



PRIMER:

TRANSNATIONAL WEAPONS CORPORATIONS

RESIST US-LED WAR MOVEMENT
RESISTUSLEDWARMOVEMENT.COM



TRANSNATIONAL WEAPONS CORPORATIONS

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May 20, 2022

WHAT ARE W-TNCS

Transnational weapons companies (W-TNCs) are corporations with global operations overseeing and gaining profits from the industrial mass production of high-tech weapons of war. They are private and sometimes state-owned companies, though all of them exist to profit from arming and re-arming state militaries to use in their wars against other countries or their own people. In short, war brings the demand for what they supply.

A list of the top 30 W-TNCs (in weapons sales) is found on the next page, though historically and to this day the five most powerful companies in the world are Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon Technologies, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, all centered in the US.

Most W-TNCs make a percentage of their profits from selling non-weapons related products, as shown in the list, but this does not make them any less complicit in the human rights violations and war crimes undertaken by aggressive state forces using their products. Examples of these atrocities can be found in other materials on US wars of aggression and US-led military alliances by the Resist US-Led War Movement. This primer will focus on the nature of W-TNCs and their relationship to US-led war and militarism in general.

HISTORY OF W-TNCS

The billions of dollars in profits listed on the next page testifies to the leading role W-TNCs have secured in the political and economic system throughout their history. The history of W-TNCs is as old as modern imperialism itself, though warfare itself predates both by millenia. From the start of human civilization, humans have crafted weapons for hunting and warfare, with the technological level rising alongside the changing relations of production and societal organization.

What began as small bands producing knives, clubs, bow and arrows from stone, wood and animal products as equal individuals of a clan for communal use transitioned to class-stratified societies with artisan producers overseeing apprentice workers in handicraft production of bronze, iron and steel weapons and eventual gunpowder weapons for heads of state and their armies. Until the 19th century, the closest examples of state-owned mass-producing corporations were the ship-producing Venetian Arsenal and the imperial ironworks of China.

The first modern weapons companies in the late 19th century began supplying the militaries of their home states (predominantly Britain, Germany and the US) with breech-loading rifles and warships. This signaled the first international arms sales, with British Elswick Ordnance Company selling surplus rifles to other states and eventual warships as far as Japan. This also signaled the bloody start of industrial warfare as the US and European imperial states rapidly expanded their colonial possessions overseas and unleashed rapid firepower weapons upon colonized peoples, each other's people and, when deemed necessary, their own people. This expansionist warfare laid the basis for the modern arms industry

Lack of state regulation of the arms trade leading up to World War 1 was reversed after the carnage of that first inter-imperialist war but would not last long. Germany, Italy and Japan greatly increased their weapons production in preparation for World War 2 and were matched and eventually surpassed by the combined efforts of the US, Britain and the Soviet Union. This was the deadliest and widest-reaching war in history, with the use of aerial bombing, chemical weapons and the only two times nuclear weapons have been used in war. It also mobilized whole masses of the population in weapons production, with the Soviet people working tirelessly through the nights, the people of the colonies and concentration camps put to forced labor and the US boasting of itself as the "arsenal of democracy", bringing down the mass unemployment of the Great Depression.

Unemployment in the US returned fast after the close of the war despite the US emerging as the top capitalist superpower, and its "democracy" became exported around the world in wars of counter-revolution. With new, permanent forms of "asymmetrical warfare" becoming the norm for the US war machine, even US President Eisenhower famously warned of the dangers of the military-industrial complex of endless war-making by states to feed an endlessly expanding for-profit weapons industry. This would not cease as the US would use arms exports as a tool to advance political influence around the world during the Cold War.

