

New Mexico Key to Military Strategy Threatening Species Survival

Nuclear Terror at Home

By Noam Chomsky | February 24, 2005



Noam Chomsky

If you can imagine some rational observers from Mars looking at this curious species down here, I don't think they'd put very high odds on survival—another generation or two. In fact, it's kind of miraculous that we've come along this far.

The world has come extremely close to total destruction just in recent years from nuclear war. New Mexico plays an important role in this. There's case after case where a nuclear war was prevented almost by a miracle. And the threat is increasing as a consequence of policies that the administration is very consciously pursuing.

U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld understands perfectly well that these policies are increasing the threat of destruction. As you know, it's not a high probability event, but if a low probability event keeps happening over and over, there's a high probability that sooner or later it will take place.

If you want to rank issues in terms of significance, there are some issues that are literally issues of survival of the species, and they're imminent. Nuclear war is an issue of species survival, and the threats have been severe for a long time.

It's come to the point where you can read in the most sober respectable journals warnings by the leading strategic analysts that the current American posture—transformation of the military—is raising the prospect of what they call "ultimate doom" and not very far away. That's because it leads to an action-reaction cycle in which others respond. That leads us to be closer and more reliant on hair-trigger mechanisms, which are massively destructive.

Militarization of space could very well doom the species. It's being pushed very hard. That's one issue that really requires major work and that's a huge one in New Mexico. New Mexico is one of the centers where this potential destruction of the species is taking place.

There's a document called *The Essentials of Post Cold War Deterrence* that was released during the Clinton years by the Strategic Command, which is in charge of nuclear

weapons. It's one of the most horrifying documents I've ever read. People haven't paid attention to it.

The Strategic Command report asks how we should reconstruct our nuclear and other forces for the post-Cold War period. And the conclusions are that we have to rely primarily on nuclear weapons because unlike other weapons of mass destruction, such as chemical and biological, the effects of nuclear weapons are immediate, devastating, overwhelming—not only destructive but terrifying. So they have to be the core of what's called deterrence.

Everything means the opposite of what it says. Deterrence means our offensive stance should primarily be based on nuclear weapons because they're so destructive and terrifying. And furthermore just the possession of massive nuclear forces casts a shadow over any international conflict, like people are frightened of us because we have this overwhelming force.

We have to have a national persona of irrationality with forces out of control, so we really terrify everybody, and then we can get what we want. And furthermore they're right to be terrified because we're going to have these nuclear weapons right in front of us, which will blow them all up—in fact, blow us all up if they get out of control.

If you read the vision for 2020 published by the Space Administration, it talks about how the new frontier is space—and that we have to take control of space for military purposes and make sure that we have no competitors. That means the space-based instruments of sudden mass destruction.

There was an outer space treaty in 1967, which doesn't have any teeth in it but it does call for preserving space for peaceful purposes. And there have been efforts at the U.N. General Assembly Disarmament Committee to



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strengthen it. But they've been blocked unilaterally by the United States. The United States alone refuses to vote for the General Assembly resolution, and it's been tied up since the year 2000. The Chinese are the ones who are pushing to expand it. That's not reported in the United States. In the year 2000 it was only reported in one newspaper, a small newspaper in Utah.

The whole world is supposed to be covered with—probably is—with sophisticated surveillance devices and the whole range of complex, lethal, destructive weaponry designed to be able to attack anything from space. This means nuclear weapons in space—nuclear energy sources in space—which can get out of control and blow up and who knows what will happen.

When the Bush administration took over they just made it more extreme. They moved from the Clinton doctrine of control of space to what they call ownership of space, meaning—their words—“instant engagement anywhere” or unannounced destruction of any place on earth.

These are remarks Noam Chomsky made on Jan. 25 at events in Santa Fe, NM, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the International Relations Center (IRC), online at www.irc-online.org. Chomsky is a member of the IRC's board of directors.

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