



# End Space Weapons

By Bruce Gagnon

The 1967 U.N. Outer Space Treaty prohibits ‘weapons of mass destruction’ in space or on ‘celestial bodies’ like the moon. Virtually all warfare on the planet is now directed by space technology. Thus, filling up the increasingly limited parking spaces in various orbital regions will determine which nation has an advantage.

Anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) have been tested by India, US, Russia and China. ASAT’s need no explosives. At orbital speeds, kinetic energy — one thing smashing into the other— does the job.

Elon Musk’s SpaceX makes rockets and satellites to build Starlink, a broadband Internet system that once completed will cover the entire world. SpaceX has so far put 12,000 satellites into orbit and plans for 40,000 satellites in low-Earth orbit (LEO), occupying 80% of this space.

The Pentagon funds and tests Starlink for its military capabilities. Starlink satellites are being utilized by the Ukrainian military to communicate, as well as help guide drones, artillery shells, and missiles into Russian positions and at civilian targets. Very recently Musk has begun to slightly restrict the use of Starlink by the Ukrainian military as he feared that Russia might take action against the Starlink constellation.

In early 2023 China announced that it was preparing to launch close to 13,000 satellites into LEO in a move to counter Musk’s SpaceX network. China stated that they intend to: “ensure that our country has a place in low orbit; and prevent the Starlink constellation from excessively preempting low-orbit resources.”

NATO in 2019 announced a new doctrine calling space a ‘fifth operational domain’. NATO maintains that the US-led bloc will use commercial



graphic: Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space

satellites as a military booster. Russia has issued a warning to the US-NATO that they are “exposing civilian space assets to potential attack by utilizing them for military purposes.”

In early February, Ukrainian troops fired rockets from a US-made HIMARS system which hit a hospital in Novoaydar, killing 14 Russian-ethnics and injuring 24. Russia claimed that Kiev used western satellites operated by NATO personnel to target the hospital.

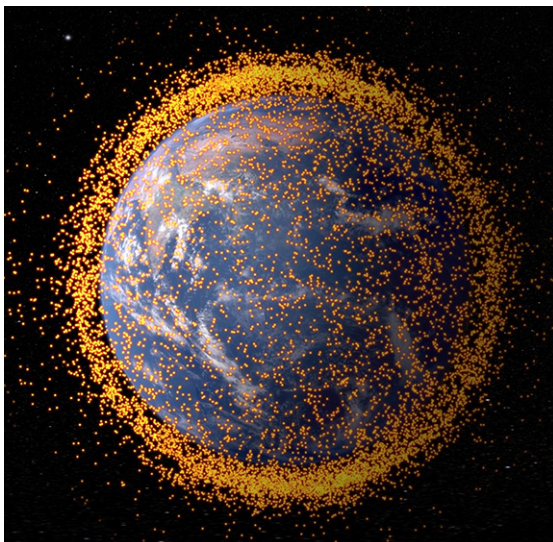
Currently, “weapons of selective destruction” fall outside of the Outer Space Treaty. Thus, a new treaty is urgently needed. Russia and China have been leading the effort at the UN to create a new treaty to ban all weapons in space for many years. But the US and Israel have been blocking such a step for peace in space. The official US line, through Republican and Democratic administrations, is “there is no problem in space, and no new treaty is needed.”

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## Space Junk

During recent years the numbers of satellites orbiting the Earth has grown dramatically. Thousands more satellite launches have been approved by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) despite legal action by a coalition of groups (including the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space). The FCC is violating environmental law that requires impact studies before thousands of launches.

Space orbital parking lots are getting dangerously crowded risking cascading collisions (Kessler Syndrome) which could become so severe that space flight would be impossible due to the orbiting field of debris. If this was to occur, much of life on planet Earth would go dark, as our daily activities are enabled by space satellites — GPS, Internet banking, weather prediction, cell phones, air traffic control, etc. Each launch releases toxic agents which are destroying the Earth’s ozone layer. In addition, when satellites fall from lower earth orbit and burn-up on reentry they release a deadly stew of electronic particles into our atmosphere. Because of the massive escalation of satellite launches, astronomers are complaining that we are losing the night sky.



graphic: Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space