

WATCHING BRIEF: WB18-5 PREVENTING AN ARMS RACE IN SPACE

As Quakers, we seek a world without war. We seek a sustainable and just community. We have a vision of an Australia that upholds human rights and builds peace internationally, with particular focus on our region. In our approach to government we will promote the importance of dialogue, of listening and of seeking that of God in every person. We aim to work for justice and to take away the occasion for war.

Sept 2018

Recent moves by the US President to establish a Space Force/Command represent a significant challenge to the peaceful uses of outer space. Other countries are also involved in military uses of space, including Australia. This Brief looks at current trends and identifies issues relevant to the peace movement.

The Current Situation

A useful summary of how things stand has been prepared for the [Reaching Critical Will](#) website (part of the work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom). Here are the main points:

- Today, militaries everywhere rely on satellites for command and control, communication, monitoring, early warning, and navigation. There is a blurring of lines between 'peaceful' and 'non-peaceful' uses of outer space.
- Weaponisation of outer space includes destructive space-based devices, ground-based systems that target space-based weapons, and dual-use systems like missile defence.
- Space weaponisation puts at risk international security and arms control, and will lead to a new arms race.
- The US has already invested in space weapons technology, and China and the US have developed anti-missile capabilities. US moves for a missile defence shield are a step towards dominance.
- Any fighting in outer space would be the cause of space debris that could damage global infrastructure.
- Every year most UN member states support a resolution for a treaty (PAROS) on prevention of an arms race in space (with US and Israel abstaining). Such a treaty would complement the 1967 Outer Space Treaty which aims to preserve space for peaceful uses.

European Union Statement

On 25 May 2018 the EU made a statement in support of PAROS:

- The EU and its Member States are highly committed to the issue of the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS). Preventing an arms race in outer space and preventing outer space from becoming an area of conflict is essential to safeguard the long-term use of the space environment for peaceful purposes.
- In this context, we stress the importance of Transparency and Confidence Building Measures, providing an important contribution to the security, safety and sustainability of activities in outer space, and the importance of promoting principles of responsible behaviour in outer space in the framework of the UN and other appropriate multilateral fora.

Outer Space Treaty

The Treaty that came into force in October 1967 includes the following principles:

- Exploration and use of outer space shall be for the benefit and interests of all countries.
- Outer space is not to be occupied or appropriated by any nation to claim sovereignty.
- States shall not [place nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit.
- States shall be responsible for their activities in space, and avoid contamination.

Analysis and Comment

Joseph Gerson (American Friends Service Committee) recently visited Australia after participating in an anti-nuclear conference in Japan on the anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki a-Bomb attacks. In an article published on 6 August (*Truthout*) he said that the US Pentagon budget has been increased by an amount equal to the total Russian military budget. He said that President Trump's announcement of a new 'Space Command' is part of a plan to dominate Earth from space, including a complete modernizing of the nuclear weapons arsenal, to enable a first strike war-fighting capacity. There are moves by other nuclear weapons states to enhance their arsenals including their space-related options. In response to these trends, some 80 members of the US Congress, says Joseph, have co-sponsored legislation to remove the president's ability to launch a first strike. A coalition of anti-war groups is campaigning to reverse current policies.

Richard Tanter, of the Nautilus Institute, has written widely on security matters. In an article published in 2015 by the *Australians for War Powers Reform* he affirmed that Pine Gap, Kojarena and North West Cape facilities are all capable of being used by the US in war without Australian consent or control. He sees the increasing integration of Australia and US militaries as reducing the capacity for independent action by Australia, and as drawing Australia into areas like drone assassinations and missile defence. His view is that no government has been willing to be open with the Australian public about the risks that are involved.

The ABC's Background Briefing (RN, 20 August 2017) revealed National Security Agency (USA) material that confirmed the close link between Australia's Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) and Pine Gap and the American strategic command:

- What NSA Provides to the Partner

NSA provides cryptologic products/services to the Government of Australia through DSD, on virtually all subjects, particularly those related to the Pacific Rim. NSA shares technology, cryptanalytic capabilities, and resources for state-of-the-art collection, processing and analytic efforts.

- What the Partner Provides to NSA

DSD provides access to commercial and foreign/domestic satellites from sites in Geraldton and Darwin, High Frequency (HF) collection and Direction Finding (DF) from three sites; and, manning of the operations floor at Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap (RAINFALL), a site which plays a significant role in supporting both intelligence activities and military operations.

Conclusion

The extension of the arms race into space adds another dimension to the challenge faced by us all in redirecting attention to common action for peace at all levels of society. QPLC will seek ways to raise public awareness of the potential for cooperation among nations to reverse the push to militarise space. We value ideas and actions by all in the peace movement to keep the issue alive in public and private conversation. In particular, questions need to be asked of our political representatives about what action they will take to reverse the role Australia is playing in the US strategies of war-fighting.

Canberra
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