StratCom the Cyber Warrior

by Loring Wirbel, Citizens for Peace in Space

A new Pentagon strategy released July 13 assigns the primary duty of cyber operations to U.S. Strategic Command, with secondary missions assumed by U.S. Cyber Command, based at the National Security Agency headquarters in Fort Meade, Maryland (http://www.defense.gov/news/d20110714cyber.pdf). This “Cyberspace Operations Strategy” is more ominous than might otherwise be suspected with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta’s revelation at a news conference in mid-July that the Pentagon now considers the commercial Internet to be “another operational theater of war”—and that StratCom and Cyber Command must be ready to take on more offensive roles in combating cyber assaults.

Scare tactics were in abundance at the July announcement with the Department of Defense disclosing that a foreign agency had collected more than 20,000 documents in a cyber-assault on a U.S. military contractor this past spring. This March 2011 attack was in fact of an altogether different degree than the previously-known assaults on Lockheed Martin and RSA Security Inc. Though Panetta revealed no details, most bloggers agreed the foreign agency in question was most likely China, and that the targeted contractor had been Northrop Grumman.

The Defense Department announcements came continued on page 2
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StratCom, continued

in the aftermath of two months’ worth of assaults on government databases that morphed into online war with anonymous groups of hackers—the two best-known going by the names of “LulzSec” and, aptly enough, “Anonymous.” LulzSec, in particular, had moved from humorous assaults on PBS news sites (where it had inserted fake stories about the rap musician Tupac Shakur) to an all-out attack on CIA databases.

The impact of these individual hacker attempts to disrupt the operations of government was the subject of a workshop on cyberwarfare at the “Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space” annual conference in North Andover, Massachusetts this past June. Regardless of the motives inspiring these intrusions (mischievous, economic gain, espionage by foreign governments, or an anarchist assault against ‘Big Brother’), these hacker attacks invariably wind up serving the interest of entities like Cyber Command and the NSA. Each new attack makes the case for even greater government encroachment on our civil liberties. Every new intrusion builds the case for government waging offensive forms of cyber-warfare to pre-emptively defend our national security. And StratCom now serves as the command center for conducting this 21st-century brand of war.

The implications of this new cyber strategy for StratCom’s already multifaceted role and mission are huge. In locations as diverse as Pakistan and Libya, the Pentagon is touting the turn to “means short of war” to strike adversaries of the U.S. These include drone strikes, cyber attacks and deadly ‘black ops’ (covert operations) by assault teams such as “SEAL Team 6”—the group that assassinated Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad. While these ‘near war’ methods are promoted as being less deadly than soldier-led ground assaults, they can lead to collateral damage that is just as extensive as aerial bombing and other means of stand-off war. Eventually, they can escalate to global means of assault with conventional weapons (the “Prompt Global Strike” mission also under StratCom’s wing). In fact, almost every method of ‘near-war’ assault—including the outbreak of cyberwarfare that captured headlines this past month—is managed from Omaha at StratCom headquarters.

The Stuxnet Worm

Sometimes, the damage caused by cyberwar is not evident until months after the online events. Earlier this year, a small news item suggested that Iran could face the danger of a meltdown at its Bushehr nuclear power plant. Such an accident would not be the result of poor construction or an ill-trained work crew. Instead, it was a perverse ‘fringe benefit’ of a program launched by Israel with the help of U.S. cyber-forces to cripple Iran’s nuclear capabilities with a computer worm—a rogue program similar to a virus. The “Stuxnet” worm was designed to interrupt the operation of centrifuges at the Natanz uranium enrichment plant, but now has been confirmed to have spread to other Iranian nuclear facilities, including Bushehr.

Given that a major nuclear accident carries the potential to kill dozens, if not hundreds, of Iranians, it is odd that some people think of Stuxnet as a preferable alternative to an Israeli military air assault on Iranian nuclear sites. But that’s the funny thing about military capabilities that

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Retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major John D. Davie of Dunlap, Iowa, who served at every level of the Army and Army National Guard during his 23-year-long military career, was the featured speaker at Nebraskans for Peace’s “EXIT Afghanistan” rally in Lincoln June 29. Printed below is the text of his remarks, which touched not only on the situation in Afghanistan, but on the necessity of cutting the military budget to start reducing the federal debt. To read Davie’s timely and superbly argued “Midlands Voices” column, “Cuts in defense spending need not imperil military,” in the June 17, 2011 Omaha World-Herald, visit the NFP website at: http://nebraskansforpeace.org/cuts-defense-not-imperil

Thank you for inviting me here today.

Being from Iowa and unfamiliar with your organization, I was surprised when I got your phone call thanking me for my June 17 op-ed in the Omaha World-Herald and asking whether I’d consider speaking at a rally in Lincoln. So I went to your website and what I found was an organization and people working diligently to advance peacemaking in our nation. This is an important and worthy goal, and I’m honored to be here with you.

The focus of today’s event is on ending our involvement in Afghanistan and the financial impact this could have coming at a time when our government is contemplating spending cuts the likes of which we’ve never before seen.

