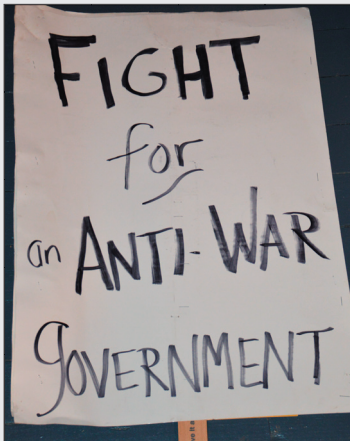


Fight for an Anti-War Government is an Election Issue



Oppose U.S. War Games! All Troops Home Now p.4

Chicago April 1 Strike Builds Unity and Determination

Building on the momentum and spirit of current movements in Chicago, such as those against police brutality, the April 1 strike by public school teachers, students, and many other unions and community organizations strengthened unity and determination

to step up the fight for rights. The action demanded full funding for all social services, all public schools, including community colleges, and opposed other attacks on the right to education. Activists standing for immigrant rights
Chicago Strike Builds Unity • 20

PEACE DEMANDS STOPPING WAR GAMES

Biggest Ever U.S.-South Korea Military Exercises

The 2016 Key Resolve/Foal Eagle war games are continuing in south Korea and expected to last until April 30. Key Resolve began March 7 and lasted until March 18 while Foal Eagle is still underway.

The military exercises involve a record number of more than 290,000 south Koreans and 17,000 U.S. troops simulating aggressive actions against the north, the Democratic

Stop U.S. War Games • 10

OPPOSE CONTROL BOARD

Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt! Pay Reparations Now for Colonialism

The government of Puerto Rico has suspended payment on debts owed to Wall Street financiers. These financiers have repeatedly imposed cuts to pensions, jobs and social services, while also imposing

higher interest rates for Puerto Rican bonds, thus increasing the debt. The Puerto Rican government, the country's largest employer, was forced to lay off 30,000 workers, cut

Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt • 15

IN THIS ISSUE

- **OPPOSE U.S. AGGRESSION & WAR GAMES:** Philippines and Middle East; Nuclear Weapons; NATO: **4-9**
- **U.S. NUCLEAR THREAT TO KOREA:** **10-14**
- **CANCEL PUERTO RICO'S DEBT:** Government Suspends Debt Payments. No More Colonialism: **15-19**
- **FUND EDUCATION, STOP TESTING:** Chicago, Buffalo: **20-24**

April edition of ***Voice of Revolution***

Editorials & Statements

- *Biggest Ever U.S.-South Korea Military Exercises..... 1*
- *Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt! Pay Reparations Now for Colonialism... 1*
- *Chicago April 1 Strike Builds Unity and Determination..... 1*

Oppose U.S. War Games and Nuclear Threats

- *The Fight for an Anti-War Government is an Election Issue..... 3*
- *Protests Across Philippines Demand Ouster of U.S. Military..... 4*
- *U.S. Leading Largest Military Exercise in Middle East..... 4*
- *U.S. Nuclear Rearmament Under Guise of World Peace 5*
- *America's Insatiable Appetite for Foreign Bases 6*
- *NATO Enforcing U.S. Imperialist Pivot to Asia 8*

No to U.S. War Games in Korea

- *To Have Peace, Suspend the U.S.-South Korea Joint Military Exercises 11*
- *The U.S. Nuclear Threat to the Sovereignty of DPRK 13*

Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt and Pay Reparations Now

- *Puerto Rico Suspends Payment on the Debt 15*
- *No More Colonialism Disguised as Financial Assistance 16*

Refuse the State Tests!

- *Resolution to Support a PARCC Refusal..... 21*
- *Successful Forum Energizes Buffalo to Increase Testing Opt Outs . 22*
- *Opting Out: The Issue is to Change the Direction of Education..... 23*

Send reports, letters and photos. Read, distribute and write for Voice of Revolution. Bulk rates available.

Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization
www.usmlo.org • office@usmlo.org • 716-602-8077
3942 N. Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60634

The Fight for an Anti-War Government is an Election Issue

One of the main features of the presidential election this year is the near silence on key issues of war and peace, including massive U.S. military exercises in Korea, the Philippines and Middle East. There is occasionally talk about Clinton's vote for the Iraq war, or Trump's absence of foreign policy advisors, or who most supports Israel. But a clear stand against U.S. aggression is absent. An elaboration of how candidates would implement the anti-war stand of the majority of people in the U.S. is absent.

How is it that huge military exercises, with the potential to spark regional and even world war, are not on the candidates' agenda? These military exercises are a reflection of U.S. preparations for broader war, at a time the people are demanding an end to wars. Yet debates on the need to bring U.S. troops home, stop the military exercises and end the crime of U.S. aggression are absent.

Given the long and continuing history of U.S. aggression and interference, including today against Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Philippines, Korea, Venezuela, Honduras and elsewhere, a stand of *principle* against all U.S. aggression is critical. It is the basis for standing with the peoples of the world and for peace. Yet there are currently no anti-war candidates in the presidential primaries and not even serious discussion of these vital issues of war and peace.

The absence of anti-war candidates and anti-war platforms reflects the reality that anyone striving to be U.S. president necessarily must represent U.S. empire building. So while there are differences on some particulars among the candidates, none takes a stand of principle against U.S. aggression. None speaks to the fact that aggression is a crime to be punished. War games, which are preparation for war and promotion of war, are also crimes against the peace.

The issues of war and peace cannot be left to chance, especially for a presidential election. The anti-war voice of the working class and people needs to be heard. The issue of ending all U.S. war and aggression must be brought to the fore in the many rallies and demonstrations taking place where



candidates speak.

Further, the absence of anti-war candidates is a reflection of the anti-democratic electoral process. Rather than serious debate on these issues, the campaigns are increasingly becoming negative and lacking in substance. Terms like "brawls," and "thugs" and "clashes" and insults of the worst kind dominate.

A modern electoral process where serious debate, based on full information on the agenda set by the people, not the candidates, is needed. And certainly the issues of war and peace are front and center for the people, here and abroad. Rather than being drawn into the "brawls," stepping up the fight for people's empowerment and an electoral process that facilitates that empowerment is needed. Discussion is needed to develop a process where we can select our own candidates that *are* anti-war and a democratic process, where it is the process, not the candidates, that is publicly funded. A process focused on informing the public, not alienating it further; a process that requires solutions to key problems, like those of war and peace. To secure an anti-war government, we need a pro-people electoral process.

Visit our website: usmlo.org

Protests Across Philippines Demand Ouster of U.S. Military

Thousands of Filipinos are taking part in protests and demonstrations across the Philippines to demand the end of the U.S. military presence on their island nation. They are protesting the annual joint U.S.-Philippines military exercises now under way, as well as the scrapping of the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) that allows for the expansion of the U.S. military presence on the islands.

Some 10,000 American and Philippine troops are involved in the 11-day Balikatan (shoulder-to-shoulder) land and sea war exercises which began on April 4. This is the 15th year that these exercises have been undertaken against the will of the Philippine people who have consistently called for their end. For the last three years, Australia, which is part of the Anglo-American imperialist system of states, has also been involved. As well, the number of U.S. troops, ships and planes has been increased in the Philippines in recent years as part of the Obama administration's pivot to Asia aimed at challenging and containing China.

The heroic Philippine people have been affirming their right to be against U.S. imperialism since the time the U.S. annexed the Philippines in 1899 following the Spanish-American War. The U.S. military was forced to shut down its bases and leave the Philippines in 1992 in the face of massive opposition by the Philippine people.

In recent years the sell-out Aquino government has caved to the demands of the U.S. to boost the number of U.S. forces in the Philippines under the pretext of the U.S.-led "global war on terror" as well as through militarizing emergency aid such as during Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 when the U.S. military used "typhoon relief" to establish a stronger foothold in the country. U.S. military officers are now "advising" the Philippine military in "counter-intelligence" operations -- a euphemism for suppressing the revolutionary forces



of the New People's Army led by the Communist Party of the Philippines and other progressive and democratic forces, including Indigenous peoples fighting for their rights.

Despite widespread opposition, the Aquino government signed the EDCA, which enables the U.S. to build new military bases on the islands if they serve both U.S. and Filipino troops as a way to get around the people's opposition, as well as increase the time U.S. troops can remain in the Philippines in each rotation. The EDCA extends the much opposed Visiting Forces Agreement of 1999. Unions, church groups, human rights organizations, women's groups and other political forces in the Philippines have denounced the signing of the EDCA as an affront to the dignity of the Philippine people and a violation of their collective rights, recalling that the U.S. military in the Philippines has a long history of committing crimes against the people including rapes, thefts, physical assault and other abuses with impunity.

By their concerted political actions against the U.S. militarization of their homeland, the people of the Philippines are carrying out their duty to themselves and humanity to secure peace on their island homeland and in Asia and the world.

U.S. Leading Largest Military Exercise in Middle East

The U.S. Navy is currently leading the largest maritime exercise in the Middle East with more than 30 countries participating in the event. The International Mine Countermeasures Exercise (IMCMEX) is a military exercise, with the U.S. seeking to ensure it controls international trade routes. Operations are taking place in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and the Red Sea. While the U.S. says it aims to prepare against possible "terrorist" attacks, the exercise, like those in Korea and the Philippines, are part of its aggressive war preparations. At the same time, it is using the claim of "terrorists" to also target additional forces, such as those in Yemen.

The exercise is organized by U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and began in Bahrain, where the U.S. now stations the 5th Fleet. Commander of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Vice Admiral Kevin Donegan highlighted U.S. concerns about shipping routes, saying, "This region provides a strong training opportunity for nations worldwide as three of the six major maritime choke-points in the world are here: the Suez Canal, the Strait of Bab Al

Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz." He also indicated how the U.S. might justify attacks on Syria and Yemen saying, "We believe that the threat from nonstate actors to international commerce is real and by doing this exercise we can help mitigate it, we look at nonstate actors that have potential capabilities to disrupt sea traffic ranging from al-Qaida to ISIS and even to the Houthis ..."

The IMCMEX, which ends on April 26, focuses on operations such as mine countermeasures, maritime security operations coordinated with industrial and commercial shipping, including, for example, oil shipments. As Donegan said, "Nearly 20 percent of the world's oil transits through the Strait of Hormuz every day. Imagine the impact on the global economy if suddenly that oil stops flowing because of restricted sea lanes." Diving operations, small-boat exercises, and port clearance operations are also being done. In addition, new technologies such as unmanned underwater vehicles and the expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Choctaw County are being demonstrated.

U.S. Nuclear Rearmament Under Guise of World Peace

Finian Cunningham, April 12, 2016

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visited Hiroshima in April, where nearly 71 years ago the U.S. dropped the first ever atomic weapon killing 140,000 people. It was the first visit by a senior American official to the Japanese city owing to immense sensitivity surrounding that notorious event.

However, the occasion this week was said to underscore U.S. President Obama's vision of a nuclear weapons free world, said Kerry's State Department.

The Japanese government of Shinzo Abe also got some good public relations value out of Kerry's landmark visit to the Hiroshima peace memorial. As Voice of America noted, the occasion "helps to soften its global image" as Abe's government steps up its military posture in recent years.

