

Bruce Gagnon
"Swords Into Plowshares: Transforming the Military Industrial Complex"
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Well it's great to be here. 42nd anniversary, I think that's pretty remarkable. Give yourselves a hand. And, God knows we need you, that's for sure.

Well, it's a pleasure to be here -- it's a great honor. I have heard of your organization many, many times over many, many years. And, I ran into Nancy Tate a few times over the years in various places. So it's a great privilege for me to be here. I'm very grateful to you.

I want to start with just a couple of minutes telling you a little about myself. I think it's always interesting to know something about your speaker -- kind of a confession time, if you will. I started out as a Young Republican for Nixon in 1968. My dad was in the military, a career military guy, and in 1968 we were living up in the Panhandle of Florida. You know, it's so conservative there that they call it lower Alabama. I was 16 and I was working on the Nixon campaign. And, I did such a good job working on the Nixon campaign as a volunteer, that they had a fish fry fundraiser for Nixon, and they asked me to sit at the head table with their invited speaker for the evening, a guy that I'm sure many of you have heard of -- he died a few years ago -- a guy by the name of Senator Strom Thurman from South Carolina. So that's how I got my start in politics. And then it kind of went downhill from there.

In 1971 I tried to join the Air Force. I wanted to be like my dad. I wanted to be a career military man, but I flunked my physical because of an old high school football injury. For when most people of good sense were trying to stay out of the military because of the war in Vietnam, I had to get a waiver to get in. And, so I was successful. And after my training I was sent to a base in California that was an air lift base for the war in Vietnam -- Travis Air Force Base, where GIs would come from all over America, get on the plane, go to Vietnam, and when the planes came back, they would bring the body bags of the dead soldiers, and scores and scores and scores of wounded GIs that would come to the hospital on our base. And, on the weekend, almost every weekend, just a few plaintiff souls, would stand outside the front gate, holding their signs. And, I can hear them talking to each other now. Do you think it does any good? Do you think we will ever stop this war? Do you think anyone on the base is paying attention to us at all? And little did those protesters outside the gate know that we would talk about them for days on end -- in the chow hall, in the barracks, even on the job. And we had 15,000 permanently stationed GIs on our base in addition to the 1,000s that came and went on the planes going back and forth to Vietnam.

And, this process, this agitation of creating sparks in the air, of creating discussion, literally liberated my consciousness, and changed my life, and turned me into a peace activist. And so after a time I decided I was a conscientious objector, and I asked to be released from the military. And their first question to me was, well what is your family history, do you come from a traditional peace church? Well no, actually, no I come from a Republican military family. I was a Young Republican for Nixon. And so they turned me down and I did three and a half years of what I call hard time, because after I learned what was going on it became exceedingly difficult for me to be there.

So finally I got out and I was going to college at the University of Florida, just ready to graduate, when I got recruited to become a union organizer with the United Farm Workers union, organizing fruit pickers in Florida. And so I quit college, never to return, never to graduate, to be a professional organizer. And for 15 years, as Mike said, I worked for the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice.

We began investigating our bio region, and the space program and the arms race moving into the heavens.

So I'm going to talk a little bit about that tonight, but first I want to put it all in a larger context. I want to talk about where the US military strategy is going today -- what their plan is, and then in the end how we deal with it, how we get out from behind the eight ball. I want to start out by reading to you a quote by a man by the name of Steven Rosen, who wrote an article for the *Harvard Review* in 2002 called, "The Future of War and the American Military." And this is what he said, "Our goal is maintaining our imperial position, and maintaining imperial order. Now we are in the business of bringing down hostile governments and creating governments favorable to us. Finally, imperial strategy focuses on preventing the emergence of powerful hostile challengers to the empire, by war if necessary, but by imperial assimilation if possible." Now this man, Rosen, was the director of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard. He at one time worked for the Department of Defense, the National Security Council and was an instructor at the Naval War College.

