

The very nexus of evil

By Scott Ritter, 16 February 2023

*[Author's Note: I was going to speak at the Rage against the War Machine rally, scheduled for February 19 at the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington, D.C. For personal reasons, I will no longer be speaking.*

*In short, I have decided to take one for the team.*

*I wish all participants and attendees at this rally to have a very successful event, and hope that it can serve as the start of something even bigger down the road.*

***This is the speech I was planning to deliver at the rally. I think it would have done the event proud.]***

*Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to address you today.*

*I speak to you from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, a place of history filled with gravitas worthy of the task we have set for ourselves at this time in our collective history: to stand up—no, to rage—against a war machine that has perverted the very definition of what it means to be an American.*

*We stand here today **at the very nexus of this war machine**. To our right, just over the Potomac River, lies the Pentagon, a structure built at a time when America called upon its collective might to defeat the scourge of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, but which has since then morphed into the very symbol of evil itself, a breeding ground for weapons and plans that are used by the other partners, in what has become known as the military-industrial complex, to spread malffeasance around a world we once protected, but now enslave through a process of perpetual conflict used to sustain the American war machine.*

*And who are these other partners? Before us, past the monument to our founding father, George Washington, stands the Capitol of the United States, where the people's representatives fund, in great secrecy, the nefarious schemes cooked up in the bowels of the Pentagon.*

*And to our left stands the White House, the seat of Executive authority, where individuals we invest with singular authority betray the trust of those who put them there by conceiving and implementing policies designed to further the Pentagon's war efforts.*

This is the very nexus of evil, an unholy trinity of terroristic madness, which some 61 years ago **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, an American warrior turned political leader, warned the American people about, cautioning that “in the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

In the history of the United States that has transpired since that speech, no truer words have been spoken by an American president, and no greater wisdom has been disregarded by those whom Eisenhower entrusted with that message—we, the people of the United States.

We stand here today to announce to **this terrible trinity, this military-industrial complex, this war machine**, that we hear you now, President Eisenhower—we hear you, and we will act on your warning to bring this nexus of un-American conspiracy to an end.

Of all the weapons produced by the military-industrial complex, of all the evil schemes hatched in the minds of the so-called national security experts—most of whom are unelected by, and unknown to, we, the American people—none reek of madness more than nuclear weapons.

“Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds,” the father of the American atomic bomb, Robert Oppenheimer, said at the time of the first American nuclear test.

Destroyer of worlds.

This is the ever-present reality that we all live in today—that from this nexus of evil we call the military-industrial complex comes the very weapons necessary to bring the words of the Hindu sacred text that Oppenheimer quoted—the Bhagavad-Gita—to life and, in doing so, bring about our collective deaths.

Most Americans, including many of you assembled here today, live in blissful ignorance of just how close the world has come to being destroyed by Oppenheimer’s progeny.

On 26 September 1983, a Soviet Officer, **Lieutenant Colonel Petrov, was on duty at a nuclear early-warning station when the system reported that five nuclear armed missiles had been launched from the United States.**

Colonel Petrov disregarded protocol requiring him to report this detection as a factual launch, an act that would have triggered a Soviet response, and in doing so bought precious time for the error to be identified, and nuclear war averted.

In November 1983 the United States and NATO carried out a command **post exercise code-named “Able Archer 83” which tested the launch control procedures for the release of NATO nuclear weapons against Soviet and Warsaw Pact targets.**

**The Soviets, believing this exercise to be a cover for a first strike, placed its nuclear forces on high alert.** Later, the CIA assessed that the Able Archer 83 exercise brought the US and Soviets closer to nuclear conflict than any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

**And on January 25, 1995, the Soviets detected the launch of a Norwegian atmospheric test rocket that mimicked the track of a US Navy Trident submarine-launched nuclear weapon.** Fearing a high-altitude nuclear attack that could blind Russian radar, Russian nuclear forces went on high alert, and the “nuclear briefcase” was delivered to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who had to make a split-second decision whether to launch a retaliatory nuclear strike against the United States.