Obama is due to go to Japan in May to attend a G7 summit. It is being suggested that he too may pay respects to Hiroshima victims of the U.S. atomic bombing, which occurred on August 6, 1945.

By the time Obama arrives in Japan, a shipment of Japanese radioactive plutonium is due to land on the U.S. east coast. The highly dangerous cargo of 331 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium reportedly left Japan on March 22 onboard an armed ship as part of an agreement with the U.S. to act as a depository for the radioactive material. The cargo is reportedly sufficient material for the production 50 nuclear warheads.

The two-month seaborne transfer is a highly classified matter, the itinerary kept secret for security reasons. It is reportedly the first major transport of weapons-grade material from Japan since 1992. The plutonium is intended to be disembarked at a nuclear facility in Savannah, South Carolina.

U.S. Spending \$1 Trillion to Upgrade Nuclear Weapons

The intake of plutonium from Japan by the U.S. is supposedly part of a 2010 accord between the U.S. and Russia that calls on both parties to begin disposal of highly enriched plutonium for the purpose of aiding weapons non-proliferation. Both sides are obligated to dispose of 34 tons of weapons-grade plutonium. Notwithstanding, on the U.S. side the commitment has been largely unfulfilled, according to Professor Peter Kuznick, director of the Nuclear Studies Institute at American University in Washington DC.

Kuznick "estimates that on Obama's watch little more than a ton of nuclear materials has been removed," reported the *Guardian*. Kuznick even went as far as accusing the American president of espousing the "height of hypocrisy" in light of his famous speech in Prague 2009 when he pledged to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Further anomaly is in the fact that the Obama administration has committed Washington to spend \$1 trillion over the next three decades in upgrading the country's entire nuclear arsenal. A central part of the task is to replace the plutonium cores in all

warheads – of which the U.S. has roughly 1,500, on parity with Russia's stockpile.

Therefore, it is very hard to see how Washington is implementing "Obama's vision" of a nuclear-weapons-free world. The opposite is more to the point.

At the end of last month, Obama hosted 50 world leaders in Washington for a nuclear security summit. It was the fourth such event under his nearly eight-year presidency. Just before the gathering, Obama wrote an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* that headlined: "How we can make our vision of a world without nuclear weapons a reality."

Notably, Russian President Vladimir Putin skipped the conference in Washington. The Kremlin said that was because the U.S. side did not consult beforehand with Russian counterparts on what the agenda of the summit would be.

In his op-ed piece, Obama appeared to re-write his "Prague vision" by saying that the "central pillar" now is "preventing terrorists from obtaining and using a nuclear weapon." The president went on to say: "We'll review our progress, such as successfully ridding more than a dozen countries of highly enriched uranium and plutonium."

So Obama deftly shifts the focus from international disarmament by nuclear powers — and his own country's tardiness in particular to implement the nearly 50-year-old Non-Proliferation Treaty — to one of "preventing terrorists from obtaining nuclear weapons."

This is where the shipment of plutonium from Japan comes into good public relations effect. As noted above, the cargo left Japan about a week before Obama's nuclear security summit was held in Washington. That shipment tends to bolster the narrative that the U.S. is "ridging more than a dozen countries of highly enriched uranium and plutonium" — thus ostensibly contributing to non-proliferation.

Obama also plugged the P5+1 accord with Iran in the same self-serving vein. He wrote: "We've succeeded in uniting the international community against the spread of nuclear weapons, notably in Iran. A nuclear-armed Iran would have constituted an unacceptable threat to our national security and that of our allies and partners. It could have triggered a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and begun to unravel the global non-proliferation regime."

Again, the intended effect is that Nobel Laureate Obama is seen to be doing his bit for world peace and nuclear disarmament. But with a trillion-dollar upgrade of the U.S. nuclear arsenal underway, as designated by Obama, it should be evident that the exact opposite is the case.

Japan has reportedly accumulated about 50 tons of plutonium over several decades, with supplies sent there from Britain, France and the U.S., supposedly for the purpose of research and use as reactor fuel. There are apparently security concerns that such nuclear material could be hijacked by terror groups.

And so the U.S. has presented itself as stepping up to the plate to receive this stockpile from Japan on to its territory for “safe disposal.”

U.S. Nuclear Facilities Have Radioactive Leakage

But the alleged disposal of weapons-grade plutonium in the U.S. does not stand up to scrutiny. Waste facilities in the U.S. for nuclear storage have reached critical capacity limits. Major sites at Hanford, Washington, Lawrence Livermore, California, Rocky Flats, Colorado, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee, have been plagued for years with radioactive leakages. The main disposal facility at Savannah is straining at full capacity. South Carolina’s Governor Nikki Haley is threatening to sue the U.S. Department of Energy in a multi-million-dollar lawsuit over delays in relieving the Savannah site from its toxic load.

Environmentalists in New Mexico state are alarmed that the federal government is now planning to shunt highly radioactive plutonium to an existing underground storage facility there as a contingency measure. The New Mexico site has been operating for 16 years and is the US’s only underground nuclear waste facility. However, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) near Carlsbad is suitable solely for low-level nuclear waste.

It is not only local environmentalists who are anxious. Former Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson has expressed concerns that the New Mexico site is being recklessly lined up to take the nuclear waste load off the site in Savannah.

“This is not a good idea for a variety of reasons, but mainly that WIPP is not suitable to be a high-level waste dump and New Mexico has done its share of accepting nuclear waste,” wrote

Richardson in an op-ed for the *Las Cruces Sun News*.

The obvious conclusion is that the U.S. is in no position to “safely dispose” of weapons-grade plutonium from Japan, or anywhere else for that matter, since it does not even have storage capacity for its own Cold War legacy of nuclear waste.

Taking in Japanese nuclear waste is dangerously adding more environmental burden to U.S. communities. Tragically, the population of New Mexico appears to be set for a precarious experiment in disposing highly toxic nuclear material that it is not equipped to deal with.

It was 71 years ago, on July 16, 1945, that the U.S. first tested its atomic weapon in the desert of New Mexico at the Trinity explosion site. Three weeks later the bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

History appears to be turning full circle as New Mexico is once again being used to expand U.S. nuclear weapons — under the guise of “disposing” plutonium. But the real reason for the “disposal” is to give the U.S. the international image of working towards non-proliferation, when in reality it is scaling up its own nuclear arsenal — in complete violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty that was first signed all the way back in 1968. Nearly half a century on, the U.S. is paving the way for extending its weapons of mass destruction, not eliminating them.

Kerry’s “historic” visit to Hiroshima this week thus seems to be part of a carefully choreographed and ultimately cynical public relations exercise by the U.S. government. Solemn words for the victims of America’s nuclear holocaust and lofty visions of disarmament jar with Washington’s conduct of rearming itself to the teeth. (*Strategic Culture Foundation*)

America’s Insatiable Appetite for Foreign Bases

Wayne Madsen, April 4, 2016

The Obama administration will be remembered for the extension of American military bases to the most far-flung parts of the world in a manner not seen since the early days of the Cold War.

The Pentagon, under Obama, drew up a plan for a worldwide network of military “half-hubs” with smaller dependent bases or “half-spokes” coordinating their activity with the hubs. One such hub is a large airbase being constructed by the United States in Erbil, in what is the all-but-declared independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq.

In February 2015, the Peshmerga Ministry in Kurdistan, the aspirant nation’s de facto defense ministry, confirmed the establishment of the U.S. base even as the Pentagon was denying it. The establishment of a U.S. military base in a Kurdistan that is still recognized by the international community as a part of Iraq is a touchy subject for the Pentagon and Obama administration. The U.S. has already gone down the slippery slope of establishing U.S. bases in self-declared independent countries that are not recognized by the United Nations. For example, Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo... is one of the largest U.S. bases in Europe.

Recently, it became clearer what “half-spoke” bases would



be built in the Middle East that would coordinate their activities with the U.S. Central Command installation in Erbil. Taking advantage of the battlefield success of the Syrian Kurds, the US built an airbase in Rmeilan, which is now part of the embryonic Syrian Kurdish state known as the Federation of Northern Syria-Rojava. The Rmeilan base is designed as one of the spokes from

the Erbil hub. The United States justifies its military bases in the largely unrecognized Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) territory and Northern Syria-Rojava by claiming the bases are needed to fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), an organization of America's making. However, anyone in the Middle East with common sense realizes that the new bases are to create zones of protection for US oil interests who want to exploit the oil reserves of both Iraq and Syria.

In a show of hypocrisy, the Pentagon maintains that it coordinated the establishment of the Erbil base with the Iraqi government in Baghdad. Yet, when it came to modernizing the 2600-meter-long runway at Rmeilan in northern Syria, it sought no permission from the central government of Syria. And many Iraqi officials scoff at the notion Washington asked Baghdad for prior permission to build its base in Erbil.

Another spoke for the Erbil hub is the not-so-secret US training base located in the northern Jordanian desert town of Safawi. At this base, US, Jordanian, British, French, and Turkish troops jointly trained Syrian rebel forces, many of which, when entering Syria, immediately defected to ISIL and its affiliates. [...]

The United States Navy has long coveted the strategic Yemeni island of Socotra. Once part of the British Empire and more recently part of South Yemen, which permitted the Soviet Union to establish a key signals intelligence base on the island that sits right in the middle of the Gulf of Aden and the maritime routes through the Red Sea, Socotra is considered the crown jewel for any global empire. In February of this year, Yemen's Saudi-supported puppet president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi reportedly offered the United Arab Emirates a 99-year lease for the control of Socotra. The UAE capital of Abu Dhabi is the headquarters for Reflex Responses (R2), the private military company established by Erik Prince, the founder of Blackwater USA, a company that provided services to the Central Intelligence Agency and State Department during the American military fiascos in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan. Currently, U.S. civilian paramilitary advisers command R2 mercenary units made up of Colombians, South Africans, and Chileans. These may be the first ground forces in Socotra to prepare the island for an American military presence.

Any agreement by the UAE to gain control of Socotra for 99-years, which suspiciously reminds one of the US 99-year lease on Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, a lease long since expired, would also open the island up to the problems usually associated with hosting American military bases. Aside from the people of Socotra suffering under a joint UAE-U.S. suzerainty, at risk will be the island's protected world natural heritage site status. One thing that is always certain after the U.S. leaves a



military base, which is rare, are the mounds of trash and toxic chemicals it leaves behind. Pristine Socotra could become a toxic waste dump while serving as a virtual American aircraft carrier in the Gulf of Aden.

From the deserts of the Middle East, the Pentagon is also refurbishing the largely abandoned NATO base at Keflavik in Iceland. The U.S. Navy plans to station P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft in Keflavik to counter what NATO sees as a Russian threat. However, it is NATO that is expanding bases and building new ones, including American military personnel, in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

In Asia, the United States is trying to convince the government of Okinawa to allow it to build a new air base on the Japanese island. However, Okinawa's government, tired of animalistic U.S. servicemen preying, for decades, on the girls and women of Okinawa, wants the U.S. out, period. If they are ever so unfortunate to host a U.S. military base, the people of Socotra need only ask the Okinawans what American troops bring to an island culture in the way of rapes, assaults, alcohol, sexually-transmitted diseases, drugs, theft, and pollution.