MIT professor Noam Chomsky says it another way. He says, "It's all about controlling most of the world's supply of oil as a lever of domination. One way that we keep Europe and China and India and Russia, and other emerging markets dependent on us, and in sync with our policies," Chomsky says, "is to maintain control of the oil spigot that many of them are reliant on." In other words, the US wants to hold the keys to the world's economic engine. To illustrate the point, China today imports 80% of its oil through the Taiwan straits, and thus it's no coincidence that today the U.S. Navy is doubling its military presence in that particular region.

The Aegis Destroyer, made in the town where I live, in Bath, Maine, outfitted with so-called missile defense systems, is now being home ported in Japan, South Korea, Australia, and even very possibly it's going to be put in Taiwan, just 90 miles off the coast of mainland China. Today China has 20 nuclear missiles capable of hitting the west coast of the United States. And, the idea of the Aegis Destroyer, in a US first strike attack, as China launches their retaliatory capability (and that's all it is, those 20 missiles, trying to get off some of them), the Aegis Destroyer is parked up along the coast of China. Their job would be to intercept them (China's missiles) as soon as they are launched.

Japan is our unsinkable air craft carrier today, used to check rivals, both China and Russia. And now the United States is moving to militarily encircle Russia today by deploying these same so-called missile defense systems, this time in Poland and the Czech Republic: ground base interceptors under the ground in Poland and a new Star Wars radar facility in the Czech Republic. Much to the agitation, I would say, of the people in the Czech Republic, 70 percent are opposed to the deployment of the Star Wars radar. Fifty-five percent of the Polish are opposed to deployment of U.S. so-called missile defense interceptors. It would only be useful in a US first strike attack on Russia. Now why in the world would the United States want to encircle and attack Russia? Why? Could it be in large part, anyway, because Russia is the world's largest producer of natural gas. In addition to the six new permanent bases in Afghanistan and a dozen or so new permanent bases in Iraq, the United States has now recently reestablished bases in Romania and Bulgaria. And today, NATO under our direction, is developing, expanding new U.S. bases, or NATO bases, but essentially U.S. military bases, in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. And when you go home look at your world map and you will see that those countries are on Russia's border. How do you expect that Russia is going to respond as the U.S. begins this encirclement of their nation?

Recently the Rand Corporation, many of you know of it as a California right-wing think tank, did a study calling for the breaking up of Russia into three separate countries, just like we did in Yugoslavia, the Balkanization of that country -- just like Senator Joe Biden, the good liberal Democrat from Delaware, wants to do in Iraq. He's got a bill proposing that we break Iraq up into three separate countries, and the idea's the same with Russia -- divide and conquer. Chomsky calls it

imperial management, and he says imperial management demands obedience, and needs to punish all transgressors, if only to set an example for others contemplating going the same way. That's how U.S. policy makers think of Iran, Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba and any other country that dares ignore the boss.

In preparation for this endless war, as you know the Bush Administration has increased military spending by over 50 percent during his time in office -- now well over a \$650 billion a year Pentagon budget; 50 cents out of everyone of your tax dollars; \$12 billion a month on top of that \$650 billion, for the occupation of Iraq (\$12 billion a month!); and more than \$2 billion a month for Afghanistan. We have spent now over \$600 billion on the occupation of Iraq. In addition the Pentagon has what's called the Black Budget, the secret budget. The Congress is not even allowed to know how the money is spent -- mostly on high tech space weapons technologies, \$30 billion a year on the Black Budget, \$10 billion a year on Star Wars research and development spending, a whole host of spending for endless war.

The Pentagon is now saying that under corporate globalization of the world economy every different country is going to have a different role. They say we're not going to have jobs in America anymore because it makes no sense, corporations can move overseas, maximize profits internationally -- cheaper labor in India, China, Indonesia, and other parts of the world. Under corporate globalization, our role in the United States will be security export. And as I define those words, what I come up with again is endless war.