### **The Lethality of Nuclear Weapons: Nuclear War has No Winner**

These three incidents underscore the razor’s edge we all walk daily when it comes to living in a world where nuclear weapons exist. **One mistake, one error or judgement, and the Bhagavad-Gita becomes reality.**

We were saved from the inevitability of our collective demise by one thing, and one thing only—arms control. **The deployment into Europe by both the US and Soviet Union of intermediate-range nuclear armed missiles in the 1980’s only increased the possibility of a mistake or misunderstanding that could trigger a nuclear conflict.** The fact that these weapons could reach their respective target in five minutes or less once launched meant that

the 30–40-minute buffer of time that existed regarding the use of strategic nuclear forces was no longer there.

To put it more starkly, if it were not for the implementation of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty in 1988 that eliminated these new and dangerous weapons, the January 25, 1995 atmospheric rocket incident would have more than likely resulted in a general nuclear war, simply for the fact that Boris Yeltsin would have been denied the luxury of time to decide not to launch his missiles.

Everyone standing here today should reflect on this statement and say a quiet word of thanks to those men and women, American and Soviet alike, who made the intermediate nuclear forces treaty a reality and, in doing so, literally saved the world from nuclear destruction.

### **Arms control, however, is no longer part of the US-Russian dialogue.**

The American war machine has conspired to denigrate the notion of mutually beneficial disarmament in the minds of the American public, instead seeking to use arms control as a mechanism to achieve unilateral strategic advantage.

When an arms control treaty becomes inconvenient to the objective of American global domination, then the war machine simply quits. America's record in this regard is damnable—the anti-ballistic missile treaty, the intermediate nuclear forces treaty, the open-skies treaty—all relegated to the trash bin of history in the cause of seeking unilateral advantage for the American war machine.

In a world without arms control, we will once again be confronted with a renewed arms race where each side develops weapons that protect nothing while threatening everything. Without arms control, we will return to a time where living on the edge of the abyss of imminent nuclear annihilation was the norm, not the exception.

The war machine has allowed the principled position of peaceful coexistence regulated by mutually beneficial treaties governed by the time-tested maxim of trust but verify to be replaced by a new posture defined by a war machine that uses the nuclear weapons establishment, and the billions of dollars it costs to maintain it annually, as a means of buying off politicians at the expense of the population our government is sworn to protect. This is the final corruption of the military-industrial complex—its conversion to the military-industrial-congressional complex, where we the people are excluded from every consideration, whether it be funding or consequence.

The key to sustaining this inherently un-American mechanism is the ability of the military-industrial-congressional complex—the war machine—to generate fear amongst the American people derived from ignorance of the true nature of the threat or threats these nuclear weapons are designed to address.

In the case of US-Russian relations, this fear is produced by systemic Russophobia imposed on the American public by a war machine and its compliant minions in the mainstream media. Left to its own device, the collusion between government and media will only further reinforce ignorance-based fear through a process of dehumanizing Russia and the Russian people in the eyes of the American public, until we have become desensitized to the lies and distortions, accepting at face value anything negative said about Russia.

It is here, in such a situation, that we can turn to scripture, John 8:32, for some guidance:

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

But what truth? The truth as told by the government? As promulgated by the mainstream media? That is no truth, but rather a bodyguard of lies constructed on behalf of a war machine that wants every American to accept without question the legitimacy of weapons the only known utility of which is the destruction of all mankind.

Some 60 years ago, on these very steps, in this very place, a man of peace gave a speech that captured the imagination of the nation and the world, searing into our collective hearts and minds the words, “I have a dream.”

Dr. Martin Luther King’s historic address confronted America’s sordid history of slavery, and the inhumanity and injustice of racial segregation. In it, he dreamed “that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

All men are created equal.