Other islands in the Indian Ocean are also not safe from being exploited by the Pentagon's foreign base frenzy. The residents of the Cocos Islands, an Australian possession in the Indian Ocean located 2750 kilometers northwest of Perth, are concerned their pristine tropical corner of the planet will soon host a major military base, part of Obam's Pivot to Asia, which is directed against China. Eager to challenge China in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, the Pentagon is busy establishing new bases in Darwin, Australia; Singapore; and the Philippines, while maintaining its large base on Diego Garcia, an island ruthlessly stolen from the native Chagossians in order to make way for American nuclear submarines, cruise missiles, and B-52s.

The only good news about one new U.S. base at Ice Camp Sargo in the Arctic is that it is located on an ice sheet. It will eventually be abandoned as the polar ice melts this summer. (strategic-culture.org)

NATO Enforcing U.S. Imperialist Pivot to Asia

On April 4, Jens Stoltenberg, Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and U.S. President Barack Obama met at the White House. The meeting coincided with the 67th anniversary of the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty commonly known as the Washington Treaty, upon which NATO was founded. Their meeting took place as the United States is stepping up the permanent rather than rotational deployment of its troops, equipment and bases in the countries of eastern Europe.



Trying to present the moves to militarize eastern Europe under U.S. domination as anything but aggressive, Obama noted that NATO continues to be the “cornerstone” of collective defense for the U.S. and Europe. “This is obviously a tumultuous time in the world. Europe is a focal point of a lot of these stresses and strains in the global security system,” Obama said to justify the deployment of more U.S. troops.

For his part, Stoltenberg presented U.S.-NATO relations as based on fighting terrorism, to hide the terror the military alliance has carried out against the countries and peoples of the world, including Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and most recently Libya. U.S. imperialism now seeks to impose itself on Syria and once again Iraq and is increasingly using NATO to carry out this push. Stoltenberg stated, “Terrorism affects us all, from Brussels to San Bernardino,” noting that all NATO Allies contribute to the U.S.-led coalition against ISIS and that NATO has just started training Iraqi officers “in partnership” with the coalition. Showing the role NATO plays as gendarme of the U.S., Stoltenberg stated that NATO’s biggest operation has been its role in Afghanistan, which he claimed was in response to the 9/11 terrorist attack and that this shows the importance of Europe and North America standing together. The NATO Secretary General also thanked Obama for new permanent deployments of U.S. troops and equipment said to be to bolster NATO through the “European Reassurance Initiative.”

European Reassurance Initiative

Under the guise of defending Europe from an “assertive Russia,” the U.S. is in the midst of a large buildup of troops and equipment and construction of new airfields in Europe. It involves the permanent placement of thousands more U.S. troops in the Baltic republics, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria

as well as airfields for the rapid deployment of these and other troops. It is said this is a show of support for NATO but it also means the permanent placement of thousands of U.S. troops and additional equipment for use against the peoples of NATO member countries and those not members or allies of NATO.

The 2017 U.S. Defense Department budget includes funds to “support the deployment of between 3,000 and 5,000 troops and the forward placement of

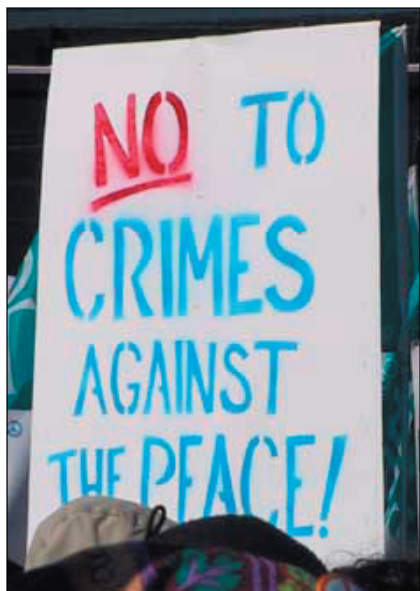
military equipment to NATO’s eastern flank.”

On March 30, the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) announced that continuous U.S. Army presence in Europe will reach three brigades — one armored, one airborne, one Stryker brigade — by 2017, as well as one pre-positioned set of combat-ready equipment sufficient to support another armored brigade combat team and “division-level enablers,” officials said. Reports say that for the past year, the U.S. military has deployed “rotational units” in eastern Europe and used a set of pre-positioned equipment — known as the European Activity Set — which includes vehicles, weapons, communication equipment and other essential supplies to outfit a combat brigade.[1]

The new deployment will mean a permanent troop presence in the targeted countries as well as the permanent placement, maintenance and repair of equipment to be used in the event of “emergencies.” *Military Times* reports that the “rotational” troops at military installations in places such as Germany and Italy will swap out “heel to toe,” meaning there will be no permanent garrison of U.S. forces like those in Germany and Italy but troops would retain a constant presence on the ground in eastern Europe.

The rotations will “demonstrate the ability to rapidly deploy equipment and forces to Europe by sending U.S.-based rotational forces with their currently assigned equipment.” Officials noted that this equipment will be the most modern the Army has to offer and over the next year will replace the current training equipment in Europe.

“This is a big step in enhancing the Army’s rotational presence and increasing their combat equipment in Europe,” said Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, EUCOM commander. “This Army implementation plan continues to demonstrate our strong and balanced approach to reassuring our NATO allies and partners in the wake of an aggressive Russia in Eastern



Europe and elsewhere. This means our allies and partners will see more capability -- they will see a more frequent presence of an armored brigade with more modernized equipment in their countries."

U.S. Air Force Europe Commander Gen. Frank Gorenc said that the U.S. government's increase of European Reassurance Initiative funds will enable NATO to strengthen its presence there. "This

will allow us to do another aspect that I am keen on and that is continuing to develop the airfields, particularly on the Eastern side of NATO — the Baltic Republics, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria." He noted that the airfields "will allow for an easier place to go, to accomplish high-volume, high-velocity operations."

In related news, on March 11, the North Atlantic Council (the decision-making body of NATO) announced that it has approved the nomination of General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, United States Army, to the post of Supreme Allied Commander Europe, replacing Breedlove. Scaparrotti is currently serving as Commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, United States Forces Korea.

Training of Iraqi Forces in Jordan Begins

An announcement from NATO informed that the "first group of officers from Iraq's national security forces started their NATO training course" at the for-profit U.S.-run training camp called the King Abdullah Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC) in Amman, Jordan on April 2.[2] Jordan's King Abdullah II visited NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium on March 17, where NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg praised the country's role "as an active member of NATO's Mediterranean Dialogue," which also includes Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

The training mission is reported to be part of a NATO Defense and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative first announced at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales in September 2014. Countries targeted for "capacity-building" include Georgia, Jordan, Moldova, Tunisia, Iraq and Libya.

NATO says the program provides "specialized assistance in the areas where NATO can add the most value," including "advice on security sector reform, military training, explosive ordnance disposal, de-mining, cyber defense, civil emergency planning, civil-military planning, countering improvised explosive devices, military medicine and medical assistance." ANATO press release announced that the aggressive alliance "is ready to

step up this work with other interested partners as well."

It is also part of establishing NATO command over the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq and Syria. Following the NATO defense ministers' meeting in February, U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter announced that they are exploring the possibility of NATO joining the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. NATO also agreed to provide surveillance aircraft to assist in bombing runs in Iraq and Syria.

Notes

1. The number of military personnel in every U.S. Army brigade is about 4,200 people. A division can be made up of anywhere between 10,000 and 20,000 soldiers. A division is the U.S. Army's largest tactical organization that trains and fights as a combined arms team. It is a self-sustaining force capable of independent operations. The division is composed of varying numbers and types of combat, combat support, and combat service support units. The mix and types of combat units determine whether a division is armored, mechanized, infantry, light infantry, airborne, or air assault.

2. The KASOTC facility in Amman began operations in 2009 and was paid for by the U.S. Defense Department and built by a U.S. construction firm supervised by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Training at the base is overseen by ViaGlobal Group, a U.S. private military contractor, along with the Jordanian Armed Forces.

Its director is Frank Toney, a retired U.S. brigadier general and commander of the Army Special Forces. Toney in 2009 became senior advisor to Iraq's counterterrorism forces before spending three years working for DynCorp, another U.S. military contractor.

KASOTC is staffed by "ex-Army Rangers, Deltas and SEALs," the New York Times reports. In 2013, reports said that U.S. Special Forces and military planners were based at KASOTC under CIA leadership for training of Syrian "rebels." It also hosts an annual "Warrior Competition," with more than 30 international and local teams competing in counter-terrorism drills.



I • Stop U.S. War Games

People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

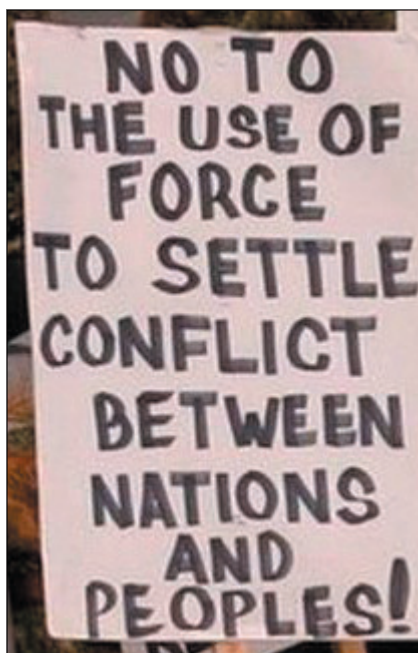
A senior south Korean defense official told the *Korea Herald*, "This year's operations will involve recovering key facilities that are located deep within North Korea, all the way near its northern borders." He added, "The scenario will include the special operations forces being deployed to border areas adjacent to China and Russia," and claimed that the large number of troops are required for a decisive victory so as not to escalate into a war with China and Russia.

Russia Today notes, "The number of Korean troops involved in drills [is] 1.5 times as big as last year, and more than four times as many U.S. Marines and other forces will be involved. Although there have been more numerous joint drills by the two countries, these are the biggest war games since the current format, named Key Resolve/Foal Eagle, was adopted in 2008.

"Traditionally, the two exercises have focused on responding to an invasion, and counter-attacking — Key Resolve mostly through computer simulations and Foal Eagle through ground drills. This year they have been supplemented by a new doctrine, called OPLAN 5015, in which the joint forces use F-22 fighters, strategic bombers, nuclear-powered submarines, amphibious carriers, and other rapid means of attack to take out potential nuclear sites."

The U.S. has deployed a combat aviation brigade for the duration of the war games, as well as a mobile U.S. Marine brigade, an aircraft carrier and its attendant fleet, a nuclear-powered submarine and aerial tankers to refuel fighter aircraft.

The Key Resolve/Foal Eagle war games follow a



provocative joint naval exercise by the U.S. and south Korean armed forces on March 4. This war exercise was carried out two days after an aggressive and unjust regime of sanctions was imposed on the DPRK by the UN Security Council.

