims the package is low-level waste, its time line and route were kept just as secret as if it were high-level waste.

Asked about the interior and exterior curie count (radiation levels), the company refused to say. Spokesperson Deb Mirasola only told Nukewatch that the levels were within NRC limits.

Now that the reactor is bound for Barnwell, it's South Carolina's water table that will indefinitely be threatened by Wisconsin's use of nuclear power. Utah is next.

— *John LaForge helped with research for this article.*