U.S. Strategic Command Near Omaha

A Dangerous & Scary Neighbor

by John Krejci
NFP State Board Member

If you are one of the thousands of recipients of the Nebraska Report who did not get a chance to hear military space expert Bruce Gagnon and Catholic Bishop Thomas Gumbleton speak at the 2007 Annual Peace Conference October 6 in Omaha, I urge you to keep reading. Gagnon, the coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, demonstrated how StratCom’s new mission to make the U.S. the unchallenged “Master of Space” is arrogant and dangerous. Gumbleton spelled out the moral and human consequences of our addiction to violence and war: “If we don’t end war, it will end us—and perhaps all life on the planet.”

The objective of the United States’ present military policy, Gagnon explained in his remarks, is “full-spectrum dominance.” And the goal is threefold:

1. Control of the earth through conventional weapons
2. Control of the seas and the earth by the Pentagon
3. Domination of space by StratCom.

The domination of space will entail controlling access to space, freedom of operation in space and denying others the use of space. The Air Force’s Space Command’s motto of “Master of Space” leaves no question about the real purpose of U.S. space operations, Gagnon said. Now that the Bush/Cheney Administration has renounced the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, U.S. space policy formally authorizes the Pentagon and StratCom to pursue the development of offensive space weapons.

When China responded to this U.S. policy of space dominance by shooting down one of its own weather satellites last January, the reaction in the U.S., Gagnon said, was telling. Alongside a sense of outrage that the Chinese would even dare to challenge our claim to space, the administration redoubled its efforts to ensure U.S. supremacy in the skies. The president and Congress, who have already doubled the military budget in the past seven years, allocated $11 billion to test space technology, and it is estimated that another $30 billion is available in the “Black Budget” of secret military funding. The aeronautics industry is gleefully speculating that “Star Wars” will be the largest industrial project in the history of the earth.

One practical and frightening consequence of this spending priority, however, is to fund it will require the dismantling of America’s entire system of entitlement programs: Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, social welfare and anti-poverty initiatives. The U.S. is even asking approved allies like Australia and India to cut their social spending to help underwrite this high-tech space venture.

Global Network Coordinator Bruce Gagnon, pictured on the left, holding a banner in front of Omaha’s Qwest Center during the Strategic Space and Defense 2007 Conference last October. Photo by Korean activist Sung-Hee Choi; banner design by NFP Webmaster Justin Kemerling.

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Nebraskans for Peace

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2007 Peacemakers of the Year

Presented at the October 6 Annual Peace Conference in Omaha

John Krejci
Recipient of the NFP Member Award

John Krejci, who serves as the National Association of Social Workers—Nebraska Chapter representative on the NFP State Board, has been a NFP member forever. Whether it’s street-picketing against war (this war, the other wars, the weapons of war) or defending civil rights (before and after Selma, Alabama and Whiteclay, Nebraska) or pushing for justice (a rehabilitative penal system) or holding the Catholic hierarchy to walk and talk their Founder’s message (justice, love), John is there. Count on it.

John is an activist in another sense of the word. Not only does he protest injustice, he practices his belief that broadening cultural awareness is the first step toward developing trust and actually building peace. John’s students at Nebraska Wesleyan University were in for an energetic ride. Because learning for John was never simply a pencil and paper thing, many of his students experienced with him the magnificent culture and the malicious poverty in a hands-on week at an Indian Reservation. Neither were his three children exempted from experiencing other cultures. He and Jean took ‘em everywhere—camping out in assorted Spanish-speaking countries. I bet they have stories to tell!!

John Krejci will tell you he’s Czech and “those Czechs, ya know, they’re stubborn.” Well, yes, John’s taught us that very well. Here’s what we think: If ever there was a feisty, persistent, nonviolent peacemaker, it’s our John Krejci!

— Carol McShane

Nebraska Coalition for Peace
Recipient of the Public Service Award

Formed in the fall of 2002 amid the Bush/Cheney Administration’s drumbeat for war with Iraq, this ad hoc collection of student, church and organizational activists proceeded to organize the largest anti-war rally in Lincoln since the Vietnam era. Over 1200 people turned out for a march, rally and teaching in the freezing cold January 18, 2003, on the day celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birth.

In the intervening five years, this hardy group—which still includes some of its founding members like Josh Cramer, Mark Weddleton and Don Tilley—has been instrumental in organizing the first “SOS—Speak Out at StratCom” in August 2003; annual anti-war protests on the anniversary of the Iraq invasion; and the weekly vigils at the Lincoln Federal Building opposing both the Iraq occupation and the anticipated attack on Iran.

As an institutional supporter of the Nebraska Coalition for Peace from the outset, Nebraskans for Peace could think of no more deserving recipient of the public service peacemaker award than the all-volunteer “Coalition,” which has faithfully led the anti-war effort in Lincoln—and Nebraska—the last five years. Coalition members Jill Francke (who serves as the Coalition liaison to the NFP State Board), Jake Hoy-Elswick and Megan Jackson accepted the award on behalf of the group. Visit their website at www.fmclincoln.org/Coalition_for_Peace.htm.

— Mark Vasina

This holiday season... Give the gift of peace.