South Korean newspapers are reporting that, for the first time, Key Resolve tested the new U.S.-South Korean military strategy operation plan, Operations Plan 5015, which is based on the use of preemptive attacks against the DPRK. Given this plan, there is little wonder the Koreans are concerned about an actual invasion.

As one U.S. expert on Korea admitted, the Marines involved are considered a force for infiltrating behind enemy lines, in this case, beyond the demilitarized zone. He said the north Korean's know the role of the Marines as an invasion force, especially when coupled with B-

52s and F-22s and nuclear-capable submarines.

The purpose of war games is to prepare for war. These drills in particular take as their starting point illegal aggressive preemptive actions. They are in the framework of decades of U.S. occupation of the south and the threatened use of force and all manner of espionage, biological warfare and violations of the DPRK's airspace and territorial waters. The U.S. has openly said it would use nuclear weapons against the DPRK and did so even before she had developed nuclear weapons.

It is the U.S. war games and nuclear threats that are the source of the very dangerous conditions in Korea and the region. They are not the source of peace but rather a demonstration of the U.S. Might Makes Right doctrine to justify its empire building. The key steps to peace at this time is *Stop the War Games* and bring *All U.S. Troops Home Now*.



To Have Peace, Suspend the U.S.-South Korea Joint Military Exercises

*Jon Min Dok, Institute for Disarmament and Peace, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)*

There has been a lot of water under the bridge since the end of the Cold War. The world has made tremendous advances and the times have undergone dramatic changes. Despite the end of the Cold War, the Korean Peninsula finds itself caught in a state of armistice and both belligerents have leveled their guns at each other for more than half a century. [The U.S. refused to sign a peace treaty when it was defeated in its war against Korea in 1953, so an armistice remains in place — VOR Ed. Note]

The Korean Peninsula has already been ranked as the biggest and most highly explosive powder-keg in the world and a fuse for a new world war.

The Main Cause of Tension on the Korean Peninsula

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a peace-loving nation. The DPRK, unlike the U.S., has neither invaded other nations with armed forces nor conducted any large-scale bilateral or multilateral joint military drills abroad against a third country.

However, in the last 70 years since its occupation of south Korea, the U.S. has annually staged all kinds of aggressive war drills in the south and surrounding areas targeted at the DPRK. The DPRK is several thousand miles away from the U.S., but such war games are driving the situation on the Korean Peninsula and the region to the brink of war.

Hindering Inter-Korean Relations and Reunification

It is well-known that the U.S. occupied south Korea under the guise of “liberator” following Japan's defeat in World War II, thus dividing the homogeneous nation of Korea and its soil into north and south. From the early days of its illegal and unlawful occupation of south Korea, turning south Korea into its colony, the U.S. has been desperate to portray itself as a “defender” of world peace and security while slandering the DPRK as a “criminal” destroying peace and security. This is done to mislead world public opinion.

In the last 70 years, the U.S. has pursued a ceaseless military build-up and conducted new war provocations and drills against the DPRK with the strategy of maintaining tension on the Korean Peninsula. It hopes to isolate the DPRK and block the improvement of inter-Korean relations.

The Aggressive Nature of the Joint Military Exercises

The joint military exercises annually staged by the U.S. and south Korea on the Korean peninsula are quite different from military exercises of other countries in terms of both frequency and purpose.

The U.S.-led RIMPAC naval joint military exercises, the world biggest in scale, is held every two years. In RIMPAC

2014, 23 countries, 47 vessels, 6 submarines and 200 aircrafts were involved, but the total number of troops amounted to only 25,000.

In the case of Cobra Gold, the biggest annual joint military exercises in Asia, less than 10,000 troops from 28 countries are participating in the drill and the duration is around 10 days.

The NATO-led Swift Response 15, the biggest in Europe since the end of the Cold War, also involves only 5,000 troops from around 10 countries.

However, the U.S. and south Korea hold annually more than 40 joint military exercises such as Key Resolve, Foal Eagle, and Ulji Freedom Guardian by mobilizing more than 500,000 U.S. and south Korean troops and all means of war including a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, strategic bombers, nuclear-powered submarines, etc.

OPLAN 5027, which has been applied to the joint military exercises including Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, is an operational plan for an all-out war that would involve 690,000 U.S. troops, 160 vessels and 2,500 aircrafts on the Korean Peninsula. The plan is offensive rather than defensive and is aimed at occupying the DPRK by preemptive strike.

War Games Target Occupation of DPRK

The aggressive nature of the U.S.-south Korea joint military exercises is also apparent in the setting of their targets. These include the feasibility of operations like “removal of the leadership,” “occupying Pyongyang,” “regime change,” “preemptive nuclear strike” and “decapitation raids,” which are not found in other countries' joint military drills.

It cannot be overlooked that the U.S. is inviting the military forces of countries that took part in the Korean War like Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Denmark and Japan to the joint military exercises.

History of U.S. Undermining Peace Using War Games

[The current War Games are part of a long history of U.S. efforts to block peace and reunification for Korea.] In 1945, when Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule the U.S. occupied south Korea and turned south Korea into its colony. It instigated the Syngman Rhee puppet clique to stage war drills and military provocations against the north along the 38th parallel and in the end sparked the Korean War in 1950. The U.S. ambition was to halt the nationwide struggle of the Korean people for a unified state, and to put the north under its domination.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Armistice Agreement the political conference for peaceful settlement of the Korean Peninsula took place in Geneva. However, the U.S. broke off the

conference by conducting Focus Lens, a joint military exercise with south Korea, in 1954. Later in the 1960s, the U.S. continued to aggravate the situation with the Focus Retina and Eagle joint military exercises.

In the early 1970s, the July 4th North-South Joint Statement for reunifying Korea based on the three principles of independence, peace and great national unity was made public, due largely to the initiatives of the DPRK. At the same time, support for independent peaceful reunification was growing rapidly on the peninsula. The U.S. got nervous about these developments and put pressure on Park Chung-hee, in south Korea, to overturn the Joint Statement. The U.S. started the Team Spirit and Ulji Focus Lens joint military exercises in 1976, thus driving the inter-Korean relations to a new confrontation. When the Korean people's expectations and aspirations for national reunification grew fervent through the announcement of an Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, and Exchanges and Cooperation between the North and the South in 1992, the U.S. restarted the Team Spirit joint military exercises in 1993 to turn the situation into another catastrophe.

Entering the 2000s, the June 15 era opened between the north and the south, [stemming from the signing of the June 15th North-South Joint Declaration for reunification]. Aspirations for reunification and anti-U.S. sentiment grew higher, including a call for the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) to the south Korean army [from U.S. control], which took place in south Korea. To check these developments, the U.S. again resorted to joint military exercises.

Last year, the U.S. overlooked and tacitly encouraged the south Korean army's provocative "landmine explosion" and "shell fired by the north" incidents, which occurred during the Ulji Freedom Guardian military exercises, thus driving the situation on the peninsula to the brink of war again. [...]

The Unprecedented Key Resolve, Foal Eagle 16

The first exercises in which the U.S. and south Korea introduced the "tailored deterrence strategy" and tested its effectiveness is the Ulji Freedom Guardian joint military exercises in 2014.

The Key Resolve and Foal Eagle 16, which the U.S. and south Korea started on March 7 this year is the unprecedented and the largest joint war drills surpassing all the previous drills. It will last for nearly two months.

Mobilized in the exercises are huge armed forces including 17,000 American soldiers, 300,000 south Korean soldiers and those from other states. The exercise is two times larger in size than previous drills, including the nuclear-powered USS John C. Stennis aircraft carrier, one of the typical strategic assets carrying 100 aircraft and even the USS North Carolina, a nuclear-powered submarine, B-52 and B-2 strategic bombers, F-22 Raptor stealth bombers, F-15K and KF-16, etc.

The U.S. and south Korea have even thrown off the deceptive mask of the "annual and defensive" nature of the drills and are staging the exercises by way of fighting an actual war, practicing a "Decapitation Raids Operation" aimed at removal of the DPRK leadership and bringing down its social system pursuant to the extremely adventurous OPLAN 5015.



OPLAN 5015, applied for the first time this year, is integrating both OPLAN 5027 and OPLAN 5029. It is aimed at a preemptive strike against the DPRK's nuclear and missile bases within 30 minutes of detecting signs of a missile launch. Therefore, it is more dangerous and aggressive than previous operational plans.

Suspension Of Joint War Drills: A Touchstone For Peace

Peace and security on the Korean Peninsula is of great importance to the Korean nation since it is directly related to the existence of the Korean nation and its reunification. Therefore, the DPRK has advanced broad and rational proposals aimed at removal of the danger of war, easing tensions and providing a peaceful environment on the Korean Peninsula and has made sincere efforts toward their realization. The suspension of joint military exercises is the precondition for the safeguarding of peace on the Korean Peninsula. [...]

The DPRK has no intention at all to interfere in the U.S. war games if they are really defensive and pose no threat to the DPRK and are conducted on U.S. territory or in the middle of Pacific Ocean. However, the DPRK cannot remain a passive onlooker to the fact that the U.S., the biggest nuclear weapons state in the world and the belligerent that is still at war with the DPRK, is conducting aggressive and large-scale war exercises at the threshold of the DPRK by mobilizing all kinds of state-of-the-art strategic assets.

If the U.S. has no intention to invade or attack the DPRK, there is no need to stage the military war drills for such a long period with huge armed forces and preemptive strike means, more than enough to fight a full-scale war.

Therefore, in January 2015, the DPRK advanced a proposal for the U.S. suspension of joint military exercises in south Korea and its vicinity and the DPRK's moratorium on nuclear tests and reiterated that proposal again in January this year. [...]

If the U.S. is sincerely interested in dialogue with the DPRK and peace on the Korean Peninsula, it should show its readiness to suspend the joint military exercises.

The U.S. Nuclear Threat to the Sovereignty of DPRK

Kim Chol Min, Institute for Disarmament and Peace, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The whole world is watching very closely and with great concern the dangerous situation on the Korean Peninsula. The ever worsening danger of war, with conventional and nuclear weapons is being created amidst acute confrontation between the nuclear armed DPRK and the U.S. forces.

The U.S. no longer bothers to disguise its military exercises as “defensive” and “annual” ones, but is waging ferocious offensive maneuvers, openly advocating a “Decapitating Operation,” “inland occupation” and “advance towards Pyongyang,” targeting our supreme headquarters and the toppling of a system for which the largest amount of troops, strategic nuclear striking means and special forces have been mobilized.

The DPRK is demonstrating its modern military means like a nuclear warhead and ballistic rockets against such maneuvers. [...] A realistic threat clear to everyone is that a tiny spark can lead to all-out war on the Korean Peninsula which could escalate into a thermonuclear war that will set the whole world on fire.

In order to solve the issue, it is of vital importance to gain a deep insight into the root cause of the deterioration of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and also to have a correct understanding of our nuclear possession.

What made the DPRK possess nuclear weapons?

The U.S. nuclear threat towards the DPRK is, by no means, an abstract notion but a reality. The DPRK is the country that has been directly and most persistently under nuclear threat and blackmail. This has been true for a long time.

