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# **VOICE OF REVOLUTION**

**Publication of the U.S. Marxist-Leninist Organization**

April 7, 2017

USMLO 3942 N. Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60634



**usmlo.org**

## ALL U.S. TROOPS HOME NOW

### **Demonstrate to Demand Hands Off Syria! No to Criminal Air Strikes**

Demonstrations are being organized across the country April 7-9 to reject the U.S. bombing of Syria April 6 and U.S. claims that the criminal aggression is for humanitarian purposes. In cities large and

small, people are mobilizing against the U.S. attacks and the danger of far broader war in the region. Given the refugee crisis and famine already imposed by U.S. wars, there is

**Hands Off Syria • 3**



**Hands Off Syria : 1-12**

## NO TO KEY RESOLVE/FOAL EAGLE WAR GAMES

### **Oppose U.S. Plans for Pre-Emptive Strikes Against the DPRK**

Just days before Trump bombed Syria, his administration openly threatened to take unilateral military action against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The administration

is openly talking about placing U.S. nuclear weapons in south Korea and organizing Black Ops to assassinate the DPRK's leader Kim Jung-Un and sabotage key civilian

**No to War Against Korea • 13**



**No to War Against Korea : 13-15**

## EDUCATE TO CHANGE THE WORLD

### **Refuse Testing and “Personalized Learning” — Tools of Control and War**

Hundreds of thousands of students, parents and teachers across the country are refusing state standardized testing. While the specific tests vary from state to state, they have in common their

harmful impact on students and education in general. This is done not only through the narrowing of curriculum, including elimination of music, art, history, social studies;

**Educate to Change the World • 16**



**Educate to Change the World: 16-24**

**ALL OUT FOR MAY DAY: A DAY WITH NO WORK, NO SCHOOL!**

## April edition of **Voice of Revolution**

### **Editorials & Statements**

- *Demonstrate to Demand Hands Off Syria! No to Criminal Air Strikes.....* 1
- *Oppose U.S. Plans for Pre-Emptive Strikes Against the DPRK .....* 1
- *Refuse Testing and “Personalized Learning” — Tools of Control and War.....* 1

### **Hands Off Syria**

- *Fight for an Anti-War Government .....* 3
- *Stop the U.S. Bombing of Syria! .....* 4
- *Resist War! Call for National Actions .....* 6
- *U.S. Guilty of War Crimes and Crimes Against the Peace .....* 6
- *Stand of Syrian President and Legislative Assembly .....* 9
- *Russian President and Officials on U.S. Bombing .....* 9
- *Stand of U.S. Government.....* 10
- *Deputy Prime Minister of Syria Says Army Did Not and Will Not Use  
Chemical Weapons Even Against Terrorists.....* 11
- *Information Provided by Russian Defense Ministry .....* 12

### **No to War Against Korea**

- *Strengthening the Fight Against U.S. THAAD Deployment in Korea —  
National Speaking Tour.....* 14

### **Refuse Testing and “Personalized Learning”**

- *Opt Out 2017: Refusing Education as a Police Power .....* 17
- *Adding Tech Concerns to the Conversation .....* 18
- *Personalized Learning: A Threat to Education .....* 19
- *Stop! Read This, Opt Out and Oppose Digital Curriculum  
and Data-Mining .....* 20
- *Digital Curriculum: Questions Parents Should Be Asking.....* 22
- *ABCs of Classrooms at Risk: Expand #OPTOUT .....* 22

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I • Hands Off Syria

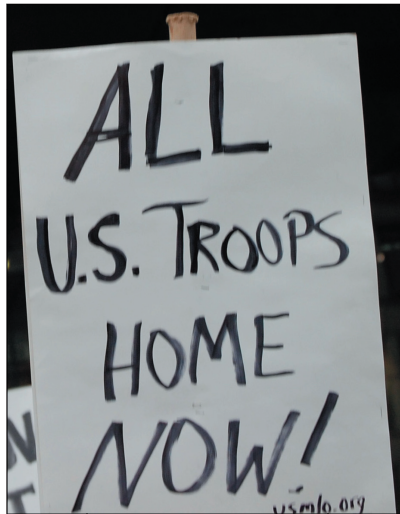
broad rejection of U.S. attempts to justify its aggression in the name of “protecting” civilians in Syria. Taking its stand to contribute to peace and unite with the people of Syria, the movement is firm in demanding *Hands Off Syria! All U.S. Troops Home Now!*

The U.S. launched its criminal attack against Syrian military targets on April 6. Sixty Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles were launched from U.S. destroyers far from home in the eastern Mediterranean Sea. They targeted aircraft, aircraft shelters, fuel and other storage, ammunition, air defense systems, and radar at the Shayrat Airfield in Homs province, about 20 miles from the city of Homs.

The airfield has played a significant role in the Syrian army’s recent battles against ISIS in central, northern and eastern Syria to liberate cities, including Palmyra, Raqqa and Deir Ezzor. Talal al-Barazi, Governor of Homs told media that casualties included the deaths of five soldiers and nine civilians, four of them children from nearby villages hit by U.S. missiles.

Imperialist president Donald Trump used the pretext of deaths due to the April 4 use of chemical weapons on civilians, which he blamed on Syrian President Bashir Al Assad, to launch the attack. It is reported that the chemical weapons belonged to forces in the pay of the Anglo-American imperialists. They were released when the Syrian armed forces bombed what they thought was an arms depot of the terrorists — an airstrike that the Russians told the U.S. military would take place.