Give to the Nebraska Peace Foundation
U.S. Strategic Command, conclusion

ture. Current plans call for permanent bases in Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America—all enabling StratCom to wage global preemptive attacks and space and computer warfare. And in Eastern Europe, the U.S. is seeking to build missile defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic, though 75 percent of the Czech public opposes such a move, and in their recent presidential election, the Poles just ousted the government that was actively promoting the U.S. proposal. The White House defends these bases as integral to thwarting a missile attack from Iran. Russia, however, sees this as nothing less than a coordinated assault on its security—both to undermine its defensive capability and ultimately gain access to its oil, natural gas and water resources.

The world, Gagnon said—and particularly those of us in Nebraska—has been lulled to sleep by the long-time presence of SAC, now StratCom. The Glenn L. Martin Co. plant in Omaha that built the “Enola Gay” (the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima) was a source of jobs and security during World War II. And for the 40 years of the Cold War, SAC controlled America’s nuclear deterrent. StratCom’s new missions, however, acquired in the aftermath of 9/11, are even more ambitious and frightening: full-spectrum global strike and the authority to attack any place on the face of the earth in one hour with either conventional or nuclear weapons; waging the international “War on Terror” with total disregard for national and international law; and the total domination of space and the capability to wage a world war from space.

Many years ago, when I lived in Bellevue, I used to reflect on the SAC motto posted outside Offutt Air Force Base: “Peace is our profession.” In my mind though, I invariably added, “However, war is our avocation!” Needless to say, few in Nebraska think as we in Nebraska do. Gagnon pleaded for us to wake up before it’s too late. Bishop Gumbleton fleshed out the moral consequences of war for the human race and our planet. He stated unequivocally: “We can end war or war will end us.” He recalled former StratCom commander, General George Lee Butler, who having seen up close the destructive capability of nuclear weapons became a disarmament advocate on his retirement. Gumbleton also cited John F. Kennedy, who, after having been briefed on the result of nuclear warfare, said, “And we call ourselves human beings.” The bishop said the abolition of war is crucial because war acts against the very creative love of God. By war, we destroy what God has made. That is the worst sin. And war kills innocent people.

Quoting the words of Pope John Paul II, Gumbleton said, “Never again war. NO, Never again war.” He said that the hatred generated by war prevents us from becoming full, loving human beings, and called for the abolition of war—all war, even limited war, if we are to save and preserve the planet. The world, he stressed, could hardly survive even another limited war the scale of World War II, which was restricted mostly to the countries of Western Europe. Nuclear and space wars, however, the bishop said, can now involve the whole planet. He alluded to the recent destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure and the death of some 650,000 Iraqi lives in an unjust war. He noted that 70 percent of the armaments in the “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign on Iraq were directed to their targets from space, by StratCom’s Space Command—proving that space warfare is real.

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Bishop Gumbleton being arrested at Offutt AFB in May 1989 after having committed civil disobedience by ‘crossing the line.’

Lulled to sleep by the familiarity of first SAC, and now StratCom, Nebraskans have gotten too comfortable with it as a neighbor.

The first major effort to do this kind of international outreach on StratCom is being planned by Bruce Gagnon and his organization, the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. On April 11-13, 2008, they will hold their Annual Conference and Protest in Omaha, with Nebraskans for Peace serving as the local sponsor. As the promotional flyer in part states, “Since 9/11, StratCom’s mission has expanded to become command central in the U.S.’s ‘War on Terror’ and for the U.S. plans to dominate space militarily...” This ‘New StratCom’ is responsible for overseeing any Global ‘First Strikes,’ the National Security Agency, and Ballistic Missile Defense... StratCom today is the most dangerous place on the face of the earth. It is secretive. Its mission is destabilizing. It operates outside the law. And its transformation has occurred so quickly, most of the world is completely unaware of its mission and dangers.” Our job as peacekeepers here in Nebraska is to make the world aware of the threat StratCom now represents, so that together we can start backing away from the brink.

What Can Be Done about StratCom?

For those of us in Nebraska who are opposed to what’s going on at StratCom, our top priority must be to get the word out to the national and international community about the menace it’s now become. Everything that we here in the state do needs to be pointed toward ‘making news’ that can be sent around the globe on the news wires and internet. The hard fact of the matter is that we’re unlikely to ever win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the majority of our Nebraska neighbors. There are just too many barriers to overcome: economic, cultural—and even political. As a creature of the federal branch of government, StratCom is effectively outside the jurisdiction of our local and state governmental bodies. So ultimately, the goal of activists here in the state should be to make StratCom the focus of national—and even international—protests. The rest of the countries of the world can be counted on to put their own, rather than America’s, interests first, making them a much more responsive audience to our message.

Getting that message out, though, is going to take time and resources. A great deal of effort and substantial human and financial commitment will be needed from members of Nebraskans for Peace and others committed to pursuing this peacemaking work. At some point, it may be feasible to establish a permanent presence near StratCom—buy some land, display permanent signs, live across the road from Kinney Gate at Offutt Air Force Base—as we seek to gain the attention of the national and international media. This very thing was done effectively by Fr. Roy Bourgeois in Fort Benning, Georgia, for the School of the Americas (S.O.A.) protest.