These words resonated in the context of America’s desperate internal struggle with the legacy of slavery and racial injustice.

But these words apply equally, especially when taken in the context that we are all God’s children, black, white, rich, poor.

American.

Russian.

You see, I too have a dream.

That the audience gathered here today can find a way to overcome the ignorance-based fears generated by the disease of Russophobia, to open our minds and our hearts to accept the Russian people as fellow human beings deserving of the same compassion and consideration as our fellow Americans—as all humankind.

I too have a dream.

That we the people of the United States of America, can unite in common cause with the Russian people to build bridges of peace that facilitate an exchange of ideas, open minds closed by the hate-filled rhetoric of Russophobia that is promulgated by the war machine and its allies, and allow the love we have for ourselves to manifest itself into love and respect for our fellow man.

Especially those who live in Russia.

Newton’s Third Law, that every action has an equal and opposite reaction, applies to the human condition every bit as much as it applies to the physical world.

Love thy neighbour as thyself is applicable to all humanity.

I too have a dream.

That by overcoming the hate generated by systemic Russophobia we can work with our fellow human beings in Russia to create communities of compassion that, when united, make a world filled with nuclear weapons undesirable, and policies built on the principles of mutually beneficial arms control second nature.

I too have a dream.

That one day, whether on the red hills of Georgia, or the black soil of the Kuban, the sons and daughters of the men and women who today operate the Russian and American nuclear arsenals will be able to quote Dr. King, “to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”

This is not an impossible dream.

I have lived it. I once was corrupted by the hatred that comes from fear generated by the ignorance about the reality of those whom I was trained to kill.

But I then embarked on a remarkable journey of discovery, facilitated by the implementation of the very same intermediate nuclear forces treaty that ended up saving humanity from nuclear annihilation, where I came to know the Russian people not as enemy, but as friend. Not as opponent, but colleague. As fellow humans capable of the same emotions as myself, imbued with the same human desire to build a better world for themselves and their loved ones, a world free of the tyranny of nuclear weapons.

I too have a dream.

That the people gathered here today will join me on a new journey of discovery, one that tears down the walls of ignorance and fear constructed by the war machine, walls designed to separate us from our fellow human beings in Russia, and instead builds bridges that connect us to those we have been conditioned to hate, but now—for the sake of ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren—must learn to love.

This will not be an easy journey, but it is one worth taking.

This is my journey, your journey, our journey, where we will embark, literally, down the road less travelled.

And yes, it will be the one that will make all the difference.

It will take us, as Dr. King once cried out from these very steps, to the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire, the mighty mountains of New York, the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania, the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado, the curvaceous slopes of California...to every hill and molehill of Mississippi.

This is an American journey—a journey of Americans, united in the cause of peace and justice, and a world free from the tyranny of nuclear weapons. Our numbers will grow, from two thousand, to twenty thousand, from twenty thousand to a hundred thousand, and from a hundred thousand to a million or more.

And who knows? Maybe in June of 2024, on the anniversary of the 1982 gathering of a million people in New York City’s Central Park, where they rallied in favor of nuclear disarmament and an end to the nuclear arms race, we can come together and send a similar message to the war machine.

A million people or more demanding that their government act in a manner that preserves and protects the lives and future of all Americans—of all humanity.

The 1982 rally set in motion events that led to the implementation of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty in 1987—a treaty that literally saved the world from nuclear destruction.

I too have a dream.

That together, we can harness the same energy, the same vision, the same passion as those who have gone before us and create a movement of people united in the principles of peace that will lead to a future arms control agreement between the United States and Russia that will preserve our collective futures.

There will be forces that will try to disrupt us, to dissuade us—to destroy us.

We cannot allow ourselves to be intimidated.

We must not go gently into that good night, but instead rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Rage, rage against the war machine.

Rage, rage so that together we may breathe life into the words of President Lincoln inscribed on the memorial behind me:

“...to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Let us get to work.

Thank you.