It is increasingly evident that terrorist groups used the chemical weapons as part of a deliberate provocation to blame the Syrian president. Without waiting for an investigation on who used the chemical weapons, the Trump administration declared the Syrian government guilty and targeted the airfield from



which the Syrians launched their attack on the arms depot.

The cruise missile attack comes after 1,000 U.S. ground troops invaded the country in the past weeks with another 1,500 expected to enter in the near future. On April 1, the Trump administration announced that it will no longer disclose the number of U.S. troops in Syria, which already number about 2,000.

Trump is acting to block any peaceful, political resolution of the conflict in Syria, by the Syrians themselves. The bombing is also an attempt to unite the military bureaucracy while striving to gain support among the people in the U.S. for more U.S. aggression and crimes. On this Trump is

failing, including among those who voted for him because he had opposed invading Syria. The resistance that is developing is not along partisan lines as dictated by the rulers, but rather based on uniting all concerned to reject U.S. wars and *Bring All U.S. Troops Home Now!*

*Voice of Revolution* urges all to join the many demonstrations taking place and continue work to strengthen the antiwar movement by taking principled stands against U.S. use of force and fighting for an antiwar government. We condemn any use of chemical weapons and targeting of civilians and call for investigations into their use so as to bring those responsible to justice, under the proper procedures prescribed under international law. We condemn U.S. terrorism, including its notorious use of chemical weapons, such as napalm, Agent Orange, white phosphorous and depleted uranium weapons. We reject all efforts to divert people from the warranted conclusions to be drawn in the current situation, including U.S. responsibility for crimes against the Syrians and all peoples of the region.

*Hands Off Syria! All U.S. Troops Home Now!*

CONSTITUTION PROVIDES NO SOLUTION

## Fight for an Anti-War Government

As people from all walks of life and various political persuasions join in rejecting U.S. war against Syria, efforts are being made to direct resistance to reliance on Congress to exercise its Constitutional authority concerning war. It is Congress that has the authority to declare war, not the president. Such calls are being put forward in part in the hopes of diverting people from reliance on their own efforts, based on a principled stand against U.S. crimes and use of force to settle problems. They fly in the face of facts on the ground, which include repeated and consistent funding by Congress for U.S. aggression and violence and massive war machine — all consistent with the common goal of U.S. rulers to maintain and expand their empire. They

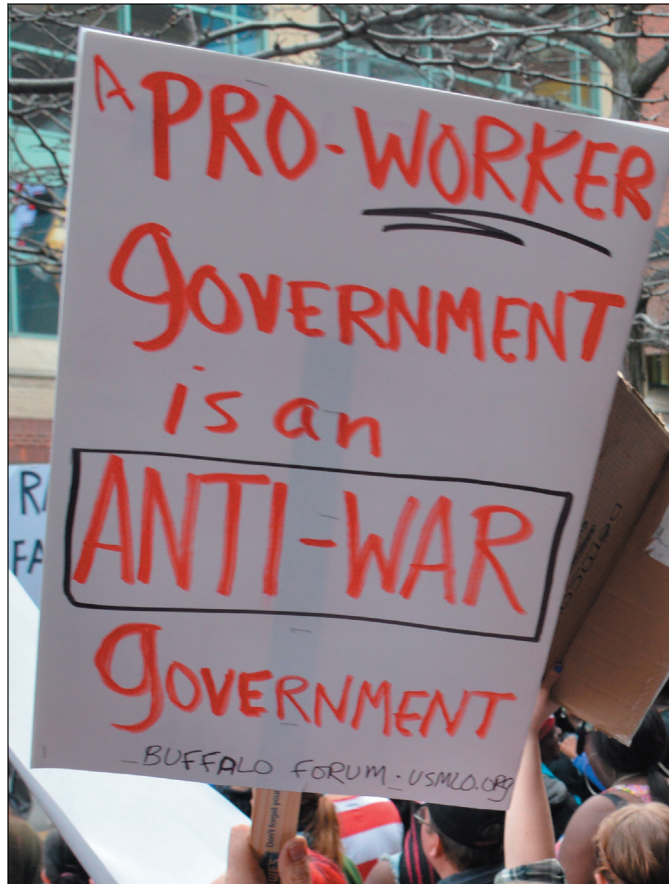
also include that Congress has not declared war since WWII — meaning all U.S. wars since then, such as against Korea, Viet Nam, Afghanistan and Iraq, Obama’s drone warfare and more, have been conducted on the basis of actions by the president. The president has long since usurped this power and Congress capitulated to these actions and continues to do so.

Further, the Constitution provides no means for holding government officials accountable for war crimes and crimes against the peace — from the president and generals on down. Indeed, the police powers of the president are enshrined in the Constitution, as part of his power to “faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States,” as his oath of office

states. The oath continues that the president will “to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States.” There is a qualifier, “to the best of my ability,” when it comes to defending the Constitution, but no such qualifier when it comes to executing the office of the president.

In the current situation, the powers of the presidency have been greatly increased and concentrated. Indeed the situation is such that a government of laws, including a functioning Congress and adherence to the Constitution, has been eliminated. What remains is a government of police powers. The Constitutional form for a government of laws may remain, but rule is by a government of police powers.

