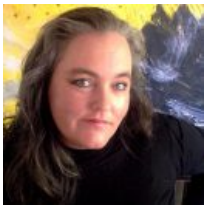


STRATCOM Wishes You a Very Scary New Year

The U.S. Strategic Command has deleted a New Year's tweet that revealed its true values, as Caitlin Johnstone explains.

By Caitlin Johnstone

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U.S. Strategic Command (or “Stratcom” if you’re trying to make a nuclear-capable arm of the U.S. Defense Department sound cool) has **issued an apology** for a poorly received New Year’s Eve tweet which has since been deleted.

“#TimesSquare tradition rings in the #NewYear by dropping the big ball...if ever needed, we are #ready to drop something much, much bigger,” **the offending tweet** read, with an attached **video** featuring B-2 stealth bombers flying all stealth bombery and causing gigantic explosions with bunker buster bombs while words like “STEALTH”, “READY”, and “LETHAL” flashed across the screen. The tweet concluded with the ostensibly unironic hashtag “#PeaceIsOurProfession”.

“Our previous NYE tweet was in poor taste & does not reflect our values,” Strategic Command **tweeted**. “We apologize. We are dedicated to the security of America & allies.”

This statement is, obviously, a lie. The part about “security” of course, because dominating the globe with nonstop military violence and aggression has nothing to do with security, but also the “does not reflect our values” part. The U.S. military deleted the post and apologized for

it because it received an angry backlash from hundreds of commenters and was circulated virally on Twitter for its jarringly creepy message, not because it did not reflect their values. It reflected their values perfectly.

The only way you could possibly encapsulate the U.S. military's values in a 42-second video clip more perfectly than cramming it full of footage of \$2,000,000,000 war planes cruising around dropping \$3,500,000 GBU-57 bombs would be to also show the human bodies they land on being ripped to pieces. Inflicting death and destruction using unfathomably expensive machinery is the U.S. military's whole job. Of course it reflects their values.

The real issue here was not values but perception. The U.S. war machine pours an immense amount of energy into perception management, making sure that ordinary Americans either (A) ignore the horrific things that are being done in their name or (B) think that those things are awesome and patriotic. The offending post was clearly attempting to accomplish (B). A team of paid social media propagandists simply did not understand that ordinary human beings wouldn't resonate with a message that amounts to "Hey I see you're all preparing to bring in the new year, so watch how good we are at killing large numbers of people!", and some damage control became necessary when everyone got freaked out. Can't have people opening their eyes to how insane America's relentless military expansionism has gotten, after all.

Watching the propaganda arm of the U.S.-centralized war machine is a lot like watching a manipulative sociopath learning how to function in normal society. Sometimes

they'll slip up and fail to react the way someone with a healthy sense of empathy would respond to the death of a pet or someone's emotions or whatever, and they risk alienating whoever's around them and losing access to the resources they could exploit them for if they can't manipulate them out of the creeped-out feeling people get when they're around someone who doesn't empathize like a normal human being. I suspect many of the commenters who flooded in telling Stratcom to delete its tweet were not so much interested in eliminating a violent social media post from the internet, but in eliminating that creeped-out feeling you get when the sociopath's mask slips a bit.



And that's understandable. One of the biggest obstacles in getting people

to realize how deeply propagandized they are is the cognitive dissonance which comes rushing in when one considers the implications of viewing the world free from the lens of military psychological manipulations. Without the lies about how beneficent and necessary and awesome the military is, all you've got is trillions of dollars worth of instruments of death circling the globe to facilitate the daily slaughter of men, women and children to advance agendas of power and profit while ordinary people struggle just to get by in your own country. It can be deeply psychologically uncomfortable to grapple with the reality of what that means for your beliefs about your nation, your society and your very identity, in much the same way

realizing you married a manipulative sociopath can be an uncomfortable truth one might feel tempted to compartmentalize away from.