TOP 30 WEAPONS COMPANIES IN 2021

Rank	Name	Base country	2020 weapons revenue (in millions)	2020 total revenue (in millions)	Revenue from weapons	Private or State owned
1	Lockheed Martin	US	\$62,562.00	\$65,398.00	96%	Private
2	Raytheon Technologies	US	\$42,000.00	\$65,000.00	65%	Private
3	Boeing	US	\$32,400.00	\$58,158.00	56%	Private
4	Northrop Grumman	US	\$31,400.00	\$36,799.00	85%	Private
5	General Dynamics	US	\$29,800.00	\$37,900.00	79%	Private
6	Aviation Industry Corporation of China	China	\$25,468.59	\$67,911.42	38%	State owned
7	BAE Systems	United Kingdom	\$23,502.38	\$24,739.35	95%	Private
8	China North Industries Group Corporation	China	\$15,249.27	\$70,303.18	22%	State owned
9	L3 Harris Technologies	US	\$14,936.00	\$18,194.00	82%	Private
10	China State Shipbuilding Corporation	China	\$13,379.35	\$66,911.23	20%	State owned
11	China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation	China	\$12,060.26	\$37,702.80	32%	State owned
12	Airbus	Netherlands / France	\$12,004.28	\$56,970.41	21%	Private
13	Leonardo	Italy	\$11,173.33	\$15,306.40	73%	Partly state-owned
14	China South Industries Group Corporation	China	\$10,697.68	\$34,499.29	31%	State owned
15	China Electronics Technology Group	China	\$10,465.75	\$33,977.45	31%	State owned

Rank	Name	Base country	2020 weapons revenue (in millions)	2020 total revenue (in millions)	Revenue from weapons	Private or State owned
16	Thales	France	\$9,228.36	\$19,391.53	48%	Private
17	Huntington Ingalls Industries	US	\$8,654.37	\$9,361.00	92%	Private
18	China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation	China	\$8,305.92	\$38,804.45	21%	State owned
19	Leidos	US	\$7,341.00	\$12,300.00	60%	Private
20	Almaz-Antey	Russia	\$6,066.31	\$6,600.93	92%	State owned
21	Honeywell	US	\$5,826.00	\$32,637.00	18%	Private
22	Booz Allen Hamilton	US	\$5,470.21	\$7,858.94	70%	Private
23	Amentum	US	\$5,000.00	\$6,600.00	76%	Private
24	Edge Group	United Arab Emirates	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	100%	State-owned
25	Rolls-Royce	United Kingdom	\$4,863.94	#15,092.33	32%	Private
26	Safran	France	\$4,707.20	\$18,831.10	25%	Private
27	General Electric	US	\$4,386.00	\$79,619.00	6%	Private
28	Hanwha	South Korea	\$4,293.68	\$6,907.81	62%	Private
29	Rheinmetall	Germany	\$4,249.50	\$6,705.82	63%	Private
30	Elbit Systems	Israel	\$4,222.70	\$4,662.60	91%	Private

SOURCE: DEFENSE NEWS

The influx of arms into Africa and Asia since the 19th century became a political and business weapon to control the balance of power in countries where developed nations had corporate interests. The Third World weaponry explosion happened from 1978 to 1985 when governments ordered \$258 billion worth of arms and ammunition, including 13,960 tanks and self-propelled artillery, 27,605 armored personnel carriers, 4,005 supersonic aircraft, and 34,948 surface-to-air missiles.

Arms transfers continue to be used as bargaining chips for influence by imperialist states, especially the US that currently leads the world in arms exports. The continued use of private weapons companies led to the expansion of global supply chains of production and distribution, birthing the W-TNCs of today. These W-TNCs not only supply the majority of weapons globally but currently lead entire fields of technological innovation from quantum computing to space exploration as imperialist states seek to lay their claim to new territories of outer space and cyberspace itself. W-TNCs have thus become a crucial tool of imperialism.

W-TNCS AND IMPERIALISM

While privately owned W-TNCs hold much of the same economic freedom as other capitalist corporations, their sales are heavily regulated by the dominant states that sign off on and direct sales based on geopolitical strategy. Sales and “military aid” packages are encouraged for fascist governments that use them against their own people in ways that serve imperialist foreign policy. In a self-fulfilling cycle, W-TNC products are used in wars of aggression in order to lay claim to more land and labor power for control of more production, including the production of even more weapons. This cycle is illustrated on page 8.