On November 30, 1950, at the height of the Korean War, then U.S. President Truman publicly spoke about the use of the atomic bomb and following his statement McArthur, then Commander of the U.S. Forces in the Far East worked out a plan the following December to use dozens of atomic bombs. The plan would also set up a radioactive corridor in the northern part of Korea that would cover the area between the east coast and the west coast. McArthur attempted to put the plan into practice. Furthermore, the U.S. had planned use of atomic bombs six times during the period of the Korean War an exercise with B-29 strategic bombers simulating atomic bomb drops in the skies of Pyongyang in September and October 1951.

Even after the conclusion of the Korean War Armistice



Agreement, the U.S. has ceaselessly increased nuclear threats against the DPRK by bringing the first tactical nuclear weapon into south Korea in 1957 as a start. Since then, around 1,720 combat ready nuclear weapons were deployed by the mid 1980s. The deployment of various kinds of nuclear weapons ranging from the backpack nuke to neutron bomb, the so-called “Devil’s weapon of the 20th century” literally turned south Korea into an exhibition hall for U.S. nuclear weapons.

It was only too clear who the target was for these vast amounts of nuclear weapons deployed in the southern part of the not very large Korean Peninsula. For the DPRK it was a serious threat indeed, endangering the existence of the country and nation itself.

The U.S. not only brought nuclear weapons into south Korea but also made actual threats of nuclear attacks against the DPRK. Every year since 1954, the U.S. has been mobilizing a huge amount of nuclear weapons in and around south

Korea to wage nuclear war exercises against the DPRK, changing their titles from “Focus Lens” to “Foal Eagle” to “Team Spirit” and so on. It has persistently increased the nuclear threat towards the DPRK.

According to state documents declassified by the U.S., the Pentagon worked out three offensive plans in 1969 when the spy plane EC-121 incident broke out; the plan of striking 12 places within the DPRK with nuclear weapons with the destructive force of 0.2-10kt TNT, the plan of destroying our air forces by striking sixteen airfields with 10-70kt nuclear weapons, and the one of neutralizing most of the striking abilities of the DPRK.

At the time of the Panmunjom incident in 1976, strategic bomber fleets flew in the skies close to the DMZ putting the world under nuclear fear, and a nuclear strategic bomber B-52 was put into the skies over Jik Islet in the west sea to conduct training for dropping nuclear bombs in February 2014.

It was also disclosed that the F-16 Fighter-Bomber fleet of the U.S. 8th Combat flight corps at the U.S. Air Force Base in Kunsan underwent training to attack the DPRK with B-61 nuclear bombers.

The U.S. Bush Administration labeled the DPRK part of an “Axis of Evil” at the State of the Union address on January 30, 2002, and made public the Nuclear Posture Review Report in March of the same year, which included our country in the list for nuclear preemptive strikes. The report made clear that the

U.S. could deliver a nuclear preemptive strike against 7 countries, including the DPRK, even if those countries did not possess nuclear weapons and the U.S. was not put under direct nuclear attack. [...]

The U.S. policy of nuclear preemptive strike against the DPRK has remained completely unchanged since then. The U.S. Obama Administration excluded our country from the list of countries to which it will not use nuclear weapons in the Nuclear Posture Review Report released on April 6, 2010, clearly showing that nothing had changed from the previous policy pursued by Bush, designating the DPRK as a target for a nuclear preemptive strike.

U.S. is Biggest Nuclear Power and Threat

The U.S., the biggest nuclear power, as well as the only country to actually use nuclear weapons, established the policy of nuclear preemptive strike against us and persistently increased its nuclear threats to the extent that they can no longer be overlooked.

The U.S. has mobilized a huge amount of troops together with various kinds of nuclear war equipment including “John C. Stennis” nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, B-52, B-2 nuclear strategic bombers, and F-22A stealth fighters for the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle 16 joint military exercises. It is even conducting the training for a “Decapitating Operation” in the way of fighting an actual war pursuant to the extremely risky OPLAN 5015. [...]

The U.S. labeled us as an “Axis of Evil” and designated us as a target of nuclear preemptive strikes. At any moment the U.S. missiles or stealth bombers carrying nuclear weapons may attack us and their special forces may launch a surprise attack against our major facilities. This is the military situation on the Korean peninsula.

The Efforts by the DPRK to Remove the U.S. Nuclear Threat

The DPRK, whose security has been exposed to serious danger by the constant U.S. nuclear threat, has taken every measure and made every possible effort to prevent the U.S. nuclear threat. We took the initiative of creating the Asia Peace Zone in 1959, and made a proposal of creating the Nuclear-Free Zone in Northeast Asia in 1981, and the proposal of creating the Nuclear-Free Zone on the Korean peninsula in 1986.

We declared at home and abroad in July 1991 that we were fully prepared to take all the necessary measures to turn the Korean peninsula into a nuclear-free zone, and directed our positive and sincere efforts for the implementation of the “Joint Statement on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula” adopted between the north and south in January 1992.



For the purpose of removing the daily increasing U.S. nuclear threat, we had direct dialogues with the U.S., participated in the tripartite conference and even made a courageous decision of accepting the U.S. proposal to hold the 6- party talks. We had acceded to the “The Treaty on the non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons” (NPT), underwent the inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), held talks on denuclearization in bilateral and multilateral negotiations and discussed the issue of denuclearization and the conclusion of a peace agreement at the same time.

However, nothing was solved in the end. Our efforts through dialogue and attempts at relying on the international laws and organizations all ended in failure. Nothing and no one could stop the U.S. nuclear threat towards us. The only and last choice left was to counter the nuclear weapons with nuclear weapons. [...]

The U.S. nuclear threat is the motive force driving the DPRK to further strengthen the nuclear forces. If we had lived in a peaceful environment without any nuclear threat from the U.S., we would not have needed even a single nuclear weapon. [...]

Under the current situation where the nuclear armed DPRK and the U.S. stand in an acute confrontation, nothing can be more absurd than to tell us to give up the war deterrence unilaterally as it is quite like putting down a hunting gun in front of a fierce beast.

The U.S. is not a country that will give up its wild ambition and aggression even if the other party puts down its weapons and makes a concession. It has been clearly proven by the case of Iraq, which showed its “good faith” of leaving the president’s palace under the search by the inspection team yielding to the pressure from the U.S. and the West, and also by the one of Libya, which gave up nuclear development and tried to seek “reconciliation.” [...]

In the end, we came to a conclusion that the only way to defend the nation’s sovereignty and its right to existence is to further enhance the nuclear forces both in terms of quantity and quality and keep the balance of force in today’s extreme situation where the U.S. unhesitatingly forces wars and calamities upon other countries and nations by wielding its military high-handedness. [...]

In today’s world, sovereignty cannot be protected with words and prosperity and development cannot be achieved by begging; this is the truth felt in our bones through practical experience. It is our unshakable will to hasten the future of great prosperity as early as possible with the great force of self-development by rightfully exercising the force of justice and self-defense against the injustice of attempting to infringe on our sovereignty and dignity. [...]

I • Cancel Puerto Rico's Debt

public pensions and health benefits, raise the retirement age, close 200 schools, charge 67 percent more for water, raise electricity rates, raise property and small business taxes, hike the gasoline tax twice in one year, and hike the sales tax to 11.5 percent. Despite all these attacks on rights, conditions continue to worsen, forcing more than one million Puerto Ricans to leave their beloved island in the past twelve years. It is evident that such concessions are not solutions, yet the U.S. government and financiers continue to demand more. *Voice of Revolution* salutes the Puerto Rican government for suspending the debt payments and stands with the people of Puerto Rico in demanding: *Cancel the Debt! Reparations Now!*

It is estimated that the debt service to Wall Street financiers on the estimated \$73 billion will be roughly \$7 billion annually: \$4 billion on its general obligation (GO) bonds, and \$3 billion for the Electric Power Authority (PREPA) and the Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA). With a population now down to 3.5 million, this means that every man, woman and child in Puerto Rico will be paying \$2,000 per year just to cover the *interest* on Puerto Rico's debt. Since per capita income is only about \$16,400, this \$2,000 represents 12 percent of everyone's personal income.

The U.S. has distorted and controlled the Puerto Rican economy since it first colonized the country in 1898. This includes reducing agriculture to a single sugar crop and controlling that crop, providing huge tax incentives for the monopolies, and now using debt to rob the Puerto Rican public treasury. The fact that the U.S. has no solutions is evident in current economic and social conditions, where the poverty rate is double that of Mississippi, the poorest U.S. state. There has been a loss of more than 80,000 jobs since 2006. And now the government is on the verge of bankruptcy and takeover by a U.S. Con-

trol Board. These plans for more open colonialism are backed up by a massive U.S. military presence on the island.

It is estimated that the robbery of Puerto Rican resources from just one U.S. imposed law, the *Jones Act*, from 1920 till the present, is about \$75.8 billion. The *Act* requires all goods shipped

to and from the island to be fully U.S. owned and operated. Simply paying this amount as an immediate reparation *owed* would eliminate the debt problems. Indeed, far more in reparations are owed for the more than 100 years of colonial enslavement, with U.S. monopolies, financiers and military reaping the benefits.

We say remove the military, pay reparations and institute the UN approved and demanded de-colonization process. Reparations are due for all the crimes of colonialism, including the current robbery of Puerto Rican public funds using the debt. Colonialism has no place today and it is the responsibility of the U.S. to take all the steps necessary to end it now. Cancel the debt, pay reparations and get the military out!



JUST STAND AGAINST U.S. DICTATE

Puerto Rico Suspends Payment on the Debt

The government in Puerto Rico has decided to suspend payments on about \$72 billion in debt. The Wall Street financiers are demanding the debt payments — on debt that has been paid many times over given interest rates. A payment of \$422 million is due on May 1 and nearly \$2 billion on July 1.

Puerto Rico already has barely enough to pay its workforce, an urgent need given the government is the largest employer on the island. Many severe cuts to social services have already been made and provided no solution. So now, the Puerto Rican government is saying no. Their Senate passed a bill authorizing the Governor of Puerto Rico to suspend all debt payments and act instead to "protect the health, security and public welfare" of island residents by using government funds first and foremost for public services. The Puerto Rican House passed a similar bill authorizing suspension of the debt payments on a case-by-case basis. Debt payments have been suspended as of April 6 and the

Governor is authorized to continue the suspension until 2017.

This stand is in part a response to efforts by Wall Street financiers to freeze Puerto Rico's assets. The hedge funds holding Puerto Rican bonds sued April 4 in U.S. federal district court to freeze Puerto Rico's development bank funds. These are the same financiers who created the debt crisis in the first place, backed up by the U.S. government. This was done not only through interest rates but also by making the bonds exempt from local, state and federal taxes everywhere in the U.S. The financiers pushed \$126.6 billion in bond sales since 2000, doubling Puerto Rico's debt burden. These financiers also secured \$900 million in fees for "managing" the sales.