A lot of people got upset about that tweet, but they really shouldn't have. The tweet was not the problem; it was just a few perception managers for the U.S. military being more honest and straightforward than usual. The problem is that money is being stolen from ordinary Americans to murder strangers on the other side of the planet to advance agendas of power and profit, and everyone's being propagandized into [accepting that as normal](#). The sociopathic propaganda engine slipping up and stirring the populace from their slumber a bit is nothing to complain about, the actual reality of our actual situation is.

Caitlin Johnstone is a rogue journalist, poet, and utopia prepper who publishes regularly [at Medium](#). Follow her work on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or her [website](#). She has a [podcast](#) and a new book [Woke: A Field Guide for Utopia Preppers](#). This article was re-published with permission.

The Limits of US Military Power

Official Washington's new conventional wisdom is that the Obama administration is weak because it won't launch military strikes against every adversary around the world. But the reality is that military force has done little to project U.S. power since World War II, writes Lawrence S. Wittner.

By Lawrence S. Wittner

Is overwhelming national military power a reliable source of influence in world

affairs? If so, the United States should certainly have plenty of influence today.

For decades, it has been the world's Number 1 military spender. And it continues in this role. According to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United States spent \$640 billion on the military in 2013, thus accounting for 37 percent of world military expenditures. The two closest competitors, China and Russia, accounted for 11 percent and 5 percent respectively. Thus, last year, the United States spent more than three times as much as China and more than seven times as much as Russia on the military.

In this context, the U.S. government's inability to get its way in world affairs is striking. In the current Ukraine crisis, the Russian government does not seem at all impressed by the U.S. government's strong opposition to its behavior. Also, the Chinese government, ignoring Washington's protests, has laid out ambitious territorial claims in the East and South China Seas.

Even much smaller, weaker nations have been snubbing the advice of U.S. officials. Israel has torpedoed U.S. attempts to forge an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement, the embattled Syrian government has been unwilling to negotiate a transfer of power, and North Korea remains as obdurate as ever when it comes to scuttling its nuclear weapons program.

Of course, hawkish critics of the Obama administration say that it lacks influence in these cases because it is unwilling to *use* the U.S. government's vast military power in war. But is this true? The Obama administration channeled very high levels of military manpower and financial resources into lengthy U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and ended up with precious little to show for this investment.

Furthermore, in previous decades, the U.S. government used its overwhelming military power in a number of wars without securing its goals. The bloody Korean War, for example, left things much as they were before the conflict began, with the Korean peninsula divided and a ruthless dictatorship in place in the north.

The lengthy and costly Vietnam War led to a humiliating defeat for the United States – not because the U.S. government lacked enormous military advantages, but because, ultimately, the determination of the Vietnamese to gain control of their own country proved more powerful than U.S. weaponry.

Even CIA ventures drawing upon U.S. military power have produced a very mixed result. Yes, the CIA, bolstered by U.S. military equipment, managed to overthrow the Guatemalan government in 1954. But, seven years later, the CIA-

directed, -funded, and -equipped invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs failed to topple the Castro government when the Cuban public failed to rally behind the U.S.-instigated effort. Although the U.S. government retains an immense military advantage over its Cuban counterpart, with which it retains a hostile relationship, this has not secured the United States any observable influence over Cuban policy.

The Cold War confrontation between the U.S. and Soviet governments is particularly instructive. For decades, the two governments engaged in an arms race, with the United States clearly in the lead. But the U.S. military advantage did not stop the Soviet government from occupying Eastern Europe, crushing uprisings against Soviet domination in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, or dispatching Soviet troops to take control of Afghanistan.

Along the way, U.S. hawks sometimes called for war with the Soviet Union. But, in fact, U.S. and Soviet military forces never clashed. What finally produced a love fest between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev and ended the Cold War was a strong desire by both sides to replace confrontation with cooperation, as indicated by the signing of substantial nuclear disarmament agreements.

