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Community News

I write about one of these a month for 7

MxCC Holds Peace & Justice Conference

by Dortha Cool Willetts

On Saturday, Nov. 18, people from Connecticut, Maine and Massachusetts attended a Conference for Peace and Justice at Middlesex Community College in Middletown.

The purpose of the conference was three-fold: to oppose the building of nuclear weapons and Trump's threatening of other countries with nuclear war; to demand the building of infrastructure and fostering clean energy solutions to reduce climate change; and to get help from other communities to unite against violence in Hartford.

Speakers also appealed for opposition to President Trump's discretionary spending budget request for FY 2018 of \$1.15 trillion with 59 percent — \$679 billion — dedicated to military spending (See pie graph); urged American citizens to call on congress to stop the wars in which the U.S. is currently involved, promoted conversion of industrial production to peaceful endeavors; and demanded total national dedication to reducing climate change.

This issue will report on the address of Bruce Gagnon, Secretary/Coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power



Bruce Gagnon listens to a question from the audience: "What happens to the radiation that falls from a decapitated missile in a real war?" His answer: "It falls on the 'offending' country."

in Space, a 2006 recipient of the Dr. Benjamin Spock Peacemaker Award, and a Vietnam veteran. Reports on the addresses of the other two speakers will be made at a later date.

Gagnon said the Global Network's newsletter was established 25 years ago to create an international movement to oppose the expansion of the arms race into space, and to educate Americans about how nuclear weap-

ons in space have become so dominant in military strategy today."

Gagnon described the functioning of the role of space satellites in military strategy: "As military satellites orbit the Earth, they talk to "downlink stations" located around the planet. Those downlink stations relay the signals from the satellites back and forth in space and back to the U.S. in "real time."

"Peace groups through-

out the world," said Gagnon. "are protesting their countries' being used as part of the U.S. 'Starwars' program." These groups are the core membership of the Global Network program.

Gagnon reported that the Pentagon has long been saying that, with this space technology, "they will be able to control and dominate not

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MxCC Holds Conference for Peace and Justice (Cont.)

only space, but also the Earth below, because everything the Pentagon does today is filtered through space technology.

"Ground troops drive Humvees with small computers in them, Navy ships and aircraft are hooked up to satellites and then to space technology itself. In fact, In 2003, when the U.S. launched its initial attack into Iraq, 70 percent of the weapons used were directed by space technology.

"Over the years, Russia and China," Gagnon revealed, "have gone to the United Nations, saying 'Let's close the door to the barn before the horse gets out.' For 20-some years, Russia and China have been proposing a treaty to ban all weapons in space. When the vote comes up at the United Nations General Assembly, added Gagnon, "everybody votes in favor of the new treaty except the U.S and Israel."

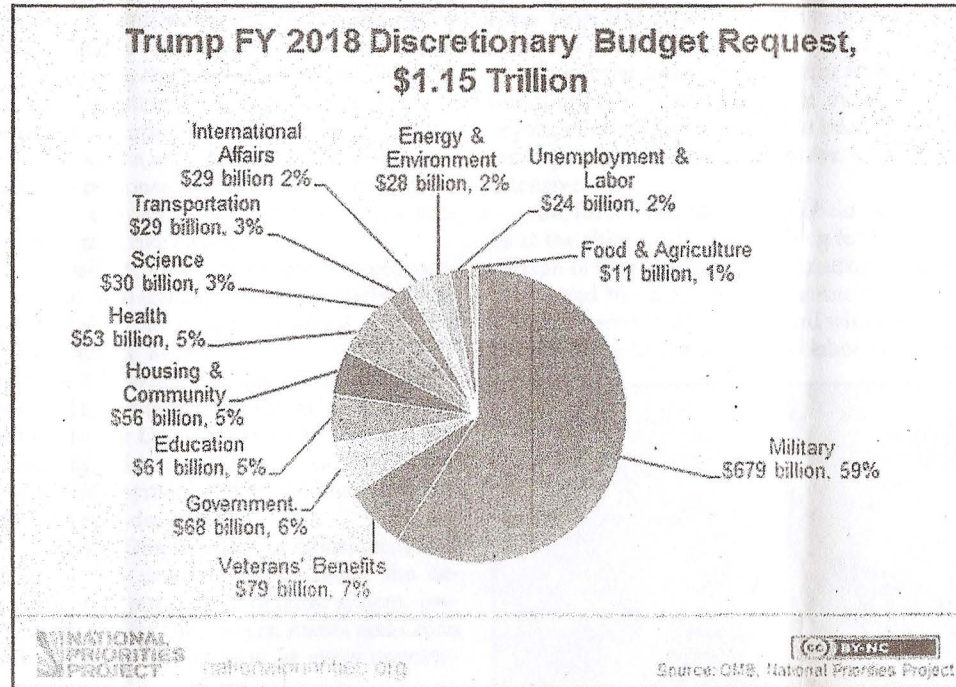
So, there is no new treaty. The U.S. has held the same position during the administrations of Bush, Obama and Trump: "There is no problem, therefore there is no need for a treaty banning weapons in space"