"Omnipresent, Dictatorial and Colonial Board"

Puerto Ricans are also responding to the refusal of the U.S. government to cancel the debt, as it does for other countries,

like Israel, or provide funds to assist with the crisis, as was done for the banks and General Motors. Instead, Congress has refused to provide funds and is preparing to impose a Control Board. The Control Board will have unprecedented powers over the Puerto Rican government and economy. As former Puerto Rican governor Anibal Acevedo Vila stated, "Its real name should be the Omnipresent, Dictatorial and Colonial Board."

For the next five years, the Control Board could approve or reject any budget or law proposed by the Puerto Rican government. It could privatize any government service, like education, water and electricity. It could approve, or disapprove, any contract over \$1 million. It could create a sub-minimum wage. It could petition to restructure any debts to bondholders and decide how those debts would be repaid. It could pass any rules or orders to carry out its work without judicial review.

The President names four of the five members from a list

supplied by U.S. congressional leaders. This means a board of *appointed* people who are not Puerto Rican or living in Puerto Rico or accountable to Puerto Ricans would be running her economy and government for at least five years. The colonialism is being made clear for all to see.

The Puerto Rican government, not those of cities and towns on the island, provides for education and funds the agencies that provide water and electricity. There have already been massive cuts to education, including school closings and attacks on the University of Puerto Rico, where students waged a strike to reject the cuts. Numerous other demonstrations have occurred demanding increases in funding for social services. The just demand of Puerto Ricans and now the government is *NO!* to paying the debt.

Puerto Ricans are rightly refusing to pay the debt and standing up for their right to determine their own affairs, free from U.S. interference.

U.S. OUT OF PUERTO RICO

No More Colonialism Disguised as Financial Assistance

Nelson A. Denis, Truthout

This year, 2016, marks a new era in Caribbean colonialism.

The U.S. Congress is preparing a "Financial Control Authority," which will supervise the finances of the entire government of Puerto Rico — its legislature and courts, public authorities, pension system and all leases, union contracts and collective bargaining agreements. The authority will also restructure the entire public workforce (including teachers and police), freeze public pensions and ensure "the payment of debt obligations." Then it will issue its own debt, spend the funds as it sees fit and leave Puerto Rico to pay the bill.

The authority will also have prosecutorial powers. It will be empowered to "conduct necessary investigations" into the government of Puerto Rico, or in other words, be empowered to hold hearings, secure government records, demand evidence, take testimony, subpoena witnesses and administer oaths — under penalty of perjury — to all witnesses.

Any witness who fails to appear or to supply information will be subject to criminal prosecution and removal from office. This includes any elected official on the island: even the governor and attorney general.

All of these powers are enumerated in the 157-page Senate Bill 2381, also known as the "Puerto Rico Assistance Act of 2015," which is currently under review in the U.S. Senate.

The bill is supported by banking lobbyists in Washington, DC, since it will ensure the repayment of \$72 billion in public debt and exclude any bankruptcy protections.

It is opposed by many of the island's journalists, union leaders and independence advocates, who view the looming "authority" as nothing more than a hedge fund collection agency. They also

fear the imposition of a de facto dictatorship in the Caribbean: created in Washington, operated from Wall Street, all disguised as a "management assistance authority."

But the problem in Puerto Rico is not simply its debt, the vulture funds or even the Financial Control Authority. The problem is that Puerto Rico, a tiny island in the Caribbean, is staring into the rifle barrel of the entire U.S. capitalist system. [...]

A History of Colonialism

The United States "liberated" Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898. The very next year, in 1899, Hurricane San Ciriaco destroyed thousands of the island's farms and nearly the entire year's coffee crop. Of 50 million pounds, only 5 million were saved.

U.S. hurricane relief was bizarre. The U.S. government sent no money. Instead, the following year, it outlawed all Puerto Rican currency and declared the island's peso, whose international value was equal to the U.S. dollar, to be worth only 60 cents. Every Puerto Rican lost 40 percent of his or her money overnight.

In 1901, the United States passed the *Hollander Act*, which raised the taxes of every farmer in Puerto Rico.

With higher taxes, devastated farms and 40 percent less cash, farmers had to borrow money from U.S. banks. But with no usury law restrictions, interest rates were so high that within a decade, the farmers defaulted on their loans and the banks foreclosed on their land.

The United States, which was undergoing its industrial revolution, then turned a diversified island harvest (coffee, tobacco, sugar and fruit) into a one-crop [sugar] cash-cow economy.

The very first U.S.-appointed governor of Puerto Rico, Charles Herbert Allen, leveraged his tenure on the island into the presidency of the American Sugar Refining Company — which today is known as Domino Sugar.

By 1930, all of Puerto Rico's sugar farms belonged to 41 syndicates. Eighty percent of these were U.S.-owned, and the largest four syndicates — Central Guanica, South Puerto Rico, Fajardo Sugar and East Puerto Rico Sugar — were entirely U.S.-owned and covered more than half of the island's

arable land. With no money, crops or land, Puerto Ricans sought work in the cities. When the Puerto Rican Legislature enacted a minimum wage law like the one in the mainland United States, the U.S. Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. After a visit to the island, AFL-CIO President Samuel Gompers held a press conference to declare: "In all my life I have never witnessed such misery, sickness and suffering."

To make matters worse, U.S. finished products — from rubber bands to radios — were priced 15 to 20 percent higher on the island than on the mainland. Again, Puerto Rico was powerless to enact any price-fixing legislation.

The United States did give Puerto Ricans one "gift." Over the objection of the Puerto Rican Legislature, Puerto Ricans were declared U.S. citizens in 1917, just in time for military conscription into World War I.

A Classic Colony

After a fraudulent plebiscite in 1952, in which voting for independence could get you 10 years in jail (see *Public Law 53* — the Gag Law), the United States filed papers with the United Nations Decolonization Committee, declaring that Puerto Rico had chosen to become a "free associated state" with the U.S., and was no longer a colony.

However, to this day, U.S. federal agencies control the island's international trade, foreign relations, banking system, currency, shipping and maritime laws, customs, import-export regulations, immigration, postal system, radio, TV, transportation, Social Security, military, environmental controls, coastal operations, judicial code, civil and criminal appeals, and cabotage rights (i.e. the *Jones Act*). In addition, the U.S. Congress has plenary jurisdiction over any law or regulation promulgated by the Puerto Rican Legislature. Congress can veto any law passed in Puerto Rico.

The U.S. military presence is overwhelming. At its peak, no



one could drive five miles in any direction without running into an Army base, nuclear site or tracking station. The Pentagon controlled 13 percent of Puerto Rico's land and operated five atomic missile bases. The island of Vieques was bombed mercilessly for 62 years. From 1984 through 1998 alone, more than 1,300 warships and 4,200 aircraft used the island for target practice, and pounded it with 80 million pounds of ordnance.

The colonial veneer is so ludicrously transparent that José Trias Monge, the chief justice of the

Supreme Court of Puerto Rico who crafted the "free associated state" and drafted the Puerto Rican "Constitution," finally threw up his hands and wrote a book titled "Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World."

Operation Booby Trap

From the mid-1950s until 2006, the United States laid a red carpet from Wall Street to San Juan. U.S. corporations were given 10- and 20-year tax exemptions on all gross revenues, dividends, interest and capital gains income. Instead of growing fruit, coffee and sugar cane, Puerto Ricans now manufactured bras and razors behind concrete walls.

Unfortunately, once Playtex and Schick found cheaper labor in Asia, the factories all disappeared. Once the IRS 936 tax exemption expired, the pharmaceutical companies vanished. All of them had repatriated their profits back to the U.S. mainland. None of them had invested in Puerto Rico. In the end, rather than providing a true economic base and self-sustaining growth, these corporations only produced more dependency on the United States, and more long-term unemployment.

The Jones Act

The greatest booby trap of all is the *Merchant Marine Act* of 1920, also known as the *Jones Act*. Under section 27 of this act, all goods carried by water between U.S. ports must be shipped on U.S. flagged ships that are constructed in the United States, owned by U.S. citizens and operated by U.S. citizens. That means that every product that enters or leaves Puerto Rico must be carried on a U.S. ship.

This includes cars from Japan, engines from Germany, food from South America, medicine from Canada — any product from anywhere. In order to comply with the *Jones Act*, all this merchandise must be off-loaded from the original carrier, re-loaded onto a U.S. ship and then be delivered to Puerto Rico. It all

makes as much sense as digging a hole and filling it up again.

There is one major exception.

A foreign-flagged vessel may enter directly into Puerto Rico — after paying an extreme levy of taxes, customs and import fees, which often double the price of the goods they carry.

This is not a business model. It is a shakedown. It is the maritime version of the “protection” racket. This maritime mafia is so entrenched that several *Jones Act* carrier company executives were indicted and jailed for price rigging in Puerto Rico.

From 1970 through 2010, the *Jones Act* cost Puerto Rico \$29 billion. Projected from 1920 till the present, this cost becomes \$75.8 billion. Ironically, this \$75.8 billion cost is higher than the amount of Puerto Rico's current public debt. In other words, if the *Jones Act* did not exist, then neither would the public debt of Puerto Rico.

In addition, if the *Jones Act* did not exist, 10,000 maritime jobs would immediately shift to the island from Jacksonville, Florida.

Fourth-Largest Market for U.S. Corporations

The tiny island of Puerto Rico — with only 3.5 million residents — is the fourth-largest market in the world for U.S. products. Because their island is a captive economy, Puerto Ricans are the largest per capita importers of U.S. goods in the world. Eighty-five percent of all fruits and vegetables consumed in Puerto Rico are sold by U.S. corporations.

Puerto Rico has more Walgreens stores per square mile, than anywhere in the United States — and more Walmart stores per square mile than anywhere on the planet.

Thanks to the *Jones Act*, all these U.S. products have been “price-protected” for the past 96 years. Automobile prices are 30 to 40 percent higher in Puerto Rico than the United States.

Some products — particularly unprocessed food items — cost twice as much in Puerto Rico.

The tragedy of all this is that Puerto Ricans cannot afford to pay these inflated prices. The per capita income of Puerto Rico is \$16,400 — roughly half that of Mississippi, the poorest U.S. state. But the cost of living is 12 percent higher in Puerto Rico than in the United States thanks to the *Jones Act*.

Shrinking Tax Base

When the IRS tax exemptions expired in 2006, dozens of pharmaceutical companies abandoned the island and unemployment became rampant. With no economy of its own and no real private sector, the government of Puerto Rico became the island's largest employer.

Over the past 12 years, 1 million Puerto Ricans have moved to the United States, largely in search of employment. The island's tax revenue has eroded and public debt is skyrocketing due to a population loss of 22 percent. [...]

Lies From Wall Street

Puerto Rico's bonds are highly attractive because they are triple-tax-exempt: All capital gains are exempt from federal, state and local taxes. But with a 22 percent population loss, Wall



Street demanded a higher level of taxation from the remaining 78 percent of island residents. The Wall Street credit ratings services — Standard & Poor's, Fitch, Moody's and Dun & Bradstreet — insisted on “fiscal austerities” in order to avoid the downgrading of Puerto Rico's debt.

The Puerto Rican government complied. They laid off 30,000 workers, charged 67 percent more for water, raised electricity rates, raised property and small business taxes, hiked the gasoline tax twice in one year, cut public pensions and health benefits, raised the retirement age, closed 200 schools and hiked the sales tax to 11.5 percent.