Given this reality, what is needed first and foremost is stepping up independent efforts to unite and build an anti-war government — where the demands



of the people against war and for funding rights, at home and abroad, can materialize. An antiwar government is a fitting aim, given the U.S. is a modern society with social relations that require a modern democracy. It is an aim that can unify all concerned and strengthen the independent politics of the people. Immediate steps in this direction include bringing the issue of uniting to fight for an antiwar government to the fore in the various actions against bombing Syria and upcoming May Day actions. They include organizing forums and house meetings to deliberate on the new constitution needed, one that empowers the people to govern and decide and provides the means to hold war criminals accountable. The issue of an anti-war government is not separate from the various battles being waged, it is integral to them and a central, unifying force for all concerned.

### U.S. OUT OF SYRIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST NOW!

## Stop the U.S. Bombing of Syria!

*Statement by United National Antiwar Coalition (UNAC)*

*(List of many actions at the bottom of this statement. Join an action or organize your own and let us know about your action by emailing: UNACpeace@gmail.com)*

On Thursday, April 6, the Trump administration launched 60 Cruise Tomahawk missiles from its offshore Mediterranean warships at Syria’s al-Sshayrat military airfield near Homs, Syria’s third largest city. The U.S. strikes obliterated substantial portions of Syria’s military capacity there. Trump’s action came a day after Democrat Hillary Clinton urged the U.S. bombing of Syria.

Neither Trump nor any other U.S. government agency presented a shred of proof that the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad used sarin nerve gas in its bombing of ISIS, Al Qaida or any other “rebel” groups in Syria’s Idlib province. President Assad denied using sarin gas while “Russia’s defense ministry” according to the UK-based Guardian, has stated that the chemicals were release when a Syria bombed a “rebel” arm storage facility.

### **Bomb first! Ask questions later!**

Trump and his now bi-partisan “Bomb first! Ask questions later” cohorts have ignited what could become a catastrophic escalation

in the region that poses the threat of nuclear war. Immediately before the U.S. missile attack, the Trump administration convened a bi-partisan group of 25 Democrats and 25 Republicans for a congressional briefing session. While there was no indication of opposition to the Trump attack, a few, citing the U.S. Constitution, later expressed the need for congressional debate and approval before waging war.

Employing the Obama administration’s “red line” threat of war in 2013 Trump stated, “These heinous actions by the Bashar al-Assad regime are a consequence of the past administration’s weakness and irresolution. President Obama said in 2012 that he would establish a ‘red line’ against the use of chemical weapons and then did nothing.” No doubt Trump was fully aware that Obama’s “nothing” included the continued arming, organizing, financing and training of terrorist and associated U.S.-backed groups in Syria aimed at al-Assad’s removal.

### **Corporate media beats the war drums**

The corporate media near unanimously beat the war drums to fever pitch and then hailed the bombing without the slightest inclination to investigate, not to mention demand, any facts to

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## ALL U.S. TROOPS HOME NOW

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substantiate their reflex support for Trump's monstrous deed. Indeed, and as always, when pretexts followed by war are employed to justify imperialist actions the corporate media paved the way with tragic photos of stricken and suffering children, all accompanied by unsubstantiated assertions that the Syrian government was responsible.

Few, if any, of the kept press proved capable of reporting that the 2013 sarin gas attacks in Syria, according to the research of Pulitzer Prize journalist Seymour Hersh and others, were the work not of the Syrian government but the so-called rebels in Syria, including ISIS. The latter took Obama's "red line" thesis seriously and likely proceeded to make it happen. But Obama's effort to bring on yet another U.S. war of intervention and plunder was thwarted by world opinion and massive antiwar sentiment in the U.S... Yesterday, that proved sufficient, but not today.

With Syria's U.S.-backed "coalition" including NATO and Gulf State monarchy- abetted forces compelled to retreat from most of the two-thirds of Syria that they previously occupied and terrorized, a bi-partisan consensus has now emerged in Washington that Obama's "regime change" orientation cannot be dismissed. [...]

### Need for United Antiwar Movement

The need for a united and massive U.S. antiwar movement in the streets of cities across the country has never been greater. Trump's dangerous and murderous escalation, despite his "assurance" that it is measured and "proportional," will prove to be the beginning of renewed and intensified U.S. imperialist war in Syria and the region and not the end.

We are witness to a shift in U.S. policy wherein Democrats and Republicans alike cannot brook a defeat in a war that they have fueled and promoted for almost seven years. Today's crisis-ridden world economy ruled by the one percent is compelled

to pursue and intensify its wars against working people at home and abroad.

The days ahead will prove to be a critical measure of our capacity to unite and stay the hand of the world's most dangerous super power.

Here are just a few of the protests planned across the country:

Anchorage, Alaska, April 7 - 6pm - 222 W. 7th Ave.  
Baltimore, April 7 - 8pm - Mckeldin Square  
Boston, April 7 - 5pm - Boston Common  
Boston, April 8 - 1pm - Park & Tremont  
Buffalo, April 9 - 3pm - Elmwood & Bidwell  
Chicago, April 7 - 5pm - Trump Int'l Hotel & Tower  
Cleveland, April 7 - 6pm - Cleveland Public Square  
Denver, April 7 - 5pm - State Capitol  
Detroit, April 7 - 5pm - Campus Martius Park  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida, April 8 - 4pm - Federal Courthouse  
Houston, April 7 - 5pm - Westheimer & Post Oak  
Jacksonville, Florida, April 7 - 6pm - Hemming Park  
Los Angeles, April 7 - 5pm - Pershing Square  
Minneapolis, April 8 - 3pm - Hiawatha & Lake Sts.  
Minneapolis, April 11 - 4:30pm - 1200 Washington Ave. So.  
Newark, New Jersey, April 7 - 5pm - MLK Monument  
New Haven, Connecticut, April 8 - 4pm - Church & Chapel Sts.  
New Orleans, April 11 - 5pm - Canal & N. Rampart  
New York City, April 7 - 6:30 pm - Union Square  
Philadelphia, April 7 - 4:30 to 6:30 pm - City Hall  
Richmond, Virginia, April 7 - 5pm - 700 W. Broad St.  
Salt Lake City, April 9 - 4:00 to 6:00 - Federal Bldg.  
San Francisco / Bay Area, April 7 - 5pm - Powell & Market  
Tucson, Arizona, April 7 - 4pm - Federal Building  
Washington DC - April 7 - 12 noon - Pentagon Metro Station

### HOUSTON



# Resist War! Call for National Actions

*ANSWER Coalition*

The Trump regime has just started bombing Syria. We must not fall for the lies and propaganda. Trump's war is not about democracy or humanitarian intervention. Trump's war is about U.S. superiority and domination. Just like the rest of his agenda, his attack is about increasing the profits of the billionaires.

For 16 years the U.S. has destroyed the Middle East, leading to the greatest refugee crisis in history and the rise of ISIS. More bombs are not the answer. Trump bombing Syria is a great danger to the people of the world. We must come together and resist!

The ANSWER Coalition is calling on people and organizations to mobilize nationally coordinated protests Friday at 5:00 p.m. and throughout the weekend to demand an end to the U.S. war against Syria. These protests will be taking place in cities across the country, including Washington, D.C., at the White House.

It is noteworthy that in the hours before Trump ordered military strikes on Syria, Hillary Clinton emerged back into the public spotlight to demand that Trump carry out military strikes against Syria. The Trump-led Republican Party and the Democrats will now reunite on the basis of a new U.S. war in the Middle East.

Again, following a tried and true script, U.S. imperialist military actions against an independent, sovereign Middle Eastern government takes place under the pretext of protecting civilians from weapons of mass destruction.

The hypocrisy of the war-mongering politicians and media is astounding. The United States has been bombing Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere daily, killing hundreds of civilians in Mosul, Iraq in one attack alone. Scores of families, including their children, were murdered by U.S. bombs. The U.S. media has been virtually silent about this crime.

In March, the Pentagon carried out 70 bombings of Yemen, more than in all of 2016, and continues to provide the bombs and bombers for the genocidal Saudi-led war on that country.

Now, the U.S. government is bombing the secular government of Bashar al-Assad at the moment that the Syrian national army was defeating al-Qaeda, the so-called Islamic State and other terrorist armed organizations. The Syrian government denies using chemical weapons. Instead of bombing first and asking



questions later, should there not be an objective investigation into the facts?

Again, the U.S. government describes its war motives as humanitarian. Again, the U.S. government asserts that the targeted government possesses and has used weapons of mass destruction as the rationale for another bombing campaign.

At this point, every person in the United States should assume that the U.S. government, the Pentagon, and the CIA are lying when they seek to justify this new military aggression.

Let us not forget that the U.S. government insisted that it was required to go to war in Iraq to prevent the government of Saddam Hussein from using weapons of mass destruction. No such weapons existed in 2003. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis died, tens of thousands of American troops suffered life-changing injuries or were killed, and the country of Iraq was fragmented, allowing ISIS to come into existence.

Trump's military strikes against Syria pose a grave danger of escalating into a regional or even global confrontation. The Syrian government, in its battle against al-Qaeda, ISIS and other armed groups, has the support of Russia and Iran.

The ANSWER Coalition is calling on people and organizations to mobilize nationally coordinated protests Friday at 5:00 p.m. and throughout the weekend to demand an end to the U.S. war against Syria. These protests will be taking place in cities across the country, including Washington, D.C., at the White House.

## U.S. Guilty of War Crimes and Crimes Against the Peace

The U.S. intervention in Syria violates the UN Charter and as such is illegal. Syria has not attacked the United States. The U.S. cannot claim self-defense and the action is not authorized by the Security Council of the United Nations. Despite not conforming to international or U.S. law, Trump is saying the attack is a moral imperative to stop a brutal dictator they say has used chemical weapons against the Syrian people. They are reporting as a fact that

the Syrian government is responsible for the use of some form of chemical weapon against the population in Khan Sheikhun in Idlib province on April 4. The attack is reported to have killed at least 70 people. This is the pretext for the latest criminal U.S. air strikes against Syria on the night of April 6.

A main source of the information and the video footage of the attack being repeated on cable news stations is the White Helmets.

The group claims to be a civil defense organization yet since its founding by a British mercenary in 2013 has been an outspoken advocate of military intervention in the form of a U.S. “No Fly Zone” over Syria. Trump has been planning to impose such a zone, which requires significantly more troops and bombers.

The images and video footage produced by White Helmets are all to support calls for military intervention.[1] Their footage depicts men dressed in the organization’s uniform, without gloves or other safety protection, tending to and spraying with hoses people lying on a muddy street.