So working class kids are not going to have any other option in the future. There's not going to be any industrial jobs in the America that is now being constructed under corporate globalization. They don't need a draft because they have the economic draft today. Young people virtually have to go into the military unless they want to flip hamburgers at McDonalds or Burger King, and how many of those jobs are there?

The Pentagon says that today under corporate globalization there's a part of the world that is not submitting to the authority of the corporations, and they call it at the Pentagon, the non-integrating gap. And our job under security export, they say, will be to go into the non-integrating gap and suppress these populations to the benefit of the multinational corporations. And, they define the non-integrating gap as the Middle East, where we are today with our permanent bases, or as the Pentagon calls them, enduring bases; and Central Asia where since 9/11 we have now built our permanent bases in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is right on China's inland border. Imagine how the United States would feel if China or Russia was building bases in Canada or Mexico, we would be freaking out, and going to war over it. Also, the Pentagon says that Africa is part of this non-integrating gap, and they say we will be fighting in Africa in 20 years for their oil, in oil rich countries like Nigeria and Angola and Algeria. And in fact, recently the Pentagon has created a new military command called Africom, Africa Command.

Also, the Pentagon is saying that we're not going to do international treaties any longer because they restrict our ability to do first strike attacks at any time we want. You might remember that one of the very first things King George II did when he came into office was to give Russia the six months notice that the US was pulling out of the ABM Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, that outlawed the testing and deployment of these so-called missile defense systems. So we're not going to do treaties anymore. In fact, I saw a presentation, a three-hour presentation by a guy by the name of Thomas Barnett who wrote a book called *The Pentagon's New Map*. It was on CSPAN and he was speaking to a room of military brass, telling them, "This is the new military transformation plan. You're going to get on board with it, you're going to go out and teach it to those under you, or else you're not going to get promoted in the years ahead." And when he was saying that we're not going to do treaties anymore, he said this: "Adolf Hitler never had to ask permission to invade another

country, and we will not either." International treaties would restrict our ability to do first strike attack anywhere, at any time.

When the United States launched the "shock and awe" invasion of Iraq in 2003, in the initial attack, 70 percent of the weapons that the Pentagon used were directed to their targets by space technology. Space technology today coordinates all warfare on the earth below. And, the Pentagon has said for some years now, well if we could do that, so could someone else. And therefore we cannot allow anyone else to have access to space. And in this planning document put out by the United States Space Command a few years ago, called Vision for 2020, they lay it out. They say that we will control space, that we will dominate space, and we will deny other countries from having access to space. And in fact, on their headquarters building, in Colorado Springs, the space command has their logo right above the doorway: "Master of Space." And in fact on our video, *Arsenal of Hypocrisy*, (our documentary on the back table) we actually have footage of it, because some people don't believe that it's true. On the back of this, you might be able to see it, this little globe, on this little pedestal, you can imagine it spins like a globe does, and it says, "Space, the war fighter's edge." So no matter whether you are a troop on the ground, or in a humvee around Bagdad, with your computer right there in the humvee, with maps downloaded from satellites giving you the ability to look at the entire city, where every house is in the entire city of Bagdad, all from space technology. Or if you're on a ship firing cruise missiles directed by space technology, or you're in a plane, you fire missiles from your plane, directed to their targets by space technology. And on and on it goes. So this is the reality today of the space program. It's what the Pentagon calls Full Spectrum Dominance.