Not all W-TNCs are private entities. Some of them are fully or partially state-owned, such as the Chinese companies listed on the top-30 list and others like Russia’s Almaz-Antey, the UAE’s EDGE Group and the Israeli Aerospace Industries. Other examples include the Italian government’s 30% ownership of Leonardo’s stock, making it the largest company shareholder. However, state ownership on its own does not increase or decrease an imperialist or imperialist-client state’s control over its domestic W-TNCs, nor the power to accumulate profits and direct operations of their corporate executives. This merely reflects a similar phenomenon of capitalist development of states with differing political systems and does not change the imperialist nature of W-TNCs themselves. Private Israeli company Elbit Systems was born from the acquisition of the formerly state-owned Israeli Military Industries, and 3 state-owned companies make it to the top 10 of the top-30 list. Page 5

The US government, overseeing the most expansive and aggressive military presence in the world today, regulates the transfer of weapons to its allies and client states under the following legal framework:

- **Foreign Military Financing:** Providing grants under the Arms Export Control Act that are used to buy equipment produced in the US at the expense of US taxpayers. This is often what is referred to as “foreign military aid” as it is at no cost to the recipient.
- **Foreign Military Sales:** US government program for transferring equipment already owned by the US military paid for by the purchaser.
- **Direct Commercial Sales:** Sale between W-TNC and foreign purchaser following US export laws. The US State Department must approve of each foreign sale.

While each of these weapons transfers utilizes the US government in different ways and charges the cost to either US or recipient country taxpayers, the common factor is that US geopolitical strategy is served and W-TNCs are rewarded with profits under every option.

HOW W-TNCS GET THEIR PROFITS

Like in any industry, the profits of W-TNCs would be non-existent without the mobilization of vast amounts of labor power on an international scale through a global supply chain fully controlled by the W-TNCs themselves via a corporate subsidiary network. The price value of W-TNC products is determined primarily by the labor employed at each stage of production and secondarily by the fluctuations of inflation, import/export laws and other market elements. This transnational production system only works when labor costs are as low as possible, which is why W-TNCs procure their labor from countries with the lowest worker protection laws, which conveniently are often the areas most rich in the required natural resources.

Workers employed in mining operations provide the extraction of metals, rare earth minerals and petroleum by-products. Modern mass production of the arms industry requires enormous amounts of these minerals at a cheap price and consistently rapid pace, leading to the severe exploitation of mine workers globally. The most glaring examples are included on page 8. Given the value based on mineral extraction by W-TNCs, local states often base their armed forces in mining and oil-producing areas leading to increased militarization and attacks against local communities, in particular women and land defenders, as seen near the Congolese cobalt mines and Canadian tar sand oil fields.

Mining products are shipped to factories for manufacturing such as chemical engineering, casting and electrical engineering. Final assembly of all these components occurs in specialized factories to produce the finished weapons of war.

The desire of militaries to maximize “command and control” of battlefields leads W-TNCs to push the limits of society’s technological capacity as imperialists strive to stake their claim to the new domains opening up in both digital and outer space. Software engineers and Research and Development staff are sought after from the leading universities. Decades of broken promises for nuclear non-proliferation lie behind the US’s continued research and production of nuclear warheads for itself and its allies, forcing non-allies states like China, Russia and North Korea to keep up with the US-led proliferation in order to keep the world at a nuclear stalemate.

This resource-heavy and labor-intensive process explains the high price tags attached to these weapons of war, as shown on the following three pages.

The immense value of these weapons can only be realized once they are sold as products to consumers. Yet W-TNC customers are not everyday citizens but entire state militaries. Product advertisement therefore isn’t to get new customers, it’s to show off products and compete with each other on the market, since these states highly regulate who can do business with them. In addition to state militaries, private military contractors are permitted to purchase W-TNC products on the open market as well. Websites, TV commercials, billboards and other advertisements serve this purpose along with major weapons expositions.