I wrote the op-ed for the Omaha World-Herald to make a couple of key points about the military budget: First, I believe cuts can be made in the defense budget without jeopardizing the mission or welfare of our troops. And second, that the mission and welfare of our troops may not always be the reason some people oppose cuts. I cited former Congressman Ike Skelton of Missouri as an example. Congressman Skelton came to Offutt Air Force Base with a message that we cannot afford defense cuts. Of course, he didn’t say he was working for a company that stands to lose a lot of money if we make cuts.

I also wrote about the ‘Catch-22’ members of Congress find themselves in when trying to make cuts. I used as an example Secretary of Defense Gates’ proposal to close the “Joint Forces Command” in Virginia and the negative reaction this garnered from the Virginia Congressional delegation.

I suspect I could have written the same story using almost any state, any military project, and any Congressional delegation in the country.

And the same principle of economic self-interest applies not only to Congress but across the board to ordinary citizens. For example, when the head of the Bellevue, Nebraska Chamber of Commerce announces that new construction funding for StratCom is, quote, “good news” she is not talking about our military needs. I doubt she knows anything about our national defense requirements. She is speaking strictly about money for Bellevue, Nebraska.

My point is, until we get honest about this—that it’s often about the money and not military requirements—we aren’t going to get spending under control no matter what kinds of cuts we make in our social programs. Somebody, some one, some group or some organization, always benefits from our defense spending; so there will always be someone advocating for every project and idea that anybody can come up with. Take, for instance, the Marine Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle. We’ve already spent $3 billion on it, and after careful study Secretary Gates says we don’t need it now—it isn’t cost effective and we don’t get enough bang for our buck. However, Congressman Buck (pun not intended) McKeon, Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, says we do need it. Why? Is it because the Congressman knows our military needs better than the Secretary of Defense? I do not know, but I suspect it has more to do with General Dynamics and the $14.4 billion contract they had to produce this fighting vehicle than it does our defense needs.

As to Afghanistan itself, it’s time to bring the troops home. When we first went into Afghanistan, we attacked terrorists and their training camps and their supply lines. Then, we joined hands with a bunch of drug-running thugs—the Northern Alliance—in order to bring down the Taliban. I think it was this expansion of the war which brought us to the difficult position we find ourselves in today: stuck between can’t win, don’t

continued on page 10
StratCom the Cyber Warrior, continued

are considered ‘defensive’ by U.S. forces. Time and again—with chemical weapons, with missile defense, and now with cyber-warfare—capabilities that are considered defensive and somewhat benign are used in very offensive ways. And the long-term end result may not be that much different than a full-frontal military assault.

Stuxnet was one of the first worms in history designed to attack embedded computers used in factories, instead of desktop and laptop computers used by consumers. In fact, its malicious payload was specific enough that it only caused harm when it encountered computers built by Siemens for industrial process control. Even when Siemens computers are present, Stuxnet only disrupts operations of certain kinds of pumps and motors that might be used in a uranium-enrichment plant. One analyst called this a “highly-targeted sniper type of computer attack.” So we shouldn’t expect much collateral damage, right?

Wrong.

It is all too common for military planners working on secret deniable assaults to minimize or ignore the danger of unintended consequences. In the case of Stuxnet’s authors (who are believed to be computer experts in Israel’s “Unit 8200” signals-intelligence agency), the focus on the design of the Iranian enrichment plant was so single-minded, programmers failed to consider how it might spread to other facilities with dangerous results.

While the primary impetus for the attack appears to have come from Israel, cables from “WikiLeaks” and internal Air Force sources suggest an important support role was played by the new Cyber Command. Since StratCom in Nebraska exercises indirect authority over Cyber Command as one of its ‘component commands,’ the development of this worm is unlikely to have taken place without the awareness—if not direction—of commanders in Omaha. A series of reports in the New York Times and Wired suggests that the Department of Energy’s Idaho National Laboratory (formerly known as INEL), also helped the team in identifying the architecture of the Siemens components used in the Iranian lab.

The NSA

Waging war by computer has been an important part of U.S. doctrine since at least the early 1990s, when the disparate strategies waged in secret by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) were given a more public home at the Colorado organization then known as “U.S. Space Command.”

For the 40 years prior to that time, NSA had been involved in highly secret efforts to disrupt the computers of foreign nations—the flip side of the public efforts to protect the computer networks of the U.S. Even after U.S. Strategic Command took over the role of cyber-warfare management from Space Command in 2002, NSA remained responsible for defining computer security for both the government’s own computers, and the larger computer networks used by private industry.