After all this austerity, three rating services still downgraded the island's debt to “junk bond” status. In other words, Wall Street lied to Puerto Rico, and then hiked the premium payments. And now they want to collect.

The debt service on \$73 billion will be roughly \$7 billion annually: \$4 billion on its general obligation (GO) bonds, and \$3 billion for the Electric Power Authority (PREPA) and the Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA).

With a population of 3.5 million, this means that every man, woman and child in Puerto Rico will be paying \$2,000 per year just to cover the interest on Puerto Rico's public debt. Since per capita income is only \$16,400, this \$2,000 represents 12 percent of everyone's personal income.

With a shrinking tax base, Puerto Ricans are unable to meet this crushing debt burden. Any further “austerities” will force more people to abandon the island — and the tax base will shrink even further. As Puerto Rico's Governor Alejandro García Padilla stated in a nationally televised speech, “Puerto Rico is in a death spiral.” [...]

A Banquet Table for John Paulson

While Puerto Ricans are forced to flee their own island under a program of taxes and “austerity measures,” a banquet table of “business incentives” has been laid out for U.S. billionaires and hedge fund operators. Two tax laws enacted in 2012 — *Act 20* and *Act 22* — provide 20-year tax exemptions to high net-worth individuals on all their dividend, interest and capital gains income. A primary beneficiary of this has been [hedge fund billionaire] John Paulson.

Paulson deals in human misery and “distressed assets.” He made his greatest fortune — billions of dollars — by profiting on home foreclosures during the 2007 U.S. mortgage crisis.

In 2007 alone, Paulson made more than \$15 billion by “short-selling the US housing market, effectively betting on its collapse, even perpetuating the magnitude of the collapse.”

Using *Acts 20* and *22*, Paulson has imported this business model into Puerto Rico. He currently owns the Condado Vanderbilt and La Concha Renaissance, the San Juan Beach Hotel, the St. Regis Bahia Beach Resort and the 326,000-square-foot AIG building in the Hato Rey financial district. He owns 8.6 percent of Banco Popular, the island’s largest bank. Paulson also owns a large share of Puerto Rico’s “public debt.” If Puerto Rico cannot pay, and if the U.S. Congress extends no Chapter 9 bankruptcy relief to the island, then Paulson will soon own a portion of Puerto Rico’s physical infrastructure (water, electricity, schools, roads, bridges) as the underlying collateral for this debt.

Thanks to *Act 20* and *Act 22*, Paulson will own major pieces of Puerto Rico without paying one cent of interest, dividend or capital gains taxes on any of his hotel, office, banking or infrastructure income for 20 years.

The banquet table is enormous. While enjoying their 20-year tax breaks, neither Paulson nor dozens of hedge funds want Puerto Rico to receive access to any Chapter 9 bankruptcy protections. They want Puerto Rico to default on its debt so that the creditors can convert this debt into public-private partnerships (P3s) — and turn the physical infrastructure of Puerto Rico (the PREPA electrical grid, the PRASA water supply, highways, bridges, schools, prisons and airports) into ATMs for the hedge fund creditors.

Puerto Rico vs. the US Capitalist System

In this game of fiscal brinkmanship, the stakes are very high. If Puerto Rico defaults, it would be the largest in the history of the \$3.7 trillion market for debt sold by U.S. state and local governments. All over the country, pension funds will be unable to meet their payment obligations.

On the other hand, if Puerto Rico is allowed to file for Chapter 9 bankruptcy protection, then every state in the United States will demand a similar privilege. The U.S. financial system cannot withstand 50 states, all potentially filing for bankruptcy at the same time.

In addition, the \$3.7 trillion municipal bond industry is more than 20 percent of U.S. GDP, which was \$18 trillion in fiscal year 2015.

With more than 20 percent of the entire U.S. economy filtered through these municipal bonds every year, the industry is too

big to fail -- a fundamental component of Wall Street revenue and financing, which no one wants destabilized.

For these reasons, the Puerto Rico debt crisis is a national financial crisis, with no clear resolution in sight. President Obama is trying to ignore it -- hiding behind Congress, the courts and the bankruptcy laws -- but sooner or later, he will have to address it.

The entire system of municipal bond financing, pension funds nationwide and the fiscal integrity of all 50 states are threatened by the crisis in Puerto Rico. Even a simple debt restructuring will not resolve this mess. So long as Puerto Rico has no real industry, economy or entrepreneurial class, the systemic problems will deepen.

The Gordian knot of predatory capitalism must be cut in Puerto Rico.

The *Jones Act* must be repealed as soon as possible. This will establish a shipping industry throughout the island and end the price inflation of U.S. products.

The *Jones Act* carrier companies — Crowley, Sea Star, Horizon and Trailway — should all be replaced by Puerto Rican shipping companies.

All import fees levied on foreign-flagged vessels should be paid into the Puerto Rican Treasury, not the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Puerto Rico must be permitted to negotiate its own international trade agreements. This will enable it to develop capital resources, an entrepreneurial class and a diverse economy.

A large number of maritime jobs in Jacksonville, Florida, must be rightfully relocated to Puerto Rico. [...]

After 118 years, it is time for the United States to relinquish the oldest colony in the world...It is an international scandal for the United States to turn Puerto Rico into a land of beggars and billionaires — bossed by absentee landlords, fought over by lawyers and clerked by politicians.

The sooner it recognizes the fundamental [crime] of maintaining a hidden colony in the Caribbean, the sooner the United States will repair its credibility in the global community.



EQUAL RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR ALL

I • Chicago Strike Builds Unity

and fast food workers were among those that joined the fight, as did home health care and day care workers and others. Community college and state university teachers and students also participated. The action shut down the public schools for the day, as picket lines went up across the city. Together the diverse crowd of many thousands opposed government attacks and defended rights, targeting the lack of a state budget which impacts social services of all kinds.

Activities at various locations throughout the city began at 6:30am, with rallies and pickets at neighborhood schools, state universities, McDonalds, a CTA bus barn, and more. All then joined for a 4pm rally followed by a march downtown, including stopping traffic on main streets during rush hour. Speeches

rejected the barrage of false claims by Chicago Public Schools CEO Claypool, the mayor, and much of the government to try to get support from parents and get students to scab. They instead joined the strike. Efforts to turn public opinion against the Chicago Teachers Union, the main organizer of the action failed, as anger about the government's refusal to fund education and meet the just demands of the people increased.

The day was rainy and windy and raw, but this did not dampen anyone's spirits. Instead people stood firmly together. The actions on April 1 were a successful in gathering strength and momentum for the continuing battles against the City and State governments. This includes opposing upcoming state testing and building the opt out movment.



Resolution to Support a PARCC Refusal

Chicago Teachers Union, April 7, 2016

WHEREAS, last year, over 20,000 students opted out in Chicago and 40,000 opted out in Illinois leading to a debate about the legitimacy of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers test (PARCC); and over 200,000 students opted out in New York State last year, leading many people in power to publicly question the overuse and misuse of high stakes standardized testing pushed by corporate education reform; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) represents 27,000 educators with first hand experience with PARCC; and

WHEREAS, the PARCC exam is not grounded in research-based educational practices and neither PARCC nor Pearson has provided needed validity information; and

WHEREAS, the CTU struck April 1st to demand more revenue for schools and the \$160 million contract Pearson has with PARCC is wasted when we need smaller class sizes, more nurses, more social workers and more resources in our schools; and

WHEREAS, the State of Illinois has not provided 100% foundation level funding since 2010 and is currently 50th out of 50 in education funding; and

WHEREAS, teachers have a right to freedom of speech and a duty to exercise and express professional judgment about the quality and educational value of the PARCC as an assessment; and

WHEREAS, CPS leaders, some network chiefs and school administrators are already pushing teachers to devote class time to PARCC test preparation, which narrows and distorts

the curriculum for our students; and

WHEREAS, CPS has indicated that they intend to phase out NWEA [Northwest Evaluation Association assessment] and replace it with PARCC as one of the main metrics of the teacher evaluations and school performance ratings; and

WHEREAS, students who have refused PARCC have been illegally re-offered exams several times and coerced into taking

PARCC after refusing; and

WHEREAS, the new policies under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) allow for better testing options; and

WHEREAS, students of color disparately have their schools closed as a result of testing, are evaluated negatively by testing and are far more likely to be bullied and punished for exercising their own agency around testing; and

WHEREAS, in May 2015, the HB306 Opt Out Bill, which would fully acknowledge parents' rights to opt their children out of testing and would prohibit punishment of students who refuse state mandated testing, passed the Illinois House of Representatives and is awaiting passage by the Senate; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that this resolution will be shared publicly; and be it further

RESOLVED, the CTU will encourage members to call their state senators and Senate President John Cullerton whose number is 217-782-2728; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the CTU House of Delegates calls on and will fully support a parent and student boycott of PARCC via mass opt out/refusal; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the CTU will fully support teachers exercising their freedom of speech when providing student and parents accurate information about PARCC and student refusal/opt out; and be it further

RESOLVED, the CTU House of Delegates calls on the CTU to create and distribute informational flyers explaining how and why families/students can refuse PARCC; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Chicago Teachers Union announces April 12 as a city-wide Opt Out Information Day, a day for delegates to bring back flyers to their schools and to lead teachers in a day of discussion and flyering with parents before and after school; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the CTU will publicize, decry and organize against the bullying and disparate treatment of all students, and especially students of color who exercise their own agency in refusing to take the PARCC test; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the CTU will push to eliminate PARCC because of the new guidelines under ESSA.



NEW PARENTS JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Successful Forum Energizes Buffalo to Increase Testing Opt Outs

Report from a Parent Participant

The Community Forum: “Teaching the Whole Child or Teaching to the Test” on April 2 was a success. Jamaal Bowman, middle school principal from the Bronx New York, gave an important presentation emphasizing that education needed to serve humanity and changing the world. This was followed by a spirited discussion aimed at increasing the numbers of students refusing the state tests as well as alternatives to testing. These include those of NYC Consortium schools that have a waiver from testing. Many Buffalo parents new to opting out of the NYS Common Core tests participated, with about half of the audience from the African American community. Parents and teachers represented schools like Southside Elementary, School #53, Middle Early College and several others.

The event itself, building on a successful forum on testing and receivership March 12 at Buffalo State College, as well as determined community organizing at churches, schools and neighborhoods, including ads and articles in *The Criterion* and *The Challenger* newspapers, have all put the issue of refusing the tests on the agenda in Buffalo. The stand and discussion about refusing the tests reflects the struggle to have parents, students and teachers decide, and is a clear way of saying that these are *Our Schools, We Decide!*

The discussion energized many and emphasized that everyone should step up their efforts in the coming two weeks to get more information out to students and parents for more opt outs. Teachers and parents alike were urged to provide information as widely as possible so parents and students can choose to refuse. Hundreds of fill-in Opt Out letters and “Did You Know” fact sheets were given to parent facilitators, teachers and others to distribute at their churches and schools on April 4. Thirty “Refuse the NYS Tests” lawn signs were also distributed and will be displayed throughout the city.