Finally, W-TNCs are awarded even more capital from external investors looking to make their own profit through dividends. Stocks are sold to shareholders and some corporations also directly invest. A more subtle form of investment takes place when an asset management company seeks to grow a fund it manages by investing in many different companies, often without the knowledge of stakeholders. This is how pension funds, educational endowments and other funds become invested in W-TNCs, therefore contributing to their profit-making. Asset managers such as BlackRock, State Street and Vanguard are prominent culprits.

SOURCES OF W-TNC PROFITS

EXTRACTION

Includes iron, copper, nickel, gold, aluminum, bauxite, cobalt, silicon, sulfur, uranium, titanium and many other minerals, including rubber and oil drilling for petroleum by-products.

One of the most glaring examples is in the sulfur mines of Indonesia where exposure to sulfur rock causes painful skin irritation and inhalation of sulfur dioxide fumes leads to chronic respiratory illness.



Others include the nickel mines of the Philippines in which open-pit mining drains chemical fluids into nearby homes, churches and even farmland creating a permanently toxic environment of rising birth defects and cancer cases; and the uranium mines of Niger, Namibia, South Africa, Canada and the Southwest US where primarily indigenous communities are daily exposed to dangerous levels of radioactivity without care or compensation from the W-TNCs involved.

NORTHROP GRUMMAN

LOCKHEED MARTIN

BOEING

Elbit Systems

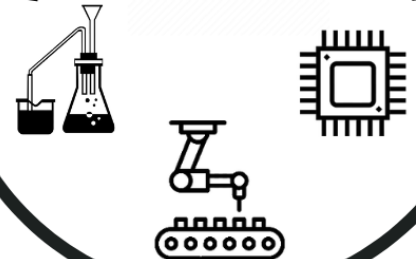
GENERAL DYNAMICS

Raytheon Technologies

WEAPONS PRODUCTS



MANUFACTURING



SOFTWARE AND R+D

Computer programmers, software engineers and applied physicists are sought after from the leading universities worldwide to program auto-pilot and targeting systems along with research into artificial intelligence and quantum computing. Additional research into cyberwarfare, hypersonic and directed energy (laser) weapons and space technology demonstrates how W-TNCs in fact lead research of the entire tech sector to ensure imperialists are well armed to stake their claim to the new domains opening up in both digital and outer space.

SOFTWARE AND R+D



MANUFACTURING

Chemical engineering transforms crude oil, sulfur, isolated nitrogen and other base products into jet fuel, explosives, rubber for tires, heat-resistance coating and other chemical components. Casting facilities produce steel, aluminum, carbon fiber and other physical components. Electrical engineering creates the copper wiring, the silicon wafers and copper plating for circuit boards and other semiconductors and electrical components.

BOEING: APACHE HELICOPTER



PRICE

\$50-\$180
million

Top-line war helicopter on the market, with machine guns firing **625 rounds a minute**, 16 air-to-ground **Hellfire Missiles**, an air-to-air **swarm missile system**, radar and infrared targeting and even **cyber-warfare capabilities** for jamming other craft



LOCKHEED MARTIN: HELLFIRE MISSILE



PRICE

\$150,000
per unit

Air-to-ground missile for drones and other aircraft that contains its own **laser-guided targeting computer**. Each of these labor and resource-intensive computers is **built to be destroyed upon impact**.



HYUNDAI: K-2 BLACK PANTHER TANK



PRICE

\$8.5 million

World's most expensive tank, containing a **120mm cannon**, **1,500 horsepower engine** and adjustable suspension for **water travel**.



NEWPORT NEWS: USS GERALD FORD



PRICE

\$13.3 billion

1,092-foot long aircraft carrier and naval warship, containing **11 magnetized elevators**, top-line **digital sensors** and capacity for holding **90 aircraft** and housing **2,600 crew**. Most expensive warship in the world.

We don't want
your wars!
U.S. out of
Asia-Pacific!