Similarly, the Iranian and U.S. governments, which have been on the worst of terms for decades, appear to be en route to resolving their tense standoff – most notably over the possible development of Iranian nuclear weapons – through diplomacy. It remains unclear if this momentum toward a peaceful settlement results from economic sanctions or from the advent of a reformist leadership in Tehran. But there is no evidence that U.S. military power, which has always been far greater than Iran's, has played a role in fostering it.

Given this record, perhaps military enthusiasts in the United States and other nations should consider whether military power is a reliable source of influence in world affairs. After all, just because you possess a hammer doesn't mean that every problem you face is a nail.

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US Still Dominates in Arms Spending

The U.S. government's military spending excess – when compared with the rest of the world – is down somewhat due mostly to troop withdrawals from Iraq and

Afghanistan but still accounts for 39 percent of the global total, according to a new international study, examined by Lawrence S. Wittner.

By Lawrence S. Wittner

According to [a report](#) just released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), world military expenditures in 2012 totaled \$1.75 trillion. And, the report revealed that, as in all recent decades, the world's biggest military spender by far was the U.S. government, whose expenditures for war and preparations for war amounted to \$682 billion – 39 percent of the global total.

The United States spent more than four times as much on the military as China (the number two big spender) and more than seven times as much as Russia (which ranked third). Although the military expenditures of the United States dipped a bit in 2012, largely thanks to the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, they remained 69 percent higher than in 2001.

U.S. military supremacy is even more evident when the U.S. military alliance system is brought into the picture, for the United States and its allies accounted for the vast bulk of world military spending in 2012. NATO members, including the United States, spent \$1 trillion dollars on the military.

Thus, although studies have found that the United States ranks 17th among nations in education, 26th in infant mortality, and 37th in life expectancy and overall health, there is no doubt that it ranks first when it comes to war.

This Number 1 status might not carry much weight among Americans scavenging for food in garbage dumpsters, among Americans unable to afford medical care, or among Americans shivering in poorly heated homes. Even many Americans in the more comfortable middle class might be more concerned with how they are going to afford the skyrocketing costs of a college education, how they can get by with fewer teachers, firefighters and police in their communities, and how their hospitals, parks, roads, bridges and other public facilities can be maintained.

Of course, there is a direct connection between the massive level of U.S. military spending and belt-tightening austerity at home: most federal discretionary spending goes for war.

The Lockheed Martin Corp.'s new F-35 joint strike fighter plane provides a good example of the U.S. government's warped priorities. It is estimated that this military weapons system will cost the U.S. government [\\$1.5 trillion](#) by the time of its completion. Does this Cold War-style warplane, designed for fighting enemies the U.S. government no longer faces, represent a good investment for

Americans?

After 12 years of production, costing \$396 billion, the F-35 has exhibited numerous design and engineering flaws, has been grounded twice, and has never been flown in combat. Given the immense military advantage the United States already has over all other nations in the world, is this most expensive weapons system in world history really necessary? And aren't there other, better things that Americans could be doing with their money?

Of course, the same is true for other countries. Is there really any justification for the nations of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America to be increasing their level of military spending – as they did in 2012 – while millions of their people live in dire poverty? Projections indicate that, by 2015, about a billion people around the world will be living on an income of about \$1.25 per day. When, in desperation, they riot for bread, will the government officials of these nations, echoing Marie Antoinette, suggest that they eat the new warplanes and missiles?

President Dwight Eisenhower put it well in an address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors 60 years ago: "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, those who are cold and are not clothed. . . . This world in arms is not spending money alone; it is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. . . . This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

That sentiment persists. On April 15, people in 43 countries participated in a Global Day of Action on Military Spending, designed to call attention to the squandering of the world's resources on war. Among these countries was the United States, where polls show that 58 percent of Americans favor major reductions in U.S. military spending. How long will it take the governments of the United States and of other nations to catch up with them?

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