

Weapons Giants Manufacture China Nuclear Threat

Bechtel, Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, and other war profiteers behind China bashing and out-of-control nuclear weapons budget

Opinion by Alex Lo, in Toronto, Ontario. Originally for the *South China Morning Post*, this version has been edited by Nukewatch.

There is threat inflation, and then there is threat hyper-inflation. The U.S. under Joe Biden has gone full throttle with the latter over China and the nuclear threat.

It seems that the unquestioned “China threat,” even backed with nuclear weapons, is not enough in itself to scare the U.S. public into acquiescence. The myth now has to be [coupled] with a “coordinated” nuclear attack threat by Russia and North Korea. Seriously.

A front-page story in the *New York Times* and duly — and uncritically — used by other major news outlets, reported on an “updated nuclear-weapons employment guidance [to] deter Russia, the PRC [China], and North Korea simultaneously.”

“President Biden approved in March a highly classified nuclear strategic plan ... that, for the first time, reorients [U.S.] deterrent strategy to focus on China’s rapid expansion in its nuclear arsenal,” it said. “The shift comes as the Pentagon believes China’s stockpiles will rival the size and diversity of the United States’ and Russia’s over the next decade. [The] revised strategy, called the ‘Nuclear Employment Guidance,’ seeks to prepare the United States for possible coordinated nuclear challenges from China, Russia, and North Korea,” the *Times* said.

Questions? How likely is it these three countries will coordinate a nuclear attack knowing full well it would mean retaliatory annihilation for themselves? Even dictators are concerned with self-preservation. Will China want to tie its own “no first use” nuclear weapons pledge (and its own survival) to what happens in Moscow or Pyongyang?

It is at least conceivable that out of desperation, Vladimir Putin or Kim Jong-un could “go nuclear” in a Hitler-style *Götterdämmerung*. But should that ever happen, the first thing the Chinese would do is run for cover, not join them!

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the currently deployable U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile is roughly nine times as large as China’s, and the Pentagon budget is three times what Beijing spends on its military. So, given the sheer implausibility of this “coordinated nuclear attack” scenario, why is the U.S. under Biden committing to the new nuclear attack program?

It makes no sense in terms of deterrence. The U.S. has more than 5,000 nuclear warheads, enough to annihilate life on Earth multiple times. However, it makes sense if you want to increase military spending, and take the Pentagon’s world-destroying capability to an even more cosmic level. But why? Well, follow the money.

Sharon Weiner, an Associate Professor of International Relations at American University, and author of *Our Own Worst Enemy? Institutional Interests and the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Expertise*, wrote in *Scientific American* in May: “Unfortunately, that [bipartisan] consensus seems to extend to turning a blind eye to the exploding costs, which helps explain why the original \$1 trillion [nuclear] modernization program proposed in 2010 today has a price tag approaching \$2 trillion. That estimate is likely to escalate even further by 2050 — the supposed end date for modernization.”

Escalating costs from the supply-side economics of the military-industrial complex demands a growing threat, otherwise the spending could face Con-



Cartoon by Eric J. Garcia

gressional challenges and could be scaled back or cancelled.

According to the Washington-based Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, the U.S. arms industry has between 800 and 1,000 lobbyists working in Washington. “Most of those lobbyists ... come through the ‘revolving door’ from careers in the Pentagon, Congress, or the Executive Branch,” it said. The ongoing so-called “modernization” of the nuclear arsenal refers to production of a new generation of missiles, bombers, submarines, warheads and the arsenal’s whole manufacturing base. It’s this rebuild program that’s projected to cost at least \$1.7 trillion. And the tax monies are going to the world’s biggest arms producers — Bechtel, Boeing, General Dynamics, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman.

These corporate war profiteers, not China, are the real reason the U.S. intends to spend \$2 trillion or more on nuclear weapons.

Opinion: Unfriendly Fire in Arms-Flooded Ukraine War Zone

By John LaForge

Giant military contractors might be just too big when their own weapons so overcrowd a war zone that their own missiles shoot down their own fighter jets.

This could be what happened in Ukraine in August, when a Lockheed Martin F-16 jet fighter, piloted by Ukrainian Lt. Col. Oleksiy Mes, was most likely shot down by a Patriot air-defense missile. Six of Lockheed Martin’s F-16s were delivered to Ukraine in August. An undisclosed number of Patriot missile systems arrived there earlier, from a General Dynamics program which was bought by Lockheed Martin in 1993.