Idlib is among the last significant areas in Syria held by so-called rebel groups. When Aleppo, some 37 miles away, was liberated in December, foreign-sponsored armed groups, affiliated organizations such as the White Helmets and a small number of civilians were evacuated to Idlib. Control of Idlib as well as Khan Sheikhun, where the April 4 attack took place, is held mostly by the Al-Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda affiliated group that has gone by various names including the latest, Tahrir al-Sham. Al Nusra is accused of having used chemical weapons in the past; its members have been arrested in Turkey for sarin gas possession and they left behind in Aleppo a facility used for chlorine gas production, found after the city was liberated.[2]

The Syrian army general command issued a statement on April 4 condemning and categorically denying any involvement in the crime, and stated that it has not and will not use any chemical weapons. The army command stated that foreign-sponsored groups “accuse the Syrian Arab Army of using toxic gases against them or against civilians at anytime they fail to implement the targets of their sponsors and operators or when they are unable to achieve any advantages on the ground in a desperate attempt to justify their failure and to maintain the support of their masters.”

In an interview with the Lebanese network al-Mayadeen TV on April 4, before the U.S. air strikes, Syrian Deputy Foreign and Expatriates Minister Fayssal Mikdad said that a few weeks ago, the Syrian government informed and provided evidence to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations’ Security Council that organizations, including Al-Nusra were transporting and storing toxic substances in Syria. He affirmed that Syria stands against using chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere, and under any circumstances.

The OPCW is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction by prohibiting the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention, transfer or use of chemical weapons by States Parties. On June 23, 2014, the OPCW confirmed that Syria had successfully disposed of its chemical weapons stocks and production facilities.

### **U.S. Intelligence Committee Knew Syria Did Not Use Chemical Weapons**

Colonel W. Patrick Lang, a retired senior officer of U.S. Military Intelligence and U.S. Army Special Forces (The Green Berets) provided the following account on his website on April 7:

“Donald Trump’s decision to launch cruise missile strikes on a Syrian Air Force Base was based on a lie. In the coming days the

American people will learn that the Intelligence Community knew that Syria did not drop a military chemical weapon on innocent civilians in Idlib. Here is what happened:

1. The Russians briefed the United States on the proposed target. This is a process that started more than two months ago. There is a dedicated phone line that is being used to coordinate and deconflict (i.e., prevent U.S. and Russian air assets from shooting at each other) the upcoming operation.

2. The United States was fully briefed on the fact that there was a target in Idlib that the Russians believed was a weapons/explosives depot for Islamic rebels.

3. The Syrian Air Force hit the target with conventional weapons. All involved expected to see a massive secondary explosion. That did not happen. Instead, smoke, chemical smoke, began billowing from the site. It turns out that the Islamic rebels used that site to store chemicals, not sarin, that were deadly. The chemicals included organic phosphates and chlorine and they followed the wind and killed civilians.

4. There was a strong wind blowing that day and the cloud was driven to a nearby village and caused casualties.

5. We know it was not sarin. How? Very simple. The so-called “first responders” handled the victims without gloves. If this had been sarin they would have died. Sarin on the skin will kill you. How do I know? I went through “Live Agent” training at Fort McClellan in Alabama.

There are members of the U.S. military who were aware this strike would occur and it was recorded. There is a film record. At least the Defense Intelligence Agency knows that this was not a chemical weapon attack. In fact, Syrian military chemical weapons were destroyed with the help of Russia.[3]

### **Claims of Humanitarian Intervention Cannot Hide U.S. Crimes**

Creating a pretext to justify aggression is the tried and true method of the U.S. imperialists. They have not been able to pursue their striving to control Europe and dominate Asia with approval under international law from the Security Council of the United Nations. Thus, they have created humanitarian crises with crimes so heinous that they expect world public opinion to clamor for them to act as liberators. The U.S. is not a liberator, they are the perpetrators of crimes against peace and crimes against humanity. The missile



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## HANDS OFF SYRIA

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attack on the Syrian air base April 6 is but the latest such atrocity of the U.S. war machine. In October 2016, the U.S. killed or wounded more than 160 Syrian soldiers who were defending the city of Deir Ezzor against Daesh/ISIS. This demonstrated yet again direct U.S. support for this so-called Islamist reincarnation of the U.S.-created Al-Qaeda.

U.S. claims of intervention on humanitarian grounds to prevent use of weapons of mass destruction have proven to be manufactured by the U.S. from the time of the first Iraq war in 1991 and the dismemberment of Yugoslavia by NATO in 1999. Then and since, the U.S. and big European powers have themselves staged criminal massacres to create humanitarian crises, which they then blame on one regime after another, accusing them of being rogue states.

Evidence shows that the pretexts are set in motion or directly put in place by the imperialist powers' own covert agencies and that the big powers and their media cite the falsified "evidence" as pretexts for their use of force to take over those countries that they covet. The results are disastrous, they leave death and wanton destruction in their wake. U.S. regime change operations in the Middle East have now created among the worst humanitarian refugee crises ever experienced by humanity.

The U.S. has resolved no problem on the basis of its invasions and acts of aggression in one country after another. It spawned Al-Qaeda and ISIS and despite its continued military presence and use of force has experienced one defeat after another. This isolated the U.S. and led the Obama administration to try to change tack to realize U.S. ambitions through other means, including negotiations, as it did with Iran, along with massive expansion of drone and other targeted assassinations.