- ILPS PHILIPPINES -

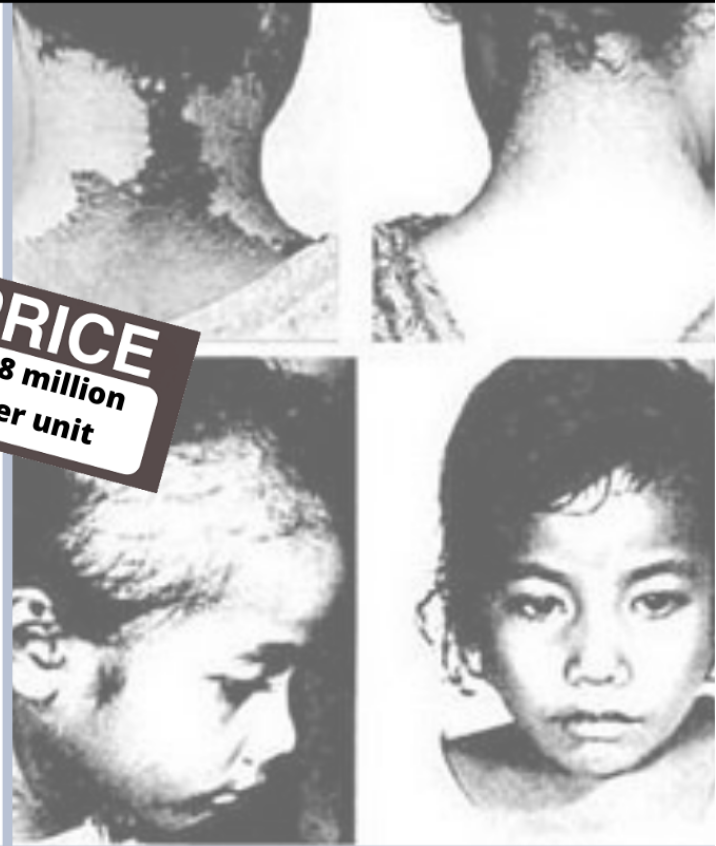
VARIOUS COMPANIES: B61 NUCLEAR BOMB



PRICE

\$28 million
per unit

340-400 kiloton thermonuclear bomb with the capability of **wiping out whole cities** with a single use. Each one is part of an **ever-growing weapons system of mass destruction** pointed at every corner of the world that has only been used twice in history, both times by **the US**.



HOW W-TNCS EXERCISE THEIR POWER

W-TNCs, like all transnational corporations, are headed by the most powerful class of monopoly capitalists in the world. A profile of the top 5 of them is included pm the next page. This class's power is already tied inexorably to the US government and all other imperialist states. But there are very specific ways this power is maintained and exercised.

W-TNC board members and executives find their way into government positions, often through influential relationships or even backroom deals. On one hand, some achieve positions as executive secretaries or even generals where they can make military decisions that determine the need for more weapons purchases. A profile of these is included at the back of this primer. On another hand, some run for legislative office where they have decision-making power over budgets for military spending. If they are not directly voted in, lobbyists hired by W-TNCs work to influence this decision making. Nearly \$104 million was spent on defense lobbying within the US in 2020 while over \$46 million was given in direct donation to US legislators from W-TNCs in the same year. Looking at the value-creation process from the previous section of this primer, it is no wonder the industry can afford this.

To ensure the influence of W-TNCs in the world's leading universities to funnel students into military STEM R+D (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Research and Development), W-TNC executives find their way onto school boards, deanships and teaching positions.

Finally, W-TNCs work extra hard to maintain influence over large investment institutions. Banks provide large amounts of capital, and so both W-TNC executives and the government officials they are close with work their way onto the boards of the biggest banks and in the social circles of bank owners. Stock traders on the New York, London, Tokyo and other major Stock Exchanges make millions off investing in the weapons industry. Stock prices for the top five W-TNCs increased by close to and even higher than 1,000% during the 20-year US occupation of Afghanistan. It is no wonder then why many upper class social circles are an eclectic mix made up of weapons producers, government officials, bankers and stock traders all looking to meet their bottom line.