The efforts conducted in the 1990s by both Space Command and the NSA to secretly control the computer networks run by both allies and adversaries remains one of the most classified elements of U.S. cyber plans. Over the past two decades, rumors have circulated about everything from desktop computers to weapon systems being shipped to foreign nations embedded with computer chips containing rogue ‘Trojan Horse’ programs that would either make systems malfunction, report the operations of the system back to U.S. government officials, or otherwise implement secret actions that would work to the benefit of U.S. agencies. Often, however, computer ‘black operations’ were only called cyber-warfare if the computers adversely affected the operations of the military systems of adversary governments. For example, the U.S. reportedly disrupted the operations of Iraqi air-defense networks during the opening days of the “Shock and Awe” aerial assault on Iraq in March 2003—actions that clearly fit the definition of cyber-warfare.

StratCom gained control of computer attack-and-defense activities when U.S. Space Command was folded into StratCom at the end of 2002. Nevertheless, the NSA remained the agency of expertise in this relationship. The command authority exercised by StratCom (which had also acquired the mission of “Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance” in 2003) was useful to the U.S. government because it established a layer of deniability for the NSA—an agency so secretive during its 60 years of existence that its three-letter designation was said to stand for “Never Say Anything” or “No Such Agency.”

When the Secretary of Defense asked StratCom in 2009 to create a dedicated sub-command for computer warfare, it was no surprise that the resulting Cyber Command would be based at NSA headquarters, or that Cyber Command’s new chief would be Gen. Keith Alexander, director of the NSA. There are two reasons why StratCom’s relationship with NSA represents a unique opportunity for the Pentagon. First, the NSA is the intelligence agency with the closest ties to the military, going back to the NSA’s founding in 1952. Most of agency’s secret electronic listening posts worldwide are staffed by uniformed military personnel, not civilians. Second, the NSA has been involved in various types of ‘dirty tricks’ throughout its history, ranging from ‘black bag jobs’ to steal codes at foreign embassies, to participation in

continued on page 8
The following statement by Nobuko Tsukui, a Japanese national from Tokyo who has specialized in the literature of the atomic bomb, will be delivered at the 2011 Annual Lantern Float at Lincoln’s Holmes Lake Park Saturday evening August 6—the 66th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

(First, I wish to pay a tribute to the memory of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and of the March 11 disaster.)

I have no word to describe the sense of devastation I felt at the triple disaster of March 11. The earthquake and the tsunami were, of course, caused by the forces of nature. But I could not help reflecting on our civilization in the face of this catastrophe. The Fukushima nuclear disaster, especially, symbolized the problem of civilization in the nuclear age vis-à-vis the forces of nature in their most destructive form. The world witnessed how utterly defenseless the nuclear power plant—supposedly the epitome of nuclear science and technology—could be against the earthquake and tsunami. And I believe that the Fukushima disaster has compelled us to re-examine our attitudes toward both ‘nuclear weapons’ and ‘nuclear energy.’

I wish to refer to two writers who, nearly 30 years ago, tried to awaken us.

John Berger, a British writer and art historian, published an essay titled “Hiroshima” in 1981. The point he makes is that the facts of nuclear holocaust have been hidden through “a systematic, slow and thorough process of suppression and elimination,” and in the process the world has forgotten that the victims of the atomic bombing—the hibakusha—were individual human beings. He also points out that what happened on August 6 and 9, 1945 was “neither the beginning nor the end of the act.” To my mind, his observation has far-reaching implications and relevance. We know that there was a long and arduous ‘preparation’ for “the acts” of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And there has been an ‘aftermath,’ which the hibakusha have had to cope with to this day: “long, lingering death, radiation sickness, many fatal illnesses which developed later as a result of exposure to the bomb, and tragic genetic effects on generations yet to be born.”

In the following year, 1982, Jonathan Schell’s The Fate of the Earth was published. He writes: “The earth is the largest of the support systems for life, and the impairment of the earth is the largest of the perils posed by nuclear weapons.” (p. 23) He closes his book with the following admonition: “One day—and it is hard to believe that it will not be soon—we will make our choice. Either we will sink into the final coma and end it all or, as I trust and believe, we will awaken to the truth of our peril, a truth as great as life itself, and... we will break through the layers of our denials, put aside our faint-hearted excuses, and rise up to cleanse the earth of nuclear weapons.” (p. 231)

Thirty years later, in March 2011, a gigantic earthquake hit Japan, followed by the stupendous tsunami. The nuclear power plant at Fukushima was severely damaged by both the earthquake and the tsunami. Although the TEPCO (the power company that operates the nuclear power plant at Fukushima) withheld many of the facts and data for nearly two months, the three reactors at the plant which were in operation at the moment of the earthquake (2:46 p.m. March 11, 2011) sustained varying degrees of damage and when the tsunami came, the entire electrical system
Feeding the Community, One Garden at a Time

by Ingrid Kirst
Community CROPS
Executive Director

Growing your own food is a political statement. It lets you be independent. It lets you grow food organically. It lets you buy less from major corporations and the industrial agricultural system. Yet, community gardens are one program that people from all across the political spectrum can agree on—they provide the resources so people can help themselves. Rather than a handout, a community garden plot allows a family to grow some of their own food. They can then choose to share this food with other friends and families, spreading the wealth and nutrition.