The Trump administration has now smashed this to smithereens with its missile attack in Syria on April 6. It thinks that this will serve notice to all those fighting to preserve their sovereignty. The boorishness of the new U.S. president is such that he thinks that by launching this attack, even while the Chinese president was with him at an official dinner at his private estate in Florida, that

the Chinese will do the U.S. bidding to "rein in" the Democratic People's Republic of Korea under the threat of nuclear destruction at U.S. hands.

Now is the time to take independent political stands that block U.S. crimes and their claims of a humanitarian mandate. Trump and Congress cannot be looked to for solutions to these crimes and the increasing danger of broader war. A stand of principle, that conflicts must be resolved on a peaceful, political basis, requiring the U.S. to end all its wars and bring troops home, is needed.

### Notes

1. See "Call to Nominate Unsavoury Group for Nobel Peace Prize," TML Weekly, October 1, 2016 and Enver Villamizar, "Promotion of "White Helmets" Serves Nefarious Aims," TML Weekly, December 10, 2016.

2. Seymour Hersh, "Whose sarin?" London Review of Books, December 19, 2013. Hersh wrote: "In the months before the [2013 Ghouta] attack, the American intelligence agencies produced a series of highly classified reports, culminating in a formal Operations Order — a planning document that precedes a ground invasion — citing evidence that the al-Nusra Front, a jihadi group affiliated with al-Qaida, had mastered the mechanics of creating sarin and was capable of manufacturing it in quantity. When the attack occurred al-Nusra should have been a suspect, but the administration cherry-picked intelligence to justify a strike against Assad."

Also see: "Turkey indicts 11 linked with Syria militants caught with sarin gas," PressTV, September 14, 2013.

"Turkey intercepts chemical shipment from Syria," al Akhbar, November 4, 2013.

"This is Where Syrian Rebels Obtain Chemical Weapons," Sputnik, November 12, 2016.

"Syrian Army Discovers Saudi-Made Chemical Weapons in Aleppo," Alwaght, January 11, 2017.

3. "Donald Trump Is An International Law Breaker by Publius Tacitus," Sic Semper Tyrannis, April 7, 2017.





POSITIONS ON U.S. AIR STRIKE

## Stand of Syrian President and Legislative Assembly

U.S. aggression against Syria is “an irresponsible and short-sighted action that holds no military or political prospects,” the Syrian presidential office said in a statement circulated by the news agency SANA the day following the U.S. air strikes.

The missile strike pursues a goal of rendering support to the accomplices of the U.S. from among terrorist groups active in Syria, the statement reads. “The Syrian Arab Republic states in response that this aggression will only strengthen Syrians’ resolve to crush mercenaries’ gangs and will accelerate the pace of military operations against them,” it adds.

For its part, the Syrian People’s Assembly condemned the U.S. aggression in the strongest terms, SANA reports.

“This blatant aggression came in defense of the collapsed terrorist organizations and in an attempt to revive them since Israel failed

to carry out this mission before,” the Assembly said in a statement. It added that the United States, the sponsor of terrorism in the world, began to practice terrorism against Syria after its terrorist tools failed to achieve any progress against the Syrian Arab Army.

“This new U.S. aggression, added to the aggression on the army units in Deir Ezzor and the bombing of the Euphrates Dam facilities, reveals again the falsity of the U.S. allegations of combating the ISIS terrorist organization,” the statement said. It also extended greetings to the steadfast Syrian people and wished a speedy recovery to the wounded, SANA stated.

The Syrian Arab Army will not be deterred by this brutal aggression from defeating terrorism and its supporters and clearing the entire Syrian soil of terrorism, the Legislative Assembly said in conclusion.

## Russian President and Officials on U.S. Bombing

Russian officials on April 7 condemned the U.S. strike against a Syrian airfield as an “act of aggression.” In addition, Russia called off its use of a shared military communications channel that had been used to prevent possible midair collisions between U.S. and Russian pilots, TASS reports. Called the deconfliction line, it was established in October 2015 after several close calls between U.S. and Russian air forces in Syrian skies. It was suspended as of April 8.

Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the U.S. of using a “far-fetched pretext” to attack Syria following this week’s chemical weapons strike, the news agency TASS reported. “Washington’s move deals a significant blow to Russia-U.S. relations, which are already in deplorable shape,” a Putin spokesperson said.

Asked at a news conference whether the U.S. attack was viewed by the Kremlin as an act of aggression against Russia’s ally, the President’s press secretary Dmitry Peskov said “Definitely.... Since we are rendering assistance to the Syrian military in line with the relevant request from the Syrian authorities, we view Syria as our ally.”

“As for the changes in the geopolitical situation after these attacks, let’s watch the situation develop together. So far, one can definitively say that the strikes impaired the fight against terrorism,” Peskov said.

“What is unambiguous is the fact that the strikes [by the U.S. on Syria] de facto were delivered in the interests of the ISIL [the former name of the Islamic State terrorist organization outlawed in Russia], Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist organizations,” he said.

Regarding exchanges of information via military channels about its operations in Syria, Peskov confirmed that Russia has suspended the Memorandum on preventing military incidents

and ensuring aviation security that was signed with the U.S.

“Technically the channels remain, but no information will be exchanged,” Peskov said. “This Memorandum lost its meaning last night when the attack was carried out,” he added.

Viktor Ozerov, the chairman of the Defense Committee in the Federation Council, condemned the cruise missile strikes at the Shayrat airfield, stating that the operation could endanger any further joint military operations. “This could eliminate the ongoing cooperation between Russian and U.S. forces in Syria,” Ozerov said, as reported by RIA news.