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StratCom on Campus

The Global Innovation and Strategy Center at UNO

by Tim Rinne, State Coordinator Nebraskans for Peace

It’s a windowless, bunker-like structure enclosed by a fence, and nobody will say for certain what goes on there. But on the grounds of the University of Nebraska-Omaha sits the first facility ever built on an academic campus for StratCom’s own exclusive use.

In existence since October 2005, the “Global Innovation and Strategy Center” (GISC) formally opened the doors of its University of Nebraska headquarters in August 2006. News accounts typically describe the center as a “think tank,” though its director, retired Air Force officer Kevin Williams, dislikes the label as too limiting. The center, Williams says, is charged with doing more than simply generating “ideas”—it presents direct courses of action StratCom can take. He prefers to think of GISC (pronounced ‘gisk’ with a hard ‘g’) as a “learning lab” for developing “War on Terror” and thwarting terrorists the U.S. faces today do not operate in traditional ways. Rather than merely attacking military targets, he says, they seek vulnerable non-military ones. The World Trade Center provides a prime case in point.

That our economy and way of life might themselves be at risk tends to explain the unprecedented role played by state government and the private sector in establishing the GISC headquarters at the UNO campus. Their collaboration in this public/private venture has added a whole new dimension to the notion of the “military-industrial complex.” For instance, the structure GISC is housed in doesn’t even belong to StratCom. Omaha’s private sector tied up another $23 million. And legally, the building is the property of the University of Nebraska system. According to a Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce spokesperson, GISC constitutes a great example of the partnership between the public and private sectors in Omaha and shows the “very strong corporate commitment” toward StratCom. UNO’s chancellor, John Christensen, was just as ebullient. Not only is the center not out of place on the school’s Ak-Sar-Ben campus, he told the Omaha World-Herald—it’s part of the metropolitan university’s mission to engage with institutions in Omaha. StratCom and GISC are “a sizable and important part of that community.”

Okay. But does anybody on the outside know what actually goes on in that bunker-like building?

The director, Williams, refused to “even begin to detail the work being done in the center” when asked by a World-Herald reporter at the dedication ceremony. The former Air Force pilot, whose career included postings at the Air Force Space Command and the U.S. Space Command (now StratCom Component Commands), did concede in an article distributed at the Strategic Space and Defense 2006 Conference that “his experience in space can help him keep a strong focus on space issues at the center as needed.” But the only concrete example he was willing to publicly discuss dealt with Avian Flu.

Back when the threat of an Avian Flu outbreak was dominating the headlines, a GISC partnership group, which in this case included officials from Nebraska’s local and state governments, put together models that could help predict whether the flu virus was approaching Nebraska, and a plan for quick distribution of vaccines, Williams said. The GISC bounced off StratCom’s training to key state government officials. The Omaha World-Herald—it’s part of the metropolitan university’s mission to engage with institutions in Omaha. StratCom and GISC are “a sizable and important part of that community.”

Yes, but that’s “classified.” Despite being on the campus of a publicly funded Land Grant institution dedicated (in theory, at least) to the principles of learning and the open exchange of ideas and information, what we know about GISC is sketchy at best. Whatever minimal knowledge we do have derives mainly from the quick peek granted to the media at the ribbon-cutting opening the center in September 2006.

Under its hardened exterior lies a 13,228-square-meter, multiple-story underground facility, whose gleaming high-tech office space and secured teleconference areas are wired directly into Omaha’s fiber-optic network. Located just east of the Scott Technology Center at 6825 Pine Street, GISC is also in close proximity to the “Peter Kiewit Institute,” which has been officially designated as a “Center of Excellence” by the National Security Agency (the StratCom Component Command most famous for having instituted the controversial “warrantless wiretap” program). Both the Scott Center and the Kiewit Institute are the corporate spawn of the legendary Kiewit Construction Company—the international construction firm which once owned the Omaha World-Herald and is now already hard at work renovating the only one-year-old GISC facility.

StratCom officials say they deliberately sought a college setting for GISC in order to lure “outside the box” thinkers, who might ordinarily be reluctant to spend time on a military base. Drawing experts from around the globe in computer networks and telecommunications links, GISC staff connect with other corporate and academic experts from around the globe in so-called “virtual teams.” These teams, once commissioned with a task, operate on a tight time frame, Williams says—of no more than four months.

Speed and agility are prized qualities for the command charged with waging the White House’s “War on Terror” and thwarting terrorist attacks before they take place. The creation of the Global Innovation and Strategy Center, accordingly, is the direct outgrowth of StratCom’s new missions of “Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance,” “Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction,” “Integrated Missile Defense” and “Prompt Global Strike.” As Williams says of the center’s purpose, “In general terms, we’re trying to find ways to move faster than our adversaries.”

Involving the corporate, government and academic communities, StratCom Commander James Cartwright said at the GISC dedication a year ago, “is critical to be able to come up with solutions that will outwit any perceived adversary that we have.” And, as Williams is quick to note, the terrorist adversaries the U.S. faces today do not operate in traditional ways. Rather than merely attacking military targets, he says, they seek vulnerable non-military ones. The World Trade Center provides a prime case in point.