For the last eight years, Community CROPS has been connecting people through growing food. We are a Lincoln-based non-profit organization that helps people work together to grow healthy food and live sustainably. Since 2003, Community CROPS has served the Lincoln area with a network of community gardens, where families can grow food for themselves. Beginning in 2005, the “Growing Farmers Training Program” has provided education and land access to limited-resource farmers. Since 2005, dozens of families have participated in the program. The 48-hour “Winter Workshop Series”—spread over nine Saturdays—is taught by local farmers, extension agents and other experts, and covers the basics of starting a small-scale vegetable farm business. The new farmers then either continue on to farm at the CROPS training farm, “Sunset Community Farm,” or grow on their own land.

“Other jobs don’t allow you to get fresh air, see butterflies, or hear the birds sing. Organic farming is important to me because it contributes to strong health, helps you to live longer and healthier and saves money spent on doctors and hospitals,” said Memphis, a third-year CROPS farmer from Togo. This project enhances quality of life for beginning farmers who desire the farm lifestyle for themselves and their families. The opportunity to teach their children about their agricultural roots is highly valued. With a growing emphasis on local food, quality of life is enhanced for the whole community through greater availability of fresh, seasonal food and the opportunity to know the farmers producing it.

Produce from Sunset Community Farm is sold at local farmers’ markets, grocery stores and restaurants. A significant portion of the produce is also sold directly to local families through the Community CROPS CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), in which members pay in advance for a share in the harvest from the farm. From the end of May through mid-October, they pick up their box packed full of freshly harvested, naturally grown vegetables. CSA members love experiencing the best of Nebraska produce and learning how to cook new vegetables, while supporting beginning, limited-resource farmers at the same time.

In addition to the community gardens and Growing Farmers programs, Community CROPS offers a wide range of gardening, cooking and environmental classes. Visit our website at www.communitycrops.org or call the office at 402-474-9802 for more information on the classes, to volunteer, to sign up for a garden plot or to join the Growing Farmers program.
The Keystone XL Pipeline: Triple Trouble

The proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline, which would carry about 830,000 barrels a day at full capacity, has been catching a lot of grief locally because it could spill oil that might ruin our underground water supply. That much is true. But the environmental cost of the pipeline does not stop there. The oil that will be transported is refined from tar sands, mainly from Alberta, which combine all the worst attributes of fossil fuels: spill potential, the carbon footprint of coal, and the environmental damage of coal strip mining. Tar sands are, briefly stated, a triple environmental atrocity—enough to send a thinking person to a bicycle.

Not only does the extraction of tar sands scar the environment in ways that drilling for petroleum does not, but refining it to a useful product is considerably more energy-intensive than ‘ordinary’ oil... Thus, its dirty carbon footprint. Tar sands are so dirty that our growing dependence on tar sands imports from Canada (touted by the national-security minded as a substitute for Middle Eastern oil) may cook the atmospheric books to make dangerous global warming inevitable in coming years.

James Hansen, director of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Sciences, has done the math, and come up with figures anticipating that continued development of coal-fired electric power along with tar sands will make recovery from present levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere impossible. That level, presently 390 parts per million and rising, is as high as during the Pliocene, 2 to 3 million years ago, when the Earth had very little long-lasting ice, and sea levels were almost 200 feet higher than today.

Hansen and many other climate experts believe that we must roll the carbon dioxide level back to at least 350 parts per million, or risk long-term environmental damage. ‘Essentially Game Over’?

“The scientific community has to get involved in this fray now,” Hansen told his email correspondents. “If this project gains approval, it will become exceedingly difficult to control the tar sands monster.” The “monster” is the carbon emissions of the tar-sands resource—fully exploited, enough to add about 200 parts per million to atmospheric carbon-dioxide levels. Stabilization of climate requires, according to Hansen, phase-out of coal emissions over the next few decades, and an energy strategy that leaves “unconventional fossil fuels,” such as tar sands, “in the ground.” The other option, says Hansen, is “essentially game over.”

“Governments are acting as if they are oblivious to the fact that there is a limit to how much fossil fuel we can put into the air,” Hansen wrote. And fossil-fuel companies? Every day we get the same diet of televised propaganda that tells us oil development is necessary for our economic well-being, and coal is ‘clean.’ Repeat after me: ‘Coal is Clean,’ ‘War is Peace,’ ‘Freedom is Slavery…’

Tar Sands No Matter What

In the meantime, oil-industry experts are telling us that tar sands will be developed, and oil refined from them will be exported from Canada (possibly by ship or rail), regardless of whether the pipeline is approved, no matter what damage it inflicts on the environment. “The Canadian oil sands will continue to be developed irrespective of whether the pipeline goes ahead,” Russell K. Girling, president and chief executive of TransCanada, the company financing the $7 billion pipeline, told the New York Times. The tar sand fields of Alberta contain reserves of about 170 billion barrels of oil, in the same league as Saudi Arabia’s 265 billion barrels.

In other words, tar sands’ huge demand for water and energy, as well as its damage to the boreal forests of Canada, is beside the point—which is profit. One wonders how much damage will have to be done before people realize that our appetite for fossil fuels is condemning coming generations to a hot, miserable, barren future.