He further stressed that the operation may destroy joint anti-terrorism efforts in the country. “The U.S. rocket strike could tank the effort to combat terrorism in Syria,” Ozerov said.

Another member of the Federation Council, Konstantin Kosachev, echoed Ozerov’s remarks, stressing that future cooperation with Russia in Syria is now unlikely.

“Either way, Russian missiles continue to target terrorists while the American rockets hit government forces that spearhead the effort against terrorists,” Kosachev said. “I am afraid that with such an approach the desired Russo-American anti-terrorist coalition in Syria — that has so frequently been discussed since [President] Trump came to power — will not come to fruition,” he added.

As well, the Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Department for Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Mikhail Ulyanov told TASS on April 7 that claims of chemical weapons being present at the Shayrat Airfield hit by U.S. strikes are groundless. “This is a clumsy attempt to somehow justify the actions running counter to the fundamental norms of international law,” he said.

## Stand of U.S. Government

President Donald Trump spoke shortly after the attack, saying “Tonight, I ordered a targeted military strike on the airfield in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched. It is in this vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons. There can be no dispute that Syria used banned chemical weapons, violated its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, and ignored the urging of the U.N. Security Council.”

Trump stated, “Years of previous attempts at changing Assad’s behavior have all failed, and failed very dramatically. As a result, the refugee crisis continues to deepen and the region continues to destabilize, threatening the United States and its allies.

“Tonight, I call on all civilized nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria, and also to end terrorism of all kinds and all types. We ask for God’s wisdom as we face the challenge of our very troubled world,” he said.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson spoke about “the chaotic circumstances that exist on the ground in Syria with the presence of a battle underway to defeat ISIS, the presence of Al-Qaeda elements inside of Syria and a civil war that is underway.” He stated that an “existential threat” in Syria is “if there are weapons of this nature available in Syria, the ability to secure those weapons and not have them fall into the hands of those who would bring the weapons to our shores to harm American citizens.”

Tillerson said the plans to launch the attack were a “very deliberative process” and that “the response from our allies, as well as the region and the Middle East has been overwhelmingly supportive of the action we’ve taken.” Tillerson said that “Other things were considered. Those were rejected for any number of reasons. In my view, the president made the exact, correct decision.”

H.R. McMaster, U.S. National Security Adviser issued a statement claiming that the U.S. “confidence level has just



continued to grow in the hours and days since the attack, associated with additional evidence, especially with so sad, sadly, with the victims that are being treated and confirmation of the type of agent which was used, which is a nerve agent.” McMaster stated, “There were three options we discussed with the president, and the president asked us to focus on two options in particular, to mature those options, and he had a series of questions for us that we endeavored to answer. ... After a meeting of considerable length and a far-reaching discussion, the president decided to act and that’s the general sequence of events. So, two rather large and formal meetings, but really a whole series of discussions since the time of the attacks.”

The U.S. State Department issued its own report focused on the technical details of the attack. It also stated that the attack “was a proportional response to Assad’s heinous act. Shayrat Airfield was used to store chemical weapons and Syrian air forces. The U.S. intelligence community assesses that aircraft from Shayrat conducted the chemical weapons attack on April 4. The strike was intended to deter the regime from using chemical weapons again. ... Initial indications are that this strike has severely damaged or destroyed Syrian aircraft and support infrastructure and equipment at Shayrat Airfield, reducing the Syrian Government’s ability to deliver chemical weapons.”

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# Deputy Prime Minister of Syria Says Army Did Not and Will Not Use Chemical Weapons Even Against Terrorists

Walid al-Moallem, Syria's Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign and Expatriates Minister, reaffirmed at an April 6 press conference in Damascus that the Syrian Arab Army did not and will not use any kind of chemical weapons even against the terrorists who target the Syrian people.

Al-Moallem pointed out that this lie about the Syrian army came from countries known for conspiring against Syria, whether through support for terrorists or other attempts to disrupt the political process.

"All of you learned about the statement of the Command of the Army and the Armed Forces and the statement of the Foreign and Expatriates Ministry that was sent to the UN Security Council and sent to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the statement of Deputy Permanent Representative in New York. All of these statements stressed that our forces could not have used chemical weapons — neither in the past nor in the present, and neither could they use them in the future in any place, and that we condemn such criminal acts," al-Moallem said.

Al-Moallem reminded the press conference that Syria had already joined the OPCW and submitted successive reports, with the OPCW confirming the accuracy of the Syrian data in mid-2016.

He questioned the timing of the smear campaign against Syria. He pointed to favorable developments in recent weeks, including the active movement toward national reconciliation, the interdiction of terrorist attacks in Jobar and the northern countryside of Hama by the Syrian Army, and the absence of terrorist groups at the latest peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, whose presence would have blocked the proceedings.

He also referred to the fifth round of talks in Geneva, where the "Riyadh delegation" of opposition groups had only one demand, which is to take power.

"When all these attempts failed, they came up with the lie of the army's use of chemical weapons in Khan Sheikhoun," said al-Moallem.

The Foreign Minister explained that the campaign of accusing the Syrian Army of using chemical weapons in Khan Sheikhoun started at 06:00am on April 4, while the first air raid carried out by the Syrian army only took place at 11:30am, targeting an ammunition store of Jabhat al-Nusra terrorists that it subsequently became known included chemical weapons.