Despite being on the campus of a publicly funded Land Grant institution dedicated (in theory, at least) to the principles of learning and the open exchange of ideas and information, what we know about GISC is sketchy at best.
StratCom: The Most Dangerous Place on the Face of the Earth

Annual Space Organizing Conference & Protest
April 11-13, 2008 Omaha, Nebraska

In 2008, the Global Network will hold its Annual Space Organizing Conference and Protest outside this Strategic Command. Hundreds of people from around the world will come to Omaha from April 11–13, 2008 to learn first-hand about this military installation that operates in America's heartland. For the first time, world citizens will gather to shine a light on what StratCom has become.

Co-sponsors:
Bite the Bullet Campaign; Codepink; Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques; Fellowship of Reconciliation; International Network against Foreign Military Bases; Nebraskans for Peace; No Nukes North-Alaska; No To Bases Initiative-Czech Republic; Peace Action; United for Peace & Justice; Veterans for Peace; Women's International League for Peace & Freedom

Located in the heart of the nation, just south of Omaha, Nebraska, the U.S. Strategic Command (StratCom) for years has been the site from which a nuclear war would be controlled. Since 9/11, its mission has expanded to become command central in the U.S.'s "War on Terror" and for the U.S. plans to dominate space militarily.

This “New StratCom” is responsible for overseeing any Global “First Strikes,” the National Security Agency, and Ballistic Missile Defense. Thus, StratCom:

• Has already drawn up the war plans for a space-directed assault on Iran’s nuclear facilities and—upon approval from the President—will execute the attack;
• Is spying on Americans from above with its satellite surveillance network by overseeing “warrantless wiretaps” on the ground;
• Is authorized to attack any place on earth within one hour (using both conventional and nuclear weapons) under the White House’s “Doctrine of Preemption” if the President “suspects” a threat to America’s “national interests”;
• Is reviving the Cold War by pointing anti-ballistic missile installations at Russia from Eastern Europe and by containing China militarily with a ring of bases and naval destroyers from which to launch a first strike.

StratCom today is the most dangerous place on the face of the earth. It is secretive. Its mission is destabilizing. It operates outside the law. And its transformation has occurred so quickly, most of the world is completely unaware of its missions and dangers.

As things now stand, the next war the White House initiates will be planned, launched, and directed by StratCom. Building global awareness is essential if we are to get StratCom to back away from the brink. Join us!

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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.5
Randall Forsberg (1943-2007) on an Exit Strategy from Iraq

Scholar and activist Randall Forsberg, whose concept of a “Nuclear Freeze” galvanized the disarmament movement to a level never before seen, died this past October after a protracted struggle with cancer. In 1981, she brought her newly coined proposal for a “freeze” on the development and production of all new nuclear weapons to Nebraska as the keynote speaker at the Annual Peace Conference in Lincoln. That single presentation inspired Nebraskans for Peace to in turn launch the Nuclear Freeze Campaign in state, which over the next four years reached out to thousands of people and spawned a new generation of political activists in Nebraska.

Although the Freeze movement ultimately failed to halt the arms race, Forsberg’s commitment to peacemaking and nuclear abolition never wavered. She went on to found the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts and was later appointed by President Clinton to the Advisory Committee of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Last year, while she was already suffering from cancer, Forsberg wrote the following article for the January/February 2006 issue of Boston Review about a workable ‘exit strategy’ from Iraq—the original invasion of which she had vehemently and wholeheartedly opposed.

Barry Posen makes a strong case for the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. His main point, now widely agreed upon even in Washington, is that the American military presence is motivating the insurgency and generating a steady supply of recruits from inside and outside Iraq. Like the other “national liberation” insurrections of the past century, this form of guerrilla war cannot be won by the imperial invaders. The theory is that if American troops pull out, the insurgency will collapse and the United States will have achieved its goal.

The main problem, however, is that no one knows whether the insurgency will be replaced by an equally vicious, or perhaps even more bloody and protracted, civil war between Iraqi Sunnis and Shias. Posen argues that since the majority Shias run the government and armed forces and control all the heavy military equipment in the country, they should be able to prevent the Sunnis from running amok. Once American troops are gone, to press the Shias to offer considerable political independence to the Sunnis, comparable to that exercised by the Kurds for almost 15 years.

In this regard, I think Posen is exactly right. The solution, as always for civil wars based on ethnicity or religion, is not military but political. An effort to “win” militarily—that is, to keep American troops fighting until we see an end to all suicide bombings, improvised explosive devices, and other forms of armed resistance—will only lead to more Iraqi death and suffering, and more American troops dead or maimed.

This leaves the questions of how and when American troops should pull out, and how a functioning Iraqi federation might be established. Posen does not give a reason for choosing 18 months rather than 24, 12, six, or three. Taken alone, the view that the American presence is leading to greater bloodshed than would occur after withdrawal suggests that the quicker the withdrawal, the better. But there are other important factors to consider: Iraq needs a viable constitution that confers substantial self-governance on the Sunnis, as well as some form of revenue-sharing from the oil fields, which lie entirely within the regions that will be controlled by the Kurds and the Shias.

Posen suggests that 18 months are needed for training Shia troops. I cannot see how another 18 months will do what the last 24 months have failed to accomplish, or how training Shia troops is crucial to the establishment of a modus vivendi between the Shias and the Sunnis. The goal is not to have Shia armed forces perform functions comparable to those now being carried out by American troops; the goal is to eliminate the need for anti-insurgency fighting, thus reducing demands on the Shia-led government, armed forces, and police to normal intra-state functions.

