

1989: Military Space Forces - The Next 50 Years: The Democratic Party's Vision of Space Warfare

By Karl Grossman

The book *Military Space Forces: The Next 50 Years* was commissioned by a Democratic-controlled U.S. Congress in the 1987 and published in 1989. This blueprint for space warfare is as wild and extreme as anything produced by the U.S. Space Command or the Heritage Foundation. And yet, it was endorsed personally by a group composed mostly of Democrats.

The list of officials signing off on the "Congressional Introduction" is topped by the signatures of Representatives Ike Skelton of Missouri and John Spratt of South Carolina – Democratic Party leaders for missile defense. There are also the signatures of prominent Democrats including then-Senator John Glenn of Ohio (the former-astronaut who was given a NASA space shuttle ride in 1999); now U.S. Senator, then-Representative Bill Nelson, representing Cape Canaveral and the rest of the "Space Coast" (who got *his* NASA space shuttle ride in 1986); and Representative Harold Volkmer, of Missouri. The two Republicans were Representative John Kasich of Ohio and Ben Blaz, a non-voting member of the House from Guam.

The "Congressional Introduction" declares that Congress asked John M. Collins, senior specialist in national defense at the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress

"in June 1987 to prepare 'a frame of reference that could help Congress evaluate future, as well as present, military space policies, programs and budgets.'"

After a foreword by General John L. Piotrowski, then commander in chief of the U.S. Space Command, *Military Space Forces* opens with consideration of "economic and military enterprises" on the moon:

"The moon is rich, in many natural resources.... iron, titanium, aluminum, manganese, and calcium are abundant.... Simple machines could easily strip top layers."

Military bases on the moon would "defend" lunar mining operations and take advantage of what Military Space Forces calls the "gravity well" of Earth. This is described as a channel in space between the moon and Earth:

"Military space forces at the bottom of Earth's so-called gravity well are poorly positioned to accomplish offensive/defensive/deterrent missions, because great energy is needed to overcome gravity during launch.... Forces at the top [i.e., on the moon, could act] "more rapidly. Put simply, it takes less energy to drop objects down a well than to cast them out. Forces at the top also enjoy more maneuvering room and greater reaction time."

A map of the best "site" on the moon from which the U.S. could take military advantage of this "gravity well" is provided and the work stresses that U.S. "armed forces might lie in wait at that location to hijack rival shipments" of mate-



Big decision coming up. Do

I deploy that stupid Star Wars thing Reagan started? It's going to cost over \$60 billion and we know it won't work. Our allies say it's going to destabilize everything and crank up the arms race again. Plus, I've got to get the Russians to agree. Might as well ask them to hand us the keys to the Kremlin. \$60 billion is a lot of classrooms, roads, rebuilding inner cities and reinforcing Social Security and all the other programs. Should I do the right thing and kill this monster before it sucks up all that money. What to do? What to do?



What to do? In April 1996, Clinton approved a six-year National Missile Defense program: three for research and three to build the system. Then, on July 22, 1999, Clinton signed the National Missile Defense Act, which committed the U.S. to deploy NMD "as soon as technologically possible."

rials mined by other nations. The U.S., according to this Congressionally-authored plan, would engage in piracy in space.

Combat on the moon is discussed:

"Lunar foxholes would provide better cover than terrestrial counterparts, because the absence of air confines blast effects to much smaller areas."

Military Space Forces examines space weapons and states that nuclear weapons have a drawback:

"Nuclear weapons detonated in atmosphere create shock waves, violent winds, and intense heat that can inflict severe damage and casualties well beyond the hypocenter."

But, in space

"winds never blow in a vacuum, shock waves cannot develop...and neither fireballs nor superheated surrounding air develop above about 65 miles. Consequently, it would take direct hits or near misses to achieve required results with nuclear blast and thermal radiation."

On the other hand, it notes:

"space is a nearly perfect laser environment... because light propagates unimpeded in a vacuum.... Laser weapons, regardless of type (gas, chemical, excimer, free elec-

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tron, solid state, X-ray), concentrate a tightly focused shaft or pulse of radiant energy photons on the target.... The beam burns through.”

The book also examines use of chemical and biological warfare in space:

“Self-contained biospheres in space accord a superlative environment for chemical and biological warfare.... Clandestine operatives could dispense lethal or incapacitating CW/BW agents rapidly and uniformly through enemy facilities.”

“Conventional weapons” would have their place, too, it says, pointing out that “high-speed birdshot... could seriously damage most space facilities which are strong enough to maintain structural integrity and repel micrometeoroids, but not much more.”

As to the *UN Charter* seeking “peaceful and friendly” international relations, the Outer Space Treaty designating space as a place where “exploration and other endeavors ‘shall be carried out for the benefit...of all mankind,’” and the Moon Agreement of 1979 saying “neither the surface nor the subsurface of the moon” or “other celestial bodies within the solar system” shall “become the property” of any person or state, *Military Space Forces* declares:

“The strength of such convictions will be tested when economic competition quickens in space.... Parties that hope to satisfy economic interests in space must maintain ready access to resources on the moon and beyond, despite opposition if necessary, and perhaps deny access to competitors.”

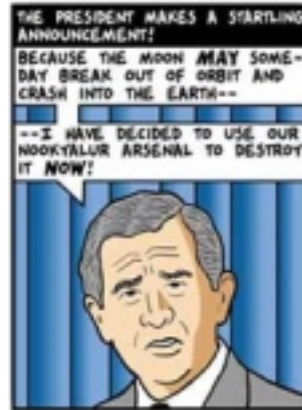
A good way to keep other nations from engaging in space militarily, is to “control attitudes” in other countries:

“Control over elitist and popular opinion, using inexpensive psychological operations as a nonlethal weapon system, could convince rivals that it would be useless to start or continue military space programs.... The basic objective would be to deprive opponents of freedom of action, while preserving it for oneself. Senior national executives, legislators, members of the mass media and, through them, the body politic, would be typical targets.”

Meanwhile, for the U.S.:

“Superiority in space could culminate in bloodless total victory, if lagging powers could neither cope nor catch up technologically.”

As examples of the advantages of waging war from space, Collins states “naval surface ships comprise” a particularly “inviting target category.... Former astronaut Michael Collins, who has been there and back twice, believes space



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is an ideal place from which to attack aircraft carriers and other major surface combatants.”

And, the Democratic Party report continues by noting that: “strike forces on the moon could choose from the full range of offensive maneuvers.”

Military Space Forces also urges the use of nuclear power in space, both plutonium-fueled radioisotope thermoelectric generators and nuclear reactors which are “the only known long-lived, compact source able to supply military space forces with electric power about 10 kilowatts and multimewatts.... Cores no bigger than basketballs are able to produce about 100 kw, enough for ‘housekeeping’ aboard space stations and at lunar outposts. Larger versions could meet multimewatt needs of space-based lasers, neutral particle beams, mass drivers, and railguns.”

Among the endorsements featured on the back cover of *Military Space Forces* are from then Senator Sam Nunn, a Georgia Democrat and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He states: “This book will be an indispensable starting point.”

Then-Representative Les Aspin, a Wisconsin Democrat, who later became Secretary of Defense under President Bill Clinton, states: “No other military space study puts all pieces of the puzzle together.”

General John W. Vessey, Jr., former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also praises the Democratic report saying thatit “should be useful for decades.”

Source: Excerpts from *Weapons in Space*, Seven Stories Press, 2001. <www.globenet.free-online.co.uk/articles/democrats.htm>