For the last three or four years I've been reading in one of the industry publications called *Aviation Week and Space Technology*. They've been reporting on a war game that the space command holds, at the beginning of every new year, set in the year 2016. They call it "Red Team/Blue Team." And in that war game, the Blue Team, the good guys, (you can imagine who they are) launch a first strike attack against the Red Team. And you can probably imagine who the reds are, China. And in that first strike attack, the very first weapon that is used is what's called the military space plane, that is now under development. They say it's going to take off like an airplane, fly up through space, and be able to go to the other side of the world in one hour. And then that plane comes down in that war game, and drops a devastating attack on China as part of the first-strike attack on China. And in one of the war games, they had a lawyer, a military lawyer, sitting next to the computer. And they turn to the lawyer and say, "Will it violate the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 if we use the military space plane in this first strike attack. The Outer Space Treaty says there can be no weapons of mass destruction in space. And so the lawyer turns back and says no, because this new technology falls outside of the old treaty, because this weapons system is not permanently stationed in space. It is transitory, therefore it falls outside of the treaty. And then they turned, after they used it (the military space plane), they turned back to the lawyer and they said, "Can we use the death star? Will it violate the Outer Space Treaty? And, the lawyer said, "Yes, you can use the death star," (what the Pentagon calls the death star) -- orbiting lasers in space, orbiting battle stations, powered with nuclear reactors, knocking out other countries' satellites, and hitting targets on the earth below. Yes, you can use it because it's not a weapon of mass destruction, it's a weapon of selective destruction. It falls outside of the treaty.

Well all during the Clinton years, and now the Bush II years, Russia and China and Canada have gone to the UN, bringing forth a new treaty that bans all space technologies. Let's close the door to the barn before the horse gets out. And the responses during the Clinton years and now the Bush II years are the same, "Hey, there's no arms race in space! We don't need a new treaty." And so the United States and Israel, the only two countries in the world not to vote for it, are blocking the development of a new treaty. Why? Because the aerospace industry says that star wars will be the largest industrial project in the history of the planet earth.

Today, all these technologies are 100 to 200 to 300 percent over budget, every single one of them. Space technologies are incredibly expensive. And in an editorial in another one of the industry publications called *Space News*, just a couple of years ago, they said, "Look, we have to be responsible corporate citizens. We know we've got to come up with the funding source for this stuff. And we have. And we're now sending our lobbyists to Washington to secure that funding source." And you know what it is? The entitlement programs. And what in America, officially, are the entitlements programs today? Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and what's left of the welfare program after Bill Clinton got through with it. These are the programs that the military industrial complex has targeted for defunding in order to pay for an arms race in space, and control and domination of the earth below.

So it's no coincidence today that our number one industrial export product is not steel. It is what today? Weapons. And when weapons are the number one industrial export product of your nation, what is your global marketing strategy for that product line? And friends, what does it say about the soul of our nation that we have to have endless war in order to supply jobs for the people in our communities -- our communities that increasingly have become addicted to military spending, that have become addicted to weapons production? What does that say about us as a people?

And I promise you, that when I go to other countries and I tell this story, people stand up and they scream at me, "Who the hell do you people think you are? Who do you people think you are? Why don't the American people stop this?" And how do you respond? Imagine, put yourself in my place in that moment. How do you respond? What do you say?

Taxpayers in Pennsylvania, according to the National Priorities Project, have paid \$17.4 billion or the cost of the Iraq occupation through 2007. That same amount of money could have provided 4.3 million people in your state with total free health care. How many people live in this state? 12.4 million, a third of the people, just from one year.

Where I live in Maine, our Democratic governor just announced two or three weeks ago that we are \$195 million short in the state budget. You probably know the textile industry from Maine is gone. The shoe industry from Maine is gone. They're even closing down paper mills in Maine now because they're cutting the timber and taking it out of the country to be processed, where there's cheaper labor. And so the #1 employer, the top employer in our state today is the military industrial complex. But because of our fiscal crisis, the governor just announced that he is defunding mental health services in the state of Maine. And they've just announced huge cuts in education funding across the state.

And two nights ago, three nights ago, I went to a meeting in a little town, a working town of Woolrich, where two parents asked me to go to a meeting with them, because the Maine Army National Guard was coming to do a presentation to parents, where they're coming into the schools and doing indoctrination inside the schools, in classrooms, for six weeks in this school, 12 weeks in another school that we know of. And when they did the presentation, they said (that) last year they visited 47 schools, and 4700 kids were brought through this program, and then they take them out for a fun weekend trip to one of the boot camps where they basically run them through a boot camp experience. These are 7th graders, by the way, that they're taking out there, not high school kids, but 7th graders. The school is happy to have the National Guard come in, because they are laying off teachers, and they can't afford to provide people to spend all the time they need to be with the kids, so the Army National Guard is essentially becoming like a substitute teacher in the schools in our state and I'm sure many other states across the country.