To begin handing over responsibility to the Shias for maintaining an interim government and for shaping a viable constitution, President Bush should announce the following revamped policy for Iraq: First, the United States supports the creation of a federation of three self-governing regions and expects nearly all the bloodshed to end when this is accomplished and the American troops are gone. Second, American troops will begin a gradual pullout now, while Iraqis work out their political future. Third, the pace of the American withdrawal will inversely match progress toward the creation of a viable federation. If steady progress is being made, the pullout might be spread over a year, but if no progress is being made, the pullout will be more rapid, possibly completed in six months. Either way, the rate of withdrawal must allow a reasonable period of time for the additional political negotiations needed to establish a federated form of government.

Announcing support for a federation and imminent withdrawal will take the wind out of the sails of the fighters. Announcing the inverse rate of withdrawal will put additional pressure on the Shias to come up with a political solution acceptable to Sunni leaders. This will not be an unconditional pullout that would lead to civil war and concede victory to the insurgents. It will be a pullout that leaves Iraq in a far better state than it is today or will be for the foreseeable future under continued U.S. military occupation.
What’s HOT in Global Warming?

by Professor Bruce E. Johansen

The Inuit Hold George W. Bush Responsible for Their Melting Ice World

The debate over global warming now turns more frequently to legal liability—which individuals, corporations, and governments are responsible, and how should they be held to account? The Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which filed a petition and obtained a hearing March 1, 2007 before the Organization of American States, seeks to establish a legal basis for liability in world forums for violations of their human rights from activities that are warming the Arctic. The Inuit in this case are very conscious of their pivotal role in a natural world that will not survive climatic business as usual.

The ICC represents the interests of roughly 150,000 Inuit spread around the North Pole from Nunavut (which means “our home” in the Inuktitut language) to Alaska and Russia. Nunavut itself, a territory four times the size of France, has a population of roughly 27,000, 85 per cent of whom are Inuit. From the top of the world, having been exposed to atmospheric perils from toxic chemicals and global warming, the Inuit find themselves in an unwilling but necessary position of international arbiters in an emerging “law of the air” that will eventually govern our shared atmospheric commons.

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A Seamless Garment...  
The Peace Tax Fund

by Carol Windrum, Peace with Justice Ministries  
United Methodist Church

I wrote lots of papers (credos) in seminary. I can’t remember all the various topics but I do remember one professor after another telling me that whatever my beliefs, what I wrote on page 3 needed to be consistent with what I wrote on page 23. They weren’t there to convince me of a certain set of beliefs; they were more concerned with my developing an integrated and consistent belief system—a seamless garment, if you will.

For many years, I have felt a deep tension between what I say I believe and what I do at tax time. It is not an integrated belief system. I say that I believe in the power of nonviolence and that I believe that war is not a solution to problems, and yet I continue to pay for war.

There is hope for folks like me and many of us within the Nebraskans for Peace family.

There is a persistent movement to allow persons who conscientiously object to all war to not be compelled to pay for it. It’s called the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund (NCPTF). I have served as a Director on the national Board for several years (along with Steve Ratzlaff, a former Nebraska Mennonite now living in California) and have a deep appreciation for the dedication of volunteers and staff who continue to build this legislative effort.

Thousands of U.S. citizens, because of deeply held religious and moral beliefs, cannot participate in war in any form. Their consciences do not allow it. Freedom of conscience and religion was acknowledged in this country as early as 1662, when colonies recognized the rights of those with “scruples of conscience” to not bear arms. This principle was later explicitly expressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution.

In 1940, legislation was passed establishing an alternative to military service, thus providing a legal way for conscientious objectors to serve their country without violation of their sincere beliefs. But there is still no alternative for the “drafted dollars” of our brothers and sisters who believe paying for war is a form of participation in war.

Unless they earn less than the federal taxable level, there is no legal option for some people to manifest or practice their faith (to “love your enemies”). They are required to support state violence through taxation. Conscientious objectors to military taxation risk fines, wage garnishment, property seizures and jail sentences by redirecting taxes which support war. Some impoverish themselves rather than be legally bound to pay such taxes and thus violate their deeply held beliefs. They seek a legal alternative, since they simply and sincerely cannot pay for war.

The National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, a national nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., advocates for passage of the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill (currently H.R. 1921). The legislation would enable designated conscientious objects to have their federal income taxes directed to a special “Peace Tax Trust Fund” which would be allocated to any federal program other than those with a military purpose.

The Peace Tax Foundation, a sister organization to the NCPTF, encourages taxpayers to reflect on their responsibility and write a “Statement of Conscience about Paying for War.” A form of this written certification would eventually be needed in order to qualify as a “designated conscientious objector.” The Peace Tax Foundation also helps coordinate the international Peace Tax movement involving 18 other countries.

200 letters in support of the Peace Tax Fund were delivered to Senator Chuck Hagel’s Omaha office April 16, 2007.
Alternatives to the Military Honors Michael Baker

by Ruth Thone

Michael Baker, the award-winning Lincoln East High School educator whose contract was abruptly terminated last April—ostensibly for having shown a video about the Iraq War—was honored by the Lincoln-based Alternatives to the Military this past summer as its “Peacemaker of the Year.”