TOP 5 WEAPONS COMPANY CEOS

Name	Company	2021 Salary
Jim Taiclet	Lockheed Martin	\$23 million+
Dave Calhoun	Boeing	\$21 million+
Gregory Hayes	Raytheon	\$23 million+
Kathy Warden	Northrop Grumman	\$20 million+
Phebe Novakovic	General Dynamics	\$18 million+

US government and military officials serving or have served on boards or executive positions of weapons companies

Name	US government position	W-TNC position
Lloyd Austin	Current Secretary of Defense	Board member of Raytheon
James Mattis	Former Secretary of Defense	Board member of General Dynamics
Patrick Shanahan	Former Interim Secretary of Defense	Vice CEO of Boeing
Robert Work	Former Deputy Secretary of Defense	Board member of Raytheon
Joseph Dunford Jr.	Former Marine Corps General	Board member of Lockheed Martin
Cecil Haney	Former Navy Admiral	Board member of General Dynamics
Mark Welsh III	Former Air Force General	Board member of Northrop Grumman
Tom Pickering	Former Undersecretary of State	Vice President of International Relations for Boeing

HOW TO FIGHT W-TNCS

As has been shown, W-TNCs hold massive amounts of power over governments and the global economy through the military-industrial complex. But they are not invincible and can be challenged by a mass movement against US-led war and militarism. Here are some ways that W-TNCs can be challenged creatively by peoples' organizations.

Divest and cut institutional ties with W-TNCs! While ultimately amounting to a miniscule percentage of their capital, the investments from various public and private institutions that W-TNCs procure play a stronger role in morally justifying their operations. The most common institutions that invest in this way are universities through their endowments and government treasuries through their public funds.

University endowments and public funds (such as pensions) invest in W-TNCs with the intention of growing their assets. But this uses public money that stakeholders like students and public workers have a legal say in. We must demand that these funds be divested from W-TNCs, and therefore divested from war and militarism.

Aside from investments, universities maintain internships and other programs with W-TNCs, often presented as educational opportunities. These must be exposed as part of the school-to-industry pipeline that co-opts STEM education for recruitment into W-TNCs.

Challenge weapons sales and military assistance! Aggressive wars cannot be waged without the weapons supplied by W-TNCs. Once a company makes a sale, it acts as if its hands are clean in how its products are used. Challenging these sales to repressive regimes is therefore a tool to delegitimize them. This can be done by highlighting the human rights abuses and war crimes of the regimes or militaries that are purchasing weapons or being awarded them through foreign military assistance.

End imperialist wars and expansion! War creates the demand for all W-TNC products. It is therefore inconceivable to fight W-TNCs without dismantling the military-industrial complex itself by struggling militantly against the war-making of the US and the alliances it leads. In the broader scheme of movement building, actions taken against W-TNCs are a tactic to further expose the US-led wars that utilize their weapons.

An international movement against war must challenge all aspects of militarism, including wars of aggression, overseas bases, joint military exercises, weapons tests, sanctions and other forms of economic warfare, arming of fascist and fascist-leaning puppet regimes, domestic police violence in imperialist countries and other forms of reactionary state violence and big-power posturing in the world.

The Resist US-Led War Movement has and will continue to provide informational materials on each of these aspects of anti-war campaigns.



ABOUT RESIST US-LED WAR MOVEMENT

The Resist US-Led War Movement is a broad global network that unites around the manifesto "For a Just Peace, Resist US-Led War" drafted at the Solidarity and Fightback: Building Resistance to US-led War, Militarism, and Neofascism Conference that took place August 5-7, 2017 at the University of Toronto. The conference gathered over 250 peace activists from 21 countries. The network aims to go beyond the participants of the conference and contribute towards strengthening a global mass movement against US-led imperialist war and militarism by encouraging coordination and cooperation amongst anti-war and peace groups across the globe.

We want to build solidarity with you against US-Led War! Follow us on social media @ResistUSLedWar, email us at resistusledwarmovement@gmail.com. Visit our website resistusledwarmovement.com to learn more and sign the manifesto to join!