The old line of many Democrats was, "Well, we can have guns, and we can have butter," but the butter is melting, and in many communities, the butter is gone. You all have heard, I know, former

Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, the WWII general, his famous words in 1961, in his concluding speech to the American people, when he warned us to beware of the power of the military industrial complex, that he said was gaining undue influence in the halls of Congress. And in fact, one gentleman tonight reminded me to make sure you say that it was originally supposed to be the military industrial Congressional complex, but that Eisenhower staffers, were worried that it was too over the top, so they dropped the line of Congress out of it. Eisenhower concluded by saying that in the end every dollar that is spent on weapons is a theft from those who hunger, and from those who are in need in our society.

So with all that said, what is the solution? How do we get out from behind this eight ball that we are standing behind today? Well, I would like to propose to you that in all my years as an organizer, almost 30 years now, I have never, ever seen the American people listening as hard as they are listening today. I don't know about here, but in Maine people are really worried about jobs. People are talking about jobs. They're talking about their future. They're worried about their kids and their grandkids. They're worried about who's going to pay to fix the potholes in our roads in Maine that are getting so bad now, that they're saying they're going to essentially go and strip and rebuild the roads from scratch. The bridges are falling apart in Maine, how are we going to fix those? And people are talking about it and people are worried and they keep saying, if you listen closely, what are we going to do? The politicians they say, the Republicans and the Democrats are not really offering us a way out.

Well I would like to humbly submit that that's our job now -- to come forward with a transformative of vision in this country. To offer people a direction where we can be going. To offer a call that not only the peace movement, but the environmental movement and the labor movement and the social justice movement can organize around, and come together on. And that is conversion of the military industrial complex. The time has come for a sustainable technology revolution in America. We're all told over and over again that climate change and global warming are so severe that if we do not act immediately, and essentially change the way we live in America, and we do it immediately, that we are destroying the future, and there will be essentially no future for those who come after us. So how do we do that?

Well with your tax dollars, that are today used to prepare for endless war, why can't we at all these military production facilities across America, and in communities where there are problems of jobs -- where people need jobs, why can't we build a solar society? Just today when I'm flying in on that little propeller plane, landing at the Allentown airport, it's a beautiful sunny day out there and I'm noticing the legions and legions of rooftops, just bare. What if we tomorrow, forced the Congress of the US to say that every house and business in America had to have at least a solar water heater on them? Can you imagine the jobs created in America? In research and development and design and manufacturing and installation and repair of a solar society, reducing the amount of oil we use, reducing the effects of global warming, putting people to work all of over this country, can you imagine?

Can you imagine where I live in Bath, Maine, at a shipyard that is building Aegis Destroyers? If that shipyard goes under, there's nothing. People are worried about it going under. There's always talk about, are we going to get the next contract because even the Pentagon, believe it or not, is running out of money. Well, what they did in Copenhagen, Denmark, was they converted a shipyard and now today they're the world's leading producer of wind mills. Why can't we at military production facilities in the United States, with your tax dollars, build wind mills? Now old timers in Maine tell the story that at one time you could go to any part of that very rural state on a train, before the car came along, and they closed down all the rail in Maine. But you know gasoline is now getting to the point where the working class are having a hard time filling the tank to go to work. What are we going to do when gas is \$5 and \$6 and \$7 and \$8 dollars a gallon like it is in England right now -- \$8 a

gallon U. S. equivalent?! What are we going to do, how are people going to get to work without real public transportation?