Gagnon asserted that the Pentagon and the weapons corporations say that "Starwars" will be the largest industrial project in the history of the planet. And, they say they have to come up with a dedicated funding source to pay for it. In a Space News editorial dated 1999, they said, "We've found our dedicated funding source."

That source, Gagnon, discloses, is the entitlement programs — social security, medic-aid, and what's left of the welfare program. The military industrial complex has targeted social programs for defunding in order pay for Pentagon military expenses.

Gagnon asserted that "truth is an increasingly hard thing to find anymore from our corporate controlled politicians and our corporate dominated media. Truth in our culture today doesn't really exist anymore."

One truth that we rarely hear about today is that the Pentagon has the largest carbon blueprint of any institution on the Earth. With more than 800 military bases around the world today, Gagnon affirmed that the "U.S. military is the top contributor to climate change. Few if



"Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed..." — President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

world total, insufficient to take on the U.S. and NATO in a war. In 2016 and 2017, Russia even cut its military budget.

Where I live in Bath, Maine, the Navy builds destroyers. These ships, outfitted with so called "missile defense systems — interceptor missiles—, serve as key instruments in the U.S. first strike attack plan. The U.S. is surrounding Russia and China with these missile defense systems, deploying them on ground based launchers and at sea on Navy destroyers.

At the U.S. Space Command, annual war game (with the 'red team' opposing the 'blue team;') the Pentagon enacts a first strike attack on China and Russia (the 'red team') with a decapitation attack with U.S. missiles (blowing up their ICBM launch sites.)

But, in this computer war game, Gagnon details, not all of their missiles are destroyed. Russia and China, in this war game, hen in this space command war game, Russia and China

nity possible, that negotiations for reductions of nuclear weapons — disarmament — are basically dead, because they can't afford to reduce their retaliatory capability at a time when the U.S. is surrounding them with these missile defense systems."

But even the few, people in the peace movement who work to reduce nuclear weapons, ever talk about the serious obstacle to real disarmament that U.S. missile defense is.

Gagnon and fellow peace activists have undertaken six peace walks in the last seven years; usually they walk for two weeks throughout Maine. Last October, they confined their protest to one week in Bath. They called for the conversion of the Bath Iron Works, owned by General Dynamics, from the building of nuclear ships and submarines to building a commuter railway system, solar systems, wind turbines, and tidal power systems. Only this conversion will help deal with

military spending.

Gagnon revealed that "militarization of our economy requires the Pentagon to consume the talent of U.S. scientists and engineers whose skills are needed by the military. The Pentagon has been saying, at least since 2003, that under corporate control of the world economy, every different country is going to have a particular job."

Gagnon claimed that, under this plan, instead of building consumer products for export, "America's role will be security export. Therefore, the number the one export product of the U.S. will be, as it is now, weapons. When weapons are your number one industrial product, what is your global marketing strategy for that product? War. So, we're doing what they programmed us to do: fighting wars while corporations control the declining resources around the world: oil, water."

"What the hell are we doing in Niger?" Gagnon questioned. "Why did four guys die in Niger — a country that has tons of resources that you can't find in other places: things for building military-dedicated computers and missiles. The U.S. can use Niger's mineral resources to make more weapons.

"We need to transform our society so that we can deal with global warming," Gagnon said, "and obviously, we all know we're running out of time. The conversion of the military-industrial complex is a win, win, win - for the peace movement, for the environmental movement and for labor because they get more jobs out of it."

"America has essentially lost its soul," Gagnon said, "with our communities' continued involvement in endless war in order to create jobs for our neighbors. We've got to stand against this, tell the truth about what kind of country we have become, and offer a transformational vision of another direction."

Gagnon proposed that, "in order to effectively deal with global warming, we need a massive and immediate reordering of our industrial fossil fuel society. Where will the money come from to undertake such an enormous effort?"