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“To me the question of the environment is more ominous than that of peace and war... I’m more worried about global warming than I am of any major military conflict.”

— Hans Blix, Former UN Weapons Inspector in Iraq

conclusion on page 11
StratCom the Cyber Warrior, continued

the overthrow of governments in Australia in 1975 and Turkey in 1980. The StratCom-NSA link, realized through Cyber Command, thus becomes StratCom’s closest involvement to ‘plausibly deniable’ secret activities in the intelligence community (and most computer warfare falls under the label of deniable activity).

In theory, any computer attacks within U.S. borders that target consumers or commercial enterprises must be handled by the White House’s civilian cyber advisor. But the NSA and Cyber Command would like to change that. In a speech in Colorado Springs to the “Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association” on February 9, Alexander said that, “I do not have the authority to stop an attack against Wall Street or industry, and that’s a gap I need to fix.” He said the NSA should be able to work on computer attack-and-defense strategies within U.S. borders involving consumers and industry.

Defense Is Offense

In his confirmation hearings for Cyber Command before Congress, Alexander said that the purpose of Cyber Command was not “about militarizing cyberspace, but about safeguarding military assets.” Reassuring as that sounds, many of the so-called ‘defensive’ structures created by StratCom’s component commands—allegedly to avoid all-out warfare—end up being just as aggressive in practice as a first-strike military assault. A book on this very subject has just been published. Inventing Col-lateral Damage: Civilian Casualties, War and Empire by Stephen Rockel and Rick Halperin argues that most ‘near-war’ methods are as hazardous as the means they replace.

This is nothing new for the U.S. military. For decades, its research efforts in chemical and biological warfare were deemed to be entirely defensive in nature, until critics pointed out that the very talents required to create an effective defense against a WMD attack would be the talents that could be used to fine-tune first-strike chemical and biological weapons. The same could be said for StratCom’s oversight of the new WMD center, of its ballistic missile defense, of its drone warfare program, or of cyber war. What is claimed as a tool to defend the nation is used in practice to wage war.

In commenting on the recent cyber incursions, former StratCom Commander and current Vice Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General James Cartwright bluntly stated that the U.S., in terms of its cyber-readiness, is “on a path that is too predictable—it’s purely defensive, there’s no penalty for attacking right now.” He said the Pentagon must focus on offense, including the possibility of responding to a cyber attack with military action.

Northrop Grumman’s top vice president for missile defense, Russell Anarde, a former director of plans at Air Force Space Command, echoed this all-too-common Pentagon thinking in a January 2011 media interview, when he said that “offense and defense sometimes go together.” That is certainly true in the area of Anarde’s expertise, missile defense. The weapon systems under StratCom’s oversight are toundly used in ways to provoke international incidents, even while StratCom calls such weapons defensive.

The U.S.’s expanded drone operations in Afghanistan, Paki-stan and Yemen have taken this ‘defense is offense’ strategy to an insidious new level. Armed drones, under the nominal control of StratCom alongside the CIA, allow the U.S. to minimize the use of troops and Air Force bombing operations that rely on human pilots. Some analysts assert that heavy use of drones leads to fewer civilian deaths than might be encountered with widespread, indiscriminate use of aerial bombing (though drones attacks still account for hundreds of civilian deaths per year). Yet when drones are used to target specific individuals (as they are routinely now), their alleged pinpoint accuracy raises a host of legal and ethical problems.

In a recent lawsuit, the ACLU charges that using drones to target individuals essentially performs the same functions that the outlawed CIA efforts to assassinate foreign leaders did in decades past. Drones certainly offer a sterilized way to take out small groups of troublemakers, often without risking any U.S. lives. The advantage they offer in warfare, however—flying undetected two miles above the ground, able to ‘kill without warning’—makes them susceptible to over-use and abuse. For instance, the Obama Administration has vastly expanded its drone warfare, to the point that targets who cannot even be identified by name are attacked based on what the Pentagon euphemistically calls ‘pattern of life’ behavior that looks suspicious.

Virtual Warfare; Realtime Casualties

The nominal success seen in the Stuxnet assault on Iran is likely to place cyber warfare in the same category. If the U.S. can bring down a communications network, an electrical grid, or a specific vertical industry in a foreign nation by using computer
warfare, isn’t this better than a broad military assault? Yes and no. As with drone warfare, the apparently painless success of using computer attacks can make it easy to abuse such a technological advantage—producing unintended consequences. As the expansion of Stuxnet from Natanz to Bushehr shows, we should never assume a computer assault to be free of victims. During the period

StratCom’s management of military efforts ‘short of war’—Missile Defense, drone attacks, and cyber war—should never be seen as victimless.

of the late 1990s and early 2000s, when the Clinton and Bush/Cheney Administrations were using widespread sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s government, critics of the sanctions pointed to the deaths of the very young, very elderly and infirm. Clinton’s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright notoriously called such deaths the price one needed to pay for waging a sanctions effort short of warfare.