More than 40 Peace & Justice activists from the Lincoln community, including several previous award winners and former colleagues of Michael’s from Lincoln Public Schools, turned out the evening of July 26, 2007 at Christ United Methodist Church for the pot luck dinner and award presentation. Michael, who is now teaching at the University of Nebraska and Southeast Community College, was recognized and thanked for his efforts throughout his 27-year-long career to make peacemaking a part of the educational curriculum.

A Vietnam War veteran and long-time member of Nebraskans for Peace, Michael was renowned for both his inspirational teaching style and educational achievements. In 2006, he was one of only 47 teachers in the entire state to win National Board Certification. Under the termination agreement reached with Lincoln Public Schools, he was prohibited from saying anything “disparaging” about the school district, though his mid-semester termination speaks for itself.

He had previously been forbidden by the district to teach history ‘backwards’—a technique intended to help students better understand our current situation by ‘reasoning backwards’ through the historical currents and events that formed the world of today. With his history-instruction approach having been deemed too controversial by the school district, he was subsequently assigned to teaching geography. On the day he showed the “Baghdad ER” video in his geography class, however, he was directed to vacate the building by the end of the school day.

Michael’s termination sent a wave of anxiety coursing through the local public school system—particularly at the high school level, where teachers tend to seek new, meaningful ways to connect with their students. But the perceived ‘censorship’ on the part of the district also sent a chill across the country. The story not only garnered extensive coverage in the Lincoln Journal Star, both The Progressive and Mother Jones magazines took note of the case, and what it portends for the future of American public education.

Michael Baker joins an esteemed group of previous “Peacemaker of the Year” award recipients, stretching back 15 years to the founding of the Alternatives to the Military organization after the first Gulf War. ATM, which routinely leaflets at high schools urging students to seek ‘alternatives to the military’ in their career choices, has been funded entirely by annual grants from the RESIST Foundation, headquartered in Somerville, Massachusetts. Each summer ATM selects an honoree (generally alternating men and women) from the ranks of our local Peace & Justice networks whose efforts have often gone unheralded by the larger community.

The 2007 Alternatives to the Military committee members are Marj Manglitz, Dwight Ganzel, Jim McChesney, LaRoy Seaver, Margaret Vrana, Nina Williamson, Joyce Sturdy, Ebb Munden, and co-chairs Nye Bond and Ruth Thone.

Weapons of Mass Destruction T-Shirt

The United States fought a war against Iraq claiming that Saddam Hussein was hiding “weapons of mass destruction.” None have been found there, but it isn’t difficult to find them on US soil!

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In a blog entry on his website, harold-andersen.com, the retired editor of the Omaha World-Herald, took issue with Paul Olson’s October 2007 column, “Downwind from Nuclear Holocaust and Wacko.” Disputing Olson’s assertion in “the Nebraskans for Peace tabloid” that the atomic bombing of Japan was not instrumental in ending the war, Andersen wrote:

As to whether the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings ‘produced a Japanese surrender,’ consider the facts:

A nuclear weapon was dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Another was dropped on Nagasaki three days later. On August 15, 1945, Japan announced its surrender, nine days after the first bomb was dropped and six days after the second bomb.

But Andersen neglects to mention that, also on August 9, the Soviet Union “attacked the Japanese in Manchuria, fulfilling its Yalta pledge to attack the Japanese within three months after the end of the war in Europe: in a few days the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria, consisting of over a million men but lacking in adequate armor, artillery, or air support, and depleted of many of its best soldiers by the demands of the Allies’ Pacific drive, had been destroyed by the Soviets.” (quote from Wikipedia). In short, the Japanese quickly lost Manchuria to the Soviets. Their nation was next.

Andersen also completely ignores the arguments of many of the U.S.’s leading generals of the time—Eisenhower, LeMay and Marshall—that the bombing was unnecessary.

He doesn’t engage the historians either, including some of the most authoritative in the United States: Gar Alperowitz of the University of Maryland in The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb, Herbert Bix of SUNY in Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan (Harper, 2000), Ernest R. May of Harvard in “The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Far Eastern War, 1941-1945,” (Pacific Historical Review May, 1955, pages 153-74), and Burton Bernstein of Stanford in “The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered” (Foreign Affairs, January/February 1995). All show, with thorough documentation, the bomb to have been peripheral to the defeat of Japan and not materially speeding up its surrender. Historian Tsuyoshi Hasegawa recently came to the same conclusion using more powerful evidence from Soviet, Japanese and American archives [Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)]. One can, of course, argue with historians. However, one cannot responsibly dismiss them without evidence.

Andersen also trots out the time-worn ‘national defense’ argument, averring that: “(1) it is appropriate American military policy to have the capability—with nuclear or non-nuclear weapons—to respond to threats to our national security and (2) at this stage in world history we should maintain the capability to use weapons which could produce the same kind of net life-saving results as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, particularly in the self-defense saving of American lives.” While this argument has repeatedly proven popular with the American public, it’s not the final word on the matter. As a signatory of the United Nations Charter, the U.S. is subject to international law. And the offensive use of both nuclear and conventional weapons— as stipulated in the Bush/Cheney “Doctrine of Preemption” and StratCom’s new role and mission in the “War on Terror” is flat-out illegal.