The deputy head of the Ukrainian parliament’s defense committee, Mariana Bezuhla, made the allegation of so-called “friendly fire” and demanded consequences for parties responsible for the blunder. According to the Associated Press, Ukraine’s Air Force has not directly denied that the F-16 was hit by a Patriot missile. Four days after the crash President Zelenskyy fired the head of Ukraine’s Air Force, Lt. Gen. Mykola Oleshchuk, who had accused Bezuhla of illegally “discrediting U.S. arms manufacturers.” The gall!

Lockheed Martin is the \$137-billion global weapons giant, with 115,000 employees, that sells — to willing buyers — anywhere all manner of war machines, from jet fighters to missiles, from helicopter gun systems, to rocket motors.

One Lockheed program making a real killing today is the F-35 jet fighter, now being sold all over the world.

Of course, Lockheed’s crash- and accident-prone F-35 is notoriously faulty. The jet’s 13 major crashes or disappearances over the last ten years hint at a shaky future performance in war. Lockheed Martin currently has around 100 F-35s in stock because they are not being delivered due to various technical problems and software modifications.

Lockheed boasts that by the 2030s, over 600 of its F-35s will be operating in ten European NATO states, the better to gear-up for permanent war with Russia.

Four NATO countries that now station U.S. hydrogen bombs at their air bases — Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Holland — are purchasing F-35s by the dozens.

The F-35s are being built to carry the Pentagon’s newest nuclear weapon, the B61-12 air-drop H-bomb. On March 8, 2024, the company declared



Air Force maintenance crew chiefs refueled an F-35A at Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Field, Arizona in November 2022. Photo by Airman Mason Hargrove/U.S.A.F.

the F-35A had officially been “certified” to carry the B61-12. These new thermonuclear weapons are set to be delivered to the allied NATO bases this year or in 2025, replacing the B61s already deployed there.

So, the Russians can sleep a little less easily as the newest U.S. fighter jets, carrying the newest U.S. air-drop nuclear bombs, will be ready and purposed for incinerating their cities on orders from the U.S. president. The F-35s are the first ever stealth (radar-evading) warplane certified to carry nuclear weapons.

Beyond the Pentagon’s “nuclear sharing” NATO partners, the F-35s are being peddled to other compliant

militaries including those of Greece, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Singapore, South Korea, Israel, Australia, United Arab Emirates, Canada, and Japan.

With the Pentagon itself buying 1,855 F-35s, and nineteen other air forces in line for their share, a rough calculation is that Lockheed will sell 3,615 of the \$110-million jets, pocketing at least \$433 billion.

Starting last year, the U.S. deployed several of the nuclear-capable F-35s to the eastern borders of NATO, operating from Estonia, Lithuania, and Romania. The Royal Netherlands Air Force has trained to carry the U.S. B61 nuclear bombs for decades. Since the start of the Ukraine war, the Dutch have twice deployed their newly purchased F-35s in shows of force against Moscow, first to Poland which borders Russia, and later to Bulgaria.

In 2024, Lockheed Martin spent \$6,434,005 on lobbying Congressional offices in Washington. On September 19, Lockheed sponsored the “Future of Defense Summit,” on Capitol Hill “to discuss how to build a more advanced defense industry and enhance deterrence.”

This bribery and lying in support of gargantuan military spending only leads to crimes of war or self-inflicted fatalities like Lockheed’s likely shoot-down of its own jet. Although it sells in Congress, Lockheed’s nuclear weapons systems and the means of delivering them are not for defense. They only produce billions in profits at the expense of the world’s crying need for basic necessities.

With the colossal volume of U.S.-made jets, tanks, bombs, missiles, helicopters, artillery, and intelligence programs being sold, traded, or gifted all over the world, it was inevitable that the empire’s guns would eventually be fired against itself — intentionally or by accident. If the Ukrainian F-16 crash and the death of Col. Mes is not to be repeated endlessly, and if accidental nuclear detonations are to be avoided, the United States will have to be forced to end its weaponization of international conflict, and to replace its militarized foreign policy with a diplomatic one.