To date though, has anyone in the State Department or StratCom actually tried to calculate the collateral damage that would result from bringing down a utility network in a targeted nation by an offensive computer attack? If a Cyber Command assault were to bring down a grid and black out hospitals, schools, law enforcement and transportation services, how many people would suffer? And who would we hold accountable for such a devastating computer attack? Some nameless spooks at the NSA? StratCom’s insulated command structure?

A small scandal erupted this past February when the Associated Press reported that CIA officers who chose the wrong targets for extraordinary rendition were not fired, but instead were promoted inside the agency. This lack of accountability for deniable activities in the intelligence community is precisely what is worrisome about Cyber Command. If the Stuxnet worm spreads to any Iranian factory or energy plant with a Siemens computer, will programmers in Israel and the U.S. be penalized or promoted? Obviously, the efforts by Iran to gain nuclear power capabilities may well be hiding a real nuclear weapons effort. A Stuxnet success does indeed keep hostilities at a lower level than an Israeli Air Force assault on Natanz would.

But StratCom’s management of military efforts ‘short of war’—Missile Defense, drone attacks, and cyber war—should never be seen as victimless. The consequences of relying on such slow-motion covert war alternatives can end up being just as deadly, particularly if the quiet successes they experience permit military leaders to rely on these silent (and faceless) warfare methods too often.

The anonymity… The lack of accountability… These are also the very traits that—by definition—make cyber-hackers of all stripes so problematic. Operating the shadows as they do, it’s almost impossible to know who or what you’re dealing with. One government’s ‘terrorist’ hacker could be another government’s ‘freedom fighter.’ Certainly, activists who participated in the ‘distributed denial of service’ computer attacks against the Iranian government to protest the crackdown on dissent of the plant failed. Without electricity, the cooling capacity for each reactor (including the pool where the ‘used rods’ were submerged in the water to keep them cool) was lost totally. As a result, the Fukushima nuclear power plant became the scene of some of the worst conditions imaginable in ‘peace time’—the scene of a colossal peacetime hazard produced by nuclear science and technology.

Now, more than three months after March 11, it has become clear that the Pacific Ocean was contaminated as soon as the tsunami subsided, and, I’m afraid, the contamination has not stopped.

In other words, although Jonathan Schell was talking about ‘nuclear weapons,’ the current disaster tells us that what is supposed to be the peaceful use of nuclear energy can cause and is causing ‘the perils’ of wartime bombing in the northern part of Japan and beyond. What we have experienced since March 12 when the Fukushima nuclear power plant problems were first reported tells us that Schell’s warning against ‘nuclear weapons’ should be applied to nuclear energy. “[The] impairment of the earth” of which he warns us is taking place.

Moreover, the TEPCO company has been grievously negligent in handling the conditions under which the workers have to work at the plant site. According to published reports, a large number of workers have been exposed to high—and dangerous—levels of radiation. No one can say for certain what may happen to them five, ten or 20 years from now. John Berger was writing about the ‘aftermath’ of the atomic bombing 36 years after the bomb was dropped. For the Fukushima workers, their exposure to radiation is only the beginning of the ‘aftermath,’ which could last for the rest of their lives.

From what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 we know that nuclear weapons destroy human lives and human society. On the other hand, despite the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, we seem to have accepted the myth of the ultimate safety of nuclear power plants. The indoctrination of the citizens on the part of the power companies (with the government’s support) has been particularly notable in Japan.

As of March 11, 2011, however, the entire world has been watching the Fukushima nuclear plant disaster. In the first three months after the tsunami, the problems at the plant worsened, showing clearly that ‘the peaceful use of nuclear energy’ could in fact go wrong, and that the safety myth was a lie. The situation at Fukushima has continued to deteriorate, becoming seemingly uncontrollable. Not only the sea, but the air and the soil have been contaminated.

Now is the time for us to “awaken to the truth of our peril, a truth as great as life itself,” to borrow Schell’s words, and we should “rise up to cleanse the earth of nuclear weapons, [and nuclear power plants]”!

Before the two atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on July 16, 1945, the world’s first atom bomb was detonated at Trinity Site on the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. In other words, the first hibakusha was not a human being but the earth. Ms. Hayashi Kyoko, a Nagasaki hibakusha writer, visited Trinity Site in 1999. In her novel, From Trinity To Trinity (2000), which is based on her trip to Trinity Site, this fact is emphasized. In the following passage, the narrator stands before Trinity Site:

Until this moment, until I came to stand here at Trinity Site, I had believed that the first victims of the nuclear devastation on earth were we, the human beings. That is not so. Earlier victims, ‘senior’ hibakusha [i.e. the earth itself], are here. They are here, but they can neither cry nor shout. My eyes were filled with tears.

[The quotation is from the Japanese original—English translation by Nobuko Tsukui.]

The earth is hurting. Are we listening to its silent cry?
EXIT AFGHANISTAN, conclusion

want to lose, and don’t know how to exit with dignity.