"I am convinced that the public is cast-

dominated media. Truth in our culture today doesn't really exist anymore."

One truth that we rarely hear about today is that the Pentagon has the largest carbon blueprint of any institution on the Earth. With more than 800 military bases around the world today, Gagnon affirmed that the "U.S. military is the top contributor to climate change. Few if any environmental groups working on climate change ever mention the military connection. Why not?"

Currently, the U.S. budget for the military is about \$680 billion a year. However, many key military spending items are not included in that baseline budget, stated Gagnon. "A few of are them: the Department of Energy nuclear weapons program: \$20 billion; Homeland Security: \$50 billion; the now-militarized NASA budget; the secret Pentagon budget — the "black budget" — at least 20-40 billion a year. Congress is not even allowed to know how much it is or what it is used for. These are not counted.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, commonly called SIPRI, reviews the largest military spenders around the world. In 2016, the total spent by the U.S. and its allies adds up to 50 percent of the world total for military spending. China spends 13 percent, and Russia spent 4.1 percent of the

on China and Russia (the 'red team') with a decapitation attack with U.S. missiles (blowing up their ICBM launch sites.)

But, in this computer war game, Gagnon details, not all of their missiles are destroyed. Russia and China, in this war game, hen in this space command war game, Russia and China launch their remaining retaliatory capability. At that point, the missile defense shield picks off these Russian and Chinese nukes. The U.S. sword of decapitation, first plunges into the heart of Russia and China, then to meet a retaliatory response, the U.S. missile shield picks off their counterattack, giving the U.S. a successful first strike attack.

Missile defense systems are thus provocative and destabilizing, making nuclear war more likely. They used to be illegal under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty between Russia and the U.S. When George W. Bush became president, one of the first things he did was to withdraw the U.S. from the ABM Treaty; immediately, missile research, development, testing and deployment took off and have been on steroids ever since.

During Obama's time in office, recounted Gagnon, "he dramatically escalated the deployment of our missile defense system, particularly on Navy destroyers. Russia and China have been saying for years, at every opportu-

fining their protest to one week in Bath. They called for the conversion of the Bath Iron Works, owned by General Dynamics, from the building of nuclear ships and submarines to building a commuter railway system, solar systems, wind turbines, and tidal power systems. Only this conversion will help deal with the world's real problem today, climate change.

Studies at nearby universities report that building railways would double the numbers of jobs over military production because military spending is capital-intensive and labor intensive.

So, for a week, the activists held daily vigils at the shipyard in Bath, calling for the conversion of the shipyard, disseminating to every house and business in the community, flyers about conversion of the shipyard which would counter the effect of capital and labor intensive

mational vision of another direction.

Gagnon proposed that, "in order to effectively deal with global warming, we need a massive and immediate reordering of our industrial fossil fuel society. Where will the money come from to undertake such an enormous effort?"

"I am convinced that the public is casting about like a fisherman looking for answers as they realize that things aren't right. They are looking for a new vision."

Gagnon quoted the great abolitionist, Frederick Douglas, who said, "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

"So," Gagnon added, "demanding the conversion of the war machine; to peaceful endeavors is essential for the lives of future generations who depend upon us."

Homegrown Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London

In September 1781, Connecticut native Benedict Arnold and a force of 1,600 British soldiers and loyalists took Fort Griswold and burnt New London to the ground. The brutality of the invasion galvanized the new nation, and "Remember New London!" would become a rallying cry for troops under General Lafayette. On Dec. 14 at 7 p.m. in the Hubbard Room at Russell Library, Eric D. Lehman, author of "Terror: Benedict Arnold and the Burning of New London," will chronicle

attack and highlight this key transformation in Arnold—the point where he went from betraying his comrades to massacring his neighbors and destroying their homes. His talk will also touch on the connections Arnold had with Middletown during the war, both before and after his betrayal.

Lehman teaches literature and creative writing at the University of Bridgeport. In addition to his contributions to numerous newspapers, journals, and magazines, Lehman is

of fiction, travel, and history, including the "Insider's Guide to Connecticut," "A History of Connecticut Food," and "Shadows of Paris," for which he was a 2017 Connecticut Book Award Finalist. He will have copies of Homegrown Terror for sale and inscription.

This program, which is free and open to the public, is sponsored by the Middlesex County Historical Society. Russell Library is located at 123 Broad St., Middletown. For more information, call 860-346-0746 or visit www.