Imagine the jobs created in America building a rail system that would rival any in the world connecting every single corner of the state of Maine and the state of Pennsylvania and the entire United States. Imagine getting us out of our gas guzzling cars, no more war for oil, reducing the effects of global warming, climate change. Imagine the jobs created laying track, building rail and production workers feeling good about what they're doing. Imagine that! So why can't we talk about that? Why can't, when we're standing on the corner, holding our signs that say peace on them, why can't we begin to give a little definition of a real alternative vision to the American people who are hungry, hungry for answers? Why can't we begin to do that? Why can't we begin to demand the conversion of the military industrial complex? If you think the corporations that run this country today are going to do it, they are leaving this country like rats off a sinking ship. They are investing overseas.

Unless we convert the military industrial complex and use those dollars to invest in an alternative future, a sustainable technology future, there's going to be no investment in America. We are going to become a third world country. That's the reality of the story today. The Republican and Democrats together, the empire parties, are not talking about this in any real way. There was another time like this in American history where the obstacles seemed so vast, when another economic system controlled our very lives, and pitted people against people in America, it was the time of slavery. And many, many people believed we would never end that institution of slavery, it was just so powerful and so ingrained, just like some people today say we will never end war. Bruce, you're a dreamer. It's great rhetoric, it's just fabulous rhetoric, but it's just talk. We are never going to stop the war machine. We can't do it. The business community, the politicians, religious leaders, defended slavery, the institution.

I took an Afro-American history class when I was in college, and I'll never forget being so astounded how each of these segments of the society during slavery so strongly defended it, even the religious community. And today they talk about just war, they talk about, "War is good for economy." Just two weeks ago Bush was saying how the war in Iraq is good for the economy, it creates jobs, which is a lie. Seymour Melman, the father of conversion, a Columbia University economics professor was saying, "Yes, it's true, you take a million dollars, yes it's true, and you put it into military production, you create "x" number of jobs, that's true. He said, "But you take that same million dollars and you invest it in hiring teachers and nurses and building schools and hospitals and fixing roads and bridges and building rail and solar, and everything else, and in every single instance you create more jobs per million dollars, because military spending is capital intensive, it eats up the money, creates few jobs, and every other kind of production is labor intensive.

But, during this time of slavery there were voices, as you know, the abolitionists. And I want to read to you a quote from one of the great abolitionists of that time. "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation; want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without the thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will." - Frederick Douglas

And so today here we are once again, needing a demand, needing the people to make a demand on the political system, a resounding national, international call for the abolition of the war system -- for the conversion of the military industrial complex -- to use your tax dollars for good rather than endless war.

My mother is Italian, my father was French Canadian, and they named me Bruce, a Scottish name. And I was always kind of curious why didn't you name me Mario or Antoine of who knows what? And my mother told me this story. During the time that the Scottish were trying to throw the British out of Scotland, Sir Robert Bruce was leading the army (if I can use a war story here). And six times in a row he was defeated by the British, and he gave up. And he crawled into a cave and he said, "I'm finished. I'm through." And he was watching a spider spin a web, and the spider was having trouble making this one connection in the web. And six times in a row the spider failed to make the connection, but on the seventh time it was successful. And he coined the phrase, "If you don't at first succeed, try, try again." And he went off and they were successful on the seventh time.

For me the importance of the story is about nature. The spider is an animal in nature, the spider does not intellectualize its job, the spider knows its job. If it takes the spider its entire life to spin that web, to make that one connection the spider does not intellectualize about it and get frustrated or anything else. But we humans, because we're so smart, we get ourselves all twisted up and tangled up and we feel all hopeless and powerless and we give up and we forget that we're part of the animal kingdom too. And so I asked myself what is my job? What is the most important thing for me to do on this planet? What is my job as a human being? And I came up with making sure that my son who is in his late 20s now, has a future. And that his children, if he chooses to have any, have a future. That's my job. And I'm never going to quit, never. Thank you very much.

This speech can be viewed at www.youtube.com/rhubarbdoom and is available on loan as a cassette tape or as a DVD from LEPOCO, 313 W. 4th St., south Bethlehem, PA. Thank you to Guy Grey and Robert Daniels II who made the recordings. Thank you to Matt Schaner and Nancy Tate who transcribed the talk.