I also think we’re stuck somewhere between nation-building, fighting a counter-insurgency, and an occupation—and none of these is what our President wants. Because of this, he forged a compromise which doesn’t meet the stated military requirements of his generals or the desires of the American people who are tired of continuous warfare and desirous of an end to our overseas involvements.

Conservative columnist George Will wrote in a piece not long ago that "U.S. involvement in the Second World War lasted 1,346 days. U.S. fighting in Afghanistan reached that milestone on June 14, 2005.” We also have more than 200,000 service members stationed in 144 countries around the globe—not counting Afghanistan or Iraq. From fiscal year 2001 until now, the military ‘baseline budget’ has increased approximately 80 percent, to $534 billion a year. However, this number isn’t a true reflection of observation and a question. As I listen to our national dialogue, I get the feeling we think it’s okay to question the legitimacy of $792 a month in disability payments

Until we get honest about Pentagon spending—that it’s often about defense industry contracts and not military requirements—we aren’t going to get the federal debt under control no matter what kinds of cuts we make in our social programs.

I think it is high time we change the direction of our dialogue.

The Buddha said there will always be conflict as long as people cling to their ideas about how the world works or should work. As we go about trying to help change the direction of our national dialogue, I would ask each of us to consider if we are carrying about ideas we need to discard or drop in order to be more effective in our peacemaking?

Now is a wonderful opportunity for talking about these things to our friends and neighbors and representatives and anyone else who will listen. Folks are receptive because they are tired of a decade of war, and they are worried about our finances—both individually and shared. Now is a wonderful time for peacemaking to begin to influence our national dialogue.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

StratCom the Cyber Warrior, conclusion

might be seen as merely going one step farther than those who provided Twitter or Facebook help to anti-government protesters. The same can be said for U.S.-based activists who helped protesters in Egypt, Syria, Bahrain and other nations defeat efforts by their governments to initiate ‘kill switches’ on Internet services.

But in early June, front-page reports in the New York Times revealed that Cyber Command was financing efforts in other nations to defeat governments’ kill-switch technologies and keep pirate Internet services open, even as the U.S. government was working on its own kill-switch technology for use within the U.S.—a perfect example of ‘the Cyber Command giveth, and the Cyber Command taketh away.’ All of which raises the question of whether U.S. citizens involved in helping protesters in developing nations create Internet ‘route-abouts’ are unwittingly doing the bidding of Cyber Command?

The ethical issues become even more profound when private citizens engage in outright computer assault. Many alleged assaults on U.S. and NATO computers from the Jemin computer center in China have been shown to come from private hackers in China who are very nationalist and want China to adopt a much more aggressive policy against the U.S. Similarly, many of the hacker wars of early summer involved groups of different persuasions who claimed they were ‘helping’ U.S. interests or attacking unfair U.S. practices. Imagine how black ops within Cyber Command could exploit these battles in the mists of cyberspace. In fact, Cyber Command may have played a significant role in the online battles between LulzSec and Anonymous.

With the advent of space- and cyber-warfare, the face of warfighting has altered forever. The Pentagon and the State Department project force nowadays in ways far beyond deploying ground troops in Afghanistan, menacing the world with nuclear weapons of mass destruction and deploying a Missile Offense system in Europe and Asia. Even as you read this, StratCom’s spy satellites are tracking potential targets for assassination and simulating (and maybe conducting) cyber attacks on prospective enemies—all in the name of “Providing Global Security for America” and preserving our status on the world’s military superpower.

A whole host of strategic, legal and ethical questions about what StratCom is now doing urgently need to be addressed:

• Constitutional questions over executive branch authority in launching an offensive cyber attack...

• Legal questions over the cyber encroachment on our civil liberties and privacy rights...

• Questions of international law over preemptive cyber attacks or ‘killing without warning’—be it a drone strike on an unsuspecting target or a hospitalized child on a respirator when a cyber assault takes down the grid… and

• Strategic questions over the unintended consequences resulting from the methods of ‘near-war’…

All of which have yet to be discussed in public.

A dangerous new era in the history of warfare is now unfolding all around us. And it’s got an Omaha, Nebraska electronic signature.

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What’s HOT, conclusion

Paul Olson, conclusion

representative of Nebraska with some other goal that will govern all of one’s actions other than promoting the general welfare amounts to disloyalty to the spirit—if not the letter—of the Constitution. People may disagree about how to promote the general welfare, but they cannot ignore the responsibility.

Aside from Grover Norquist’s tax pledge, the other pillar of the Republican stone wall is the “Ryan budget”—introduced by Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI)—that leaves the military budget as it is and cuts almost everything else that’s decent and human. The House passed this budget overwhelmingly and it is the point from which the negotiations in late July have proceeded on the Republican side. As the New York Times has written, “If the House Republican budget blueprint is the ‘path to prosperity’ that its title claims, it is hard to imagine what ruin would look like. The plan would condemn millions to the ranks of the uninsured, raise health costs for seniors and renge on the obligation to keep poor children fed. It envisions lower taxes for the wealthy than even George W. Bush imagined: a permanent extension for his tax cuts, plus large permanent estate-tax cuts, a new business tax cut and a lower top-income-tax rate for the richest taxpayers….” This kind of ruin is not the general welfare. It is Reagan’s old formula for starving the poor by feeding the Military-Industrial Complex.