All are urged to join the movement! Talk to families and students! Call your friends and relatives!

Education to Serve Humanity

The presentation from Mr. Bowman made a helpful and inspiring contrast between the need for an education system to celebrate and serve humanity vs. the inhumanity of the tests and the inhumanity of the Common Core-based education system with its focus on tracking, narrowness and humiliation. The education system needs to change in favor of social love and humanity, and the opt out movement is an important part of bringing such change.

Bowman’s talk placed education in the context of the existing political and economic system and emphasized that we cannot separate the education system from social problems. Drawing on research, his own experience as a principal, and extensive visits that he has made to schools throughout the New York City area, Bowman elaborated on alternatives to testing and the current system. Teachers and families alike support alternatives like teaching the whole child, encouraging music, art, creativity, joint projects

and alternative assessments that enable students to present and be assessed in an all-round way. Portfolio assessments in place of tests, like those done by NYC’s Consortium Schools is a step in that direction (Consortium Schools are exempted from all Regents Exams, except English, and allow for a broad and varied way for students to demonstrate their knowledge and creative appreciation of the subjects in order to graduate.)

Parents Speak Out on Refusing the Tests

After the presentation, an extended discussion unfolded featuring broad audience participation with an excellent problem solving spirit. Many people expressed their concerns about testing and curriculum and many joined in responding. The audience supported the active teachers who related the pressures and efforts to silence them, and expressed readiness to ensure that teachers and parents, together, can make sure parents are informed, and standing with their teachers who provide information. Several people volunteered ways in which they were letting people know how to refuse, and various ways they were talking to people.

Overall about 50-60 people attended the event, with a good turnout from parents. About half the participants were new to opting out, and came mainly from the African American community. Parents joined in the discussion and took opt out letters for their schools. Several parent facilitators and people from parent organizations were present, as were teachers and opt out organizations. Both *The Criterion* and *The Challenger* newspapers, which serve the African American community, were present and enthusiastic to be covering the event. They thanked the organizers for placing ads to promote the events. These papers and the *Buffalo Forum* have been looked to for accurate reporting on education and opting out, and people continue to do so.

Buffalo Board of Education members Dr. Barbara Seals Nevergold and Sharon Belton-Cottman energetically participated in the event and made remarks positive and helpful to the discussion. Both supported opting out of the tests and urged parents to do the same. They, like others, strongly criticized the efforts of Commissioner Elia on her recent visit to Buffalo. Elia went to West Hertel Academy in Buffalo (a school still in receivership) to push testing and had the principal hold a pro-testing pep rally. The board members and many of the participants also denounced the letter sent home by Buffalo Superintendent Kriner Cash pushing testing. These efforts, along with *Buffalo News* coverage, were opposed as having untrue content and unfair coercion. On the other hand, these efforts also represent the strength of the test refusal organizing, and clearly show that Commissioner Elia is worried.

Overall the event informed, inspired and drew new people into the fight, united in the stand that these are *Our Schools, We Decide* to refuse state testing!

Opting Out: The Issue is to Change the Direction of Education

Dr. Mark Garrison, markgarrison.net

One of the most significant outcomes of the Opt Out movement has been the transformation of individual acts of test refusal (a legitimate reaction to palpably harmful educational practices imposed by the state) into a social movement centered around empowering parents, students, educators and their communities.

The Opt Out movement is a movement that says it is unacceptable to ignore the voices of parents, students, educators and community activists. It emerged as a response to the state refusing to head these voices. It emerged as a strategy to undue the marginalization that has been institutionalized. It emerged as a non-partisan effort and exemplified the idea of publicly coming together to form an opinion, giving rise to a collective will. This took place through public meetings, big and small, and building organizations across the state and the country. It emerged as a means to have a say. It emerged as a demand that public schools must serve the interests of those who attend and work in them, as well as the interests of the society as a whole.

The demand to have a say is not merely a response to the erosion of the inherited forms of democratic governance of public schools (“local control”) that has taken place over many decades.[1] The power of the Opt Out movement originates from the wisdom of collective experience: the key problem to solve, the problem underneath all the other problems, is the problem of decision making itself, that is, who sets the direction of our educational institutions? What purposes are they to serve? If the purposes schools are directed to serve are wrongheaded, one does not begin by revising policy developed to serve those wrongheaded purposes. One begins by changing course.

Pro-Social Purpose Needed for Education

If the purposes schools are directed to serve are wrongheaded, one does not begin by revising policy developed to serve those wrongheaded purposes. One begins by changing course.

Parents reacted to the stupid and confusing homework, inappropriate content, humiliating tests, irrational “benchmarks,” and the double-speak and threats of some administrators because these things symbolized that education was headed in the wrong direction and did not serve their children’s interests. It did not emerge because the state simply made a policy mistake. Put another way, the Opt Out movement has been decades in the making as parents, students and teachers have become increasingly upset by the direction education has been headed. The opposition to high-stakes testing is decades old. The opposition to narrowed curriculum is decades old. The opposition to privatization is decades old.[2]

Proponents of “reform” have mocked challenges to the corporate takeover of public education for offering no solutions. These critics of the testing, we are repeatedly told, are simply change averse, fearing accountability and innovation in equal measure. Editorials read as if unions cause global warming, and



the achievement gap remains because we have failed to transfer public assets into the hands of “edupreneurs” fast enough.

These charges are of course not true. Educators and parents have many concrete solutions, which are consistently and dogmatically rejected by the high priests of reform. Current policy actually serves to erode trust in educators to advance the interests of their communities and society as a whole.

But what “reformers” mean by “solutions” is limited to technique, or policy: the etymology of policy suggests the notion of policing. So, if you do not think standardized tests should count for 50 percent of a teacher’s evaluation, how about 20 percent? Maybe it should be 19.98 percent? Across the country such modifications are being introduced. While these changes are favorable to teachers and students, they do not effect or alter the direction education is being headed. This point is key. The questions these “reformers” want to debate, in this case, is how should the state police and punish teachers. They are afraid of the growing challenge to the purpose they are directing education to serve.

Power of Opt Out Is Push for New Direction

In a recent post, Carol Burris suggested a “sea change” has occurred with the appointment of a new Board of Regents Chancellor in New York State. Burris predicts that the new leadership “will push for much more than a ‘name change’ in the Common Core standards, and ensure that revisions are deep and real.” Is this a victory? Anything short of a complete rejection of the Core and all that comes with it cannot be properly considered a substantive change in direction because the Core is admittedly about “shifts” in both what is taught and how it is taught. Is the appointment of Chancellor Betty Rosa welcome? Absolutely. Did

this change occur because of Opt Out? Most likely. Is it a “sea change”? I do not think so. Commissioner Elia, while softened, still points education in the same narrow, harmful direction, offering only what amount to policy tweaks.

Note how these “leaders” say it will take time to make the changes that have been demanded for years! Patience was nowhere to be found when reformers rushed to adopt the Core without review, when they insisted “reform can’t wait.” When it comes to the demands of parents or teachers, we are always told to be patient. But when Wall Street speaks, or Gates opens his wallet, there is no time for deliberation. We must act now! Opt Out’s power rests in its ability to withhold consent and push for new direction; it is premised on not settling for a “less” harmful set of policies that amount to a slow, rather than fast, death.

One might even argue that policy talk of “revisions” might serve to undermine the very thing that has been built in recent years: unwavering opposition to the Core regime en total. Why accept “revisions” to something that the movement and research has shown to be inherently flawed and undemocratic? The Core is so mired in political repression, thoughtless allegiance and corporate intrigue that it looks like an outline of a cheap dystopic novel one finds in the airport! The Core’s conception of “career and college ready” is fraudulent and its standard for determining readiness invalid and harmful. It is not a serious starting point for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the 21st century and should be rejected.

Focus on New Direction for Education

To take just one more example of how we need to keep our focus on direction, we are told Rosa will ensure that, “Testing will no longer be the sole measure of school quality.”

But what is the purpose of “measuring” the “quality” of schools in the first place? How does this agenda fit into larger social trends of major concern to everyone? One cannot evaluate proposals to determine school quality outside a discussion of the overall direction of education, the purposes it is being directed to serve. If these “measures” of school “quality” function to rank schools like football teams, to justify what schools are put on a receivership list, for example, then such “measures” should be rejected, no matter how nuanced the rubric, no matter how many “indicators” are used.[3]

If the purpose of education continues to be about transforming human beings into drones for “the workplace” or the military, we have not solved any problem.

If the purpose of education continues to be about transforming human beings into drones for “the workplace” or the military, we have not solved any problem. Allowing for “multiple measures” does nothing to address the real issue. A school that is good at serving the narrow demand of global competition will look quite different from a school that is good at preparing youth for democratic governance. “Good” can never be neutral — good for whom, good for what? It is an illusion that one can evaluate the skill and knowledge a student has obtained outside the purpose such skill and knowledge is to serve.

Thus, part of the strategic confusion of the “reformers” is

to trap the movement against the corporate takeover of public education into narrow policy debate and away from organizing to change the direction of education, and the purposes it is to serve. So while of course the details of policy matter and should be analyzed and debated, they must be situated within the more fundamental discussion of what direction education should be headed and what means we have at our collective disposal to achieve that direction.

References

Flanders, L. (2016). The fight against high-stakes testing: a Civil Rights movement. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from <http://www.truth-out.org/progressivepicks/item/29948-is-the-next-civil-rights-movement-against-high-stakes-tests>

Garrison, M. J. (2012). The Common Core “Standards” are the global competition warriors’ “product specifications.” Retrieved April 1, 2016, from <http://www.markgarrison.net/archives/1159>

Garrison, M. J. (2013). The lawlessness of reform: RTTT, Common Core, and the radical restructuring of assessment governance. Retrieved December 4, 2013, from <http://www.markgarrison.net/archives/2174>

Garrison, M. J. (2015). The significance of receivership. Retrieved March 31, 2016, from <http://www.markgarrison.net/archives/3220>

Mehta, J. (2013). The allure of order: High hopes, dashed expectations, and the troubled quest to remake American schooling. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). Collateral damage: how high-stakes testing corrupts America’s schools. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press.

Tyack, D. B., & Cuban, L. (1995). Tinkering toward utopia: a century of public school reform. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ziebarth, T. (1999). The changing landscape of education governance. Denver: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved from <http://www.markgarrison.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/THE-CHANGING-LANDSCAPE.pdf>

Notes

1) See Garrison (2013); for a now classic representation of how policy elites discuss limiting popular control, see Ziebarth (1999).

2) While many becoming active in the last few years might feel worn out, the Opt Out movement is an outgrowth of and originates in a much longer period of growing opposition to the direction education and society are being headed. Opt Out has been a great advance when examining things from the long view. Educators have long critiqued and opposed technocratic solutions connected to testing (Mehta, 2013, Nichols and Berliner, 2007, Tyack and Cuban, 1995). Also see: Flanders (2016).

3) While much attention is paid to the Core and teacher evaluation, New York’s receivership law remains one of the most significant and harmful changes to governance, with executive power increasing and arbitrariness normalized (Garrison, 2015).