Andersen accordingly takes Olson to task for alleging that StratCom today has “plans for propagating more Hiroshimas and Nagasakis” unless he [Olson] can quote, from responsible named sources, irrefutable evidence that StratCom is planning nuclear bombings in some way comparable to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As the U.S. did not say what it was planning before it bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki (warfare, by definition, tends to depend on surprise and deniability), it’s somewhat disingenuous to assume it will now. Even so, one can produce a chain of evidence:

1) StratCom’s new “full-spectrum global strike” mission authorizes it to plan and conduct offensive war;
2) It’s already done so once with the “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign on Iraq;
3) StratCom retains control of America’s nuclear arsenal;
4) President Bush has refused to take its nuclear option off the table vis-à-vis Iran;
5) Cheney has said that we will not let Iran have nukes;
6) Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Seymour Hersh has reported that the U.S. has already pinpointed 1200 sites in Iran to be bombed;
7) Under CONPLAN 8022, the decision as to whether nuclear or non-nuclear weapons are to be used on these sites is left to discretion of the president and the StratCom commander.

Our “tactical nuclear weapons” are extremely large nuclear weapons, perhaps comparable in size to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. We are ready to bomb. The President and Vice-President are Olson’s “responsible named sources.” His descriptions of what StratCom can do and is being asked to do are responsible and documented. And rather than defending this dangerous, destabilizing and ultimately illegal behavior, as Harold Andersen is doing, we should be doing all that we can to prevent it.
Your Foundation Speaks

by Loyal Park, President Nebraska Peace Foundation

As we near the end of the year, it is time to evaluate our personal finances and see what we can do for the charities and organizations we care about most. We hope you will put Nebraskans for Peace at the top of your list, and to remember that you can support the educational work of Nebraskans for Peace by a tax-deductible donation to Nebraska Peace Foundation.

If your tax situation will not benefit from tax deductibility, then make your donation directly to Nebraskans for Peace. A year-end gift will help keep NFP running on into the year ahead. If you would like more information, I can be reached at 402-489-6662.

PLAN FOR TOMORROW BY PREPARING YOUR WILL TODAY.

Paul Olson, conclusion

In almost every part of the world where American credibility has gone south—South America, Southeast Asia and the Middle East—the CIA installed or tried to install governments that represented the opposite of American ideals.

All of this is not surprising if one looks at who led the CIA—lazy, feckless, ignorant men like Allen Dulles. An exception is Richard Helms from the 1960s and ’70s, who appears to have been good at the information gathering work of the organization (not so good at controlling covert actions). A more typical leader, the afore-named James Angleton who ran counterintelligence from the ’50s-’70s, was so paranoid he believed almost nothing his agents told him, preferring his own fantasies to reliable information.

Weiner suggests that the CIA supported dictatorships, fascist regimes, and right-wing governments because of whom it hired initially. It took from the U.S. Ivy League men from ‘good families’ who had a stake in American hegemony and business (so much for the great education at Ivy League schools). It hired from Europe, ex-Fascists and Nazis thought to have knowledge of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, through its whole history, the organization has shown contempt for democracy, due process and human rights.

So the CIA’s 21st century cooking of the books on Iraq and its “weapons of mass destruction” should be no surprise. The only surprise is that Cheney had to set up a special CIA within the CIA to get what he wanted on Iraq—but that arrangement is now firmly in place. The former head of the National Security Agency, General Michael Hayden of the “warrantless wiretaps” fame (who also simultaneously served as a StratCom component commander), is now the head of the CIA.

Looking at the covert operations, the “Agency” has almost never given good information to the president. It has consistently given information that served his vanity, his narrow political purposes and those of the multinationals central to the military-industrial complex. And it’s easy, therefore, to see why we are where we are now.

We have used our covert muscle to destroy the aspirations for freedom and human rights of millions of people throughout the world. In the process, we have created circumstances that have led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of people, creating long-term political instability. As we have done so, our government has become the mirror of the CIA tool it has used. Under Cheney and Bush and their lawyers, it is now as undemocratic, contemptuous of human rights and feckless as the CIA that it has used.

But the game of ‘CIA-ing the world’ is about over. South America is turning away from American client dictatorships to social democratic and socialist regimes. Europe is no longer under our thumb—not even Gordon Brown’s Britain. Middle Eastern regimes remember and resent American coups and interventions. The shining apple of untrammeled power—the “New American Century”—has become ashes in the mouth. About time too. We ourselves may well be the CIA’s last victims as its myth of untrammeled power becomes the mythos of our government.

COMING SOON

11.9 - 11.15 IN SEARCH OF MOZART
This film is the first major documentary feature devoted to the life of the classical composer.

11.9 - 11.15 FLYING: CONFESSIONS OF A FREE WOMAN
Storyteller Jennifer Fox lays bare her own turbulent life to penetrate what it means to be a free woman today. Fox will be appearing at screenings of her film for Q&A sessions with the audiences; see website for details.

11.16 - 11.21 GREAT WORLD OF SOUND
astutely addresses the growing trend of people looking for a shortcut to fame, and the people who promise an easy path.

11.23 - 12.6 BODY OF WAR is an intimate and transformational feature documentary about the true face of war today.

12.10 - 12.13 KING CORN
Best friends from college move to the heartland to grow an acre of corn. When they try to follow their pile of corn into the food system, what they find raises troubling questions about how we eat—and farm.