The usual answer to any critique of this sort of Social Darwinism is that struggle promotes liberty, rolls back the ‘nanny state’ and, in Ayn Rand’s phrase, allows Atlas to shrug. Also it supposedly creates employment. Shouldn’t the Kochs and the Murdochs also struggle then? And we can see from ten years of this sort of tax structure how much employment it creates. Further, we can see how good it is from the recent studies that show that the economy is in the doldrums because 90 percent of the people lack enough money to buy what they need. You can’t create a mass production economy without surrendering enough resources to the masses for them to buy the basics.

So this voodoo economics makes no sense.

It does make sense, though, in other terms far more sinister than those offered by the Grover Norquists and the Eric Cantors. As a French writer once wrote, “There is something in the misfortune of even the best of our friends that is not entirely unsatisfying to us.” What then of those we do not know? One of the great joys of our form of capitalism, where the gap between the rich and the poor is greater than in almost all other industrialized countries, is that we can create a monster class—the foodless, the sick, the undereducated, the homeless and ill-housed—and enjoy their misery while telling them it is their fault. Hence Grover’s tax pledge. Hence Ryan’s budget. Hence the love of ruin and the dissing of the promotion of the general welfare.

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by Loyal Park, Nebraska Peace Foundation President

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NFP State Office Hours in Lincoln, 10:00 – 2:00 weekdays
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Speaking Our Peace

by Paul Olson, NFP President Emeritus

Swedes are good. Norwegians and Danes are pretty good. I grew up speaking Swedish and English until my parents noticed I could understand their off-color jokes and theological musings. Then no more ‘Swede-talk.’ But Scandinavian is still good. I feel a twinge of pride when Sarah Palin attacks European socialism because I know that she is attacking Sweden, my people. I feel a certain adrenaline rush when Robin Soderling wins a match or Bjorn Borg appears in the tennis stands or Liv Ullmann makes a subtle philosophic point with the blink of a beautiful eye in a Bergman film. And when the Swedish-born Pia Sundhage plays Bob Dylan to her U.S. women’s soccer team, I am ready to get up and dance. So much for my cultural chauvinism.

But not all Scandinavians are so good. There is—Grover Norquist. The founder of “Americans for Tax Reform,” Grover sometimes appears in my imagination as a kind of troll, a demonic figure from the Swedish woods. He started out his political life as a worshipper of Nixon, and then Ronald Reagan—the government leader who taught us that government is the enemy and that the way to get rid of social programs from the New Deal and Great Society was to up the military budget. Reagan, at least, had the Soviet Union as his excuse. Grover is using Reagan’s anti-government message to paralyze the entire country—and for an excuse Grover has… well… the whine that new taxes don’t create new jobs even if it’s only millionaires and billionaires who are being taxed and the taxes go to ‘green’ development projects and infrastructure.

Grover’s congressional pledge goes as follows:

I, ___________________, pledge to the taxpayers of the _____ district of the state of ________, and to the American people that I will: ONE, oppose any and all efforts to increase the marginal income tax rates for individuals and/or businesses; and TWO, oppose any net reduction or elimination of deductions and credits, unless matched dollar for dollar by further reducing tax rates.

Grover’s pledge is now House Majority Leader Eric Cantor’s mantra and the mindless mantra of the majority of our representatives.

The Nebraska representatives and senators who have signed on to this chant are as follows:

Sen. Mike Johanns (R)
Sen. Ben Nelson (D)
Rep. Jeff Fortenberry (R)
Rep. Lee Terry (R)
Rep. Adrian Smith (R)
All five of ‘em. Every last one.

Grover says that the representatives who make the pledge do so to the American people and not to his organization. But the American people didn’t make up the pledge. Grover did.

So what do our representatives really pledge to the American people when they take their oath of office? They pledge to support the Constitution, and the Constitution says that it is crafted “[I]n Order to form a more perfect Union,” to “establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity…”

Promoting the general welfare must, at the very least, mean ensuring that people have health care, a roof over their heads, and enough food to eat. If the general welfare does not include these, what does it include? When we fought World War II, we were properly told that we were fighting it for four freedoms, “freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.” But all of that is in the trash bin now—superseded by Grover’s tax pledge.

A government that actually sought to discover and promote the general welfare would, of necessity, have to be open to thinking together about our problems. It couldn’t fall back on mindless shibboleths. It couldn’t stonewall. In western parliamentary theory, beginning with representative parliaments in the 14th century, leaders used to these bodies to reason together about what would redound to the common benefit—the common weal—of the citizens. The phrase “promote the general welfare” in our Constitution is a direct descendant of that parliamentary tradition. To go to Washington as a rep...