12.7 - 12.23 BEFORE THE DEVIL KNOWS YOU’RE DEAD
Master filmmaker Sidney Lumet directs this absorbing suspense thriller about a family facing the worst enemy of all—itself.

12.14 - 12.23 JOE STRUMMER: THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN
From British film director Julien Temple, Joe Strummer is revealed not just as a legend or musician, but as a true communicator of our times.

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2007 NEBRASKA REPORT, P.11
In *Paradise Lost*, Satan’s army falls out of heaven for wanting endless power and Satan himself falls out of earth for initiating primal human evil. Both turn to serpents in hell and rush to eat hell’s apples. They find them ashes in the mouth (*Book X*). That, for the moment, is the end of their dream of power.

At the end of World War II, when we still entertained the dream of endless innocent power, Harry Truman set up the CIA to provide him intelligence about the world—a knowledge-gathering agency without cloak and dagger. Our power was endless, we had all the nukes. It was natural that we thought we needed to know about the world outside our borders. Fourteen years later in 1960, when the organization had become mostly power-seeking covert operations instead of intelligence, Eisenhower told the CIA’s Allen Dulles that the CIA he left behind was “a legacy of ashes.” So it appears to also be in 2007. We got no power and a passel of problems.

Ike was right. Truman’s vision was gone. Little useful information had come from the CIA from 1946-60. The legacy of the CIA he left behind was “a legacy of ashes.” It includes no unattributed quotes, off-the-record interviews or snarky insinuations. This is the straight poop.

First: we need to know how Truman’s vision failed—what CIA ‘intelligence’ didn’t know or care to know: We didn’t know:

- What was going on inside the economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe before their revolutions and the fall of Communist regimes;
- What went on in the Middle Eastern al-Qaeda and the Islamic jihadist movements;
- What happened with weapons development in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq or with torture under the Shah’s Iranian regime.
- What went on in Vietnamese popular opinion under a series of American client regimes.
- Where our potential democratic allies were in Iraq, Chile and many other parts of the world.

In fact, the CIA gathered hardly any useful intelligence on any area and culture crucial to the president’s understanding and action (save for what Israeli intelligence used to tell CIA counter-intelligence chief James Angleton during the height of the Cold War). We were simply dumb. Even today, 80 percent of the CIA’s so-called ‘classified intelligence’ is gleaned from the daily newspapers and mainstream media reports.

Time after time, the book tells the story of how we had no one on the scene, no one competent in the culture, no one who knew the language enough to be able to discover important things…. On almost any scene, in any culture, in any language important to our national security, American intelligence in these matters failed us miserably, especially in regard to other than Western European cultures. This level of cultural ignorance will be heightened by “No Child Left Behind” and its obsession with reading and math alone.

What we didn’t know was bad. What we did through our covert operations, as we substituted brutality for knowledge, was worse:

- In 1954 we overthrew the democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz, elected in the second-ever universal-suffrage election, marking the first peaceful transition of power in Guatemala’s history (**Wikipedia**). Arbenz was a capitalistic reformer, admirer of the Homestead Act and an intellectual. (We overthrew him to protect the United Fruit Company’s investments in Guatemala and unleashed a civil strife that led to a decades-long series of dictatorships and civil war that in turn led to hundreds of thousands of deaths in that little country.) This was the start of our Central American troubles.
- We overthrew democratic regimes over and over. At one time in the ’60s, most of the South American countries had dictatorships who were CIA clients. The CIA of the ’70s indirectly got rid of Chilean president Salvador Allende and installed the brutal military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. He and his hands subsequently killed thousands and ordered the husband of Allende’s Minister of Defense, Orlando Letelier, the husband of one of NFP’s friends, Isabel Letelier.
- In 1953, we destroyed the democratically elected Iranian government of Mohammed Mossedegh to protect the British oil company, BP. Our problems in Iran began then.
- We funded fascist governments in Greece and Chile, murderous dictators like Mobutu in Africa, and Islamic jihadists in Afghanistan to drive out the Soviets. Osama bin Laden was ours. Our problems in Africa and Central Asia begin with the latter two actions.
- We installed leaders by murdering presidents we didn’t like in the Congo and South Vietnam. We messed with or overthrew established governments in Iran, Indonesia, South Korea and Southeast Asia.
- The CIA hardly ever saw a right-wing government it didn’t like. It funded the elections of all the Christian Democratic legislators in Italy, funneling money through the Vatican’s Catholic Action. It did the same kind of thing for the right-wing Liberal Democrats in Japan.
- The 1950s CIA created secret prisons in the Panama Canal and later in Germany and Japan where it experimented on prisoners with torture, brain control experiments and drugs. Rendition is not a new deal. Presidential defense of it is...

**The STOP SHOPPING FOR SPACE WEAPONS GOSPEL CHOIR serenaded the military-industrial complex attendees at the “Strategic Space and Defense 2007 Conference” at the Qwest Center in Omaha, October 9. Pictured at the right are members of the SSFSW Gospel Choir with their shopping cart float loaded with weapons ‘bargains’ picked up at this arms bazaar annually organized by the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce in support of U.S. Strategic Command.**

**Paradise Lost, Hell’s Apples & the CIA**

by Paul Olson, UNL Professor Emeritus

**Speaking Our Peace**