He went on to clarify that the evidence that the target was an ammunition depot is that the affected area shown in video footage from the "White Helmets" and the London-based "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights" was relatively small, and that had this been an airstrike that used chemical weapons, the affected area would have had a radius of more than half

a kilometer.

He stressed that ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist groups have continued to store chemical weapons in cities and inhabited areas, pointing out that Syria has sent more than 100 cables to the UN Security Council and the OPCW. These included information on the entry of chemical materials from Iraq to ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra and from the Turkish border towards Idlib.

"This chorus that was launched in the international arena is made up of states that are well-known for conspiring against Syria," said al-Moallem.

"I reiterate that the Syrian Arab Army has never used and will never use this type of weapon, not only not against our people and our children, but not even against the terrorists who are killing our people and our children and attacking civilians in the cities with their random shells," al-Moallem added.

He stressed that it is not reasonable that the Syrian army would use chemical weapons at a time when it has been achieving victories on various fronts that have led to changes in the positions of some countries in the international arena and "at this time when we are optimistic about world public opinion's realization of the reality of the terrorist plot against Syria."

"And we are aware that the main beneficiary of all that is happening is Israel, and it is strange to see Netanyahu almost weeping for what happened in Khan Sheikhoun," al-Moallem said.

He commented on a statement to the Security Council made by U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley on April 5 in which she said the U.S. does not have information on what happened in Khan Sheikhoun, but nonetheless the U.S. points its finger at Syria.



Al-Moallem said it is normal that they do not have information since the chorus of accusations directed at the Syrian Army started only an hour after what happened in Khan Sheikhoun became public. He wondered how could the U.S. not have information about what happened, while UN Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura had that information and said that the chemical weapons came from the air, but that he forgot to name the pilot.

Answering a question about whether Syria would welcome an international committee of inquiry into the use of chemical weapons in Khan Seikhoun, al-Moallem said that on April 5, the Russian representative to the Security Council submitted ideas on forming a neutral and non-politicized committee with broad representation to probe the incident. He added that Syria's experience with such committees that have come to Damascus is not encouraging as they typically leave Damascus with one set of data but present another when they return home.

He pointed out that Syria constantly coordinates with the Russian side on this matter.

In response to a question on whether the aim of this campaign against Syria was to foil the political process, the Minister said this depends on the developments during the coming few days at the UNSC and through the Russian-U.S. communications, noting that "Syria is keen to make the political dialogue a success, but if their goal is to disable it, then so be it."

Al-Moallem noted that a new terrorist assault was launched on April 6 in the northern countryside of Lattakia as part of the continued attempts by backers of the terrorist organizations to disrupt the political process after their recent failed attacks in the Jobar and Hama countryside.

The Foreign Minister cited other goals that could be behind this campaign against Syria, including to cause President Donald Trump to change his recent opinion on Syria, which al-Moallem said may have been achieved to a slight degree, or to pressure the Russian side that provides real and sincere support to Syria in its struggle against terrorism. The latter



is unlikely to be achieved especially after the two statements issued by the Kremlin on continued support to Syria's army and legitimate government. Likewise, another possible aim, to pressure Damascus to change its stances and principles, will be difficult to achieve.

Asked about the announcement by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on preparing for a new operation to invade Syria after the conclusion of the so-called "Euphrates Shield" operation, al-Moallem said Erdogan had declared on April 5 that his next target is Manbij, adding that the Syrian government will "let him go ahead and we will see what he will do."

Responding to a question on whether Syria would accept a committee of inquiry convened by the UN, al-Moallem said:

"We have to ensure that this committee is not politicized, has wide geographical representation and that it starts from Damascus and not from Turkey. We have many questions on this subject and when we have made sure that these questions have convincing answers, then we will give you our answer."

(Syrian Arab News Agency)

## Information Provided by Russian Defense Ministry

On April 5, spokesperson for the Russian Defense Ministry addressed an April 4 Syrian aviation airstrike on the eastern outskirts of Khan Sheikhoun, the news agency TASS reported.

"According to Russian airspace monitoring systems, yesterday between 11:30 and 12:30 local time Syrian aviation carried out an airstrike on the eastern outskirts of Khan Sheikhoun, targeting a major ammunition storage facility of terrorists and a cluster of military hardware. The territory of this storage facility housed workshops to produce projectiles stuffed with toxic agents," Major General Igor Konashenkov said.

"From this major arsenal, chemical-laden weapons were delivered by militants to Iraq. Their use by terrorists was confirmed

on numerous occasions by international organizations and official authorities of the country," he said. The spokesman added that these projectiles were similar to those used by militants in Syria's Aleppo, where their use was recorded by Russian military specialists.

"Video footage from social networks shows that those affected in Khan Sheikhoun demonstrate the same symptoms of poisoning that the victims of the Aleppo attack had last fall," he added. The official said that Russia has handed over all information about the incident to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is still studying them. "We assure that this information is completely unbiased and true," he added.

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## U.S. TROOPS OUT OF KOREA

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### I • No to War Against Korea

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infrastructure like bridges — all of which are illegal. This open propaganda and preparation for war are themselves crimes against the peace — against a country which has invaded no one, has no troops abroad and has consistently called for a nuclear-free zone in the region. It is the U.S. that rejects such a solution, as its plans to use nuclear weapons show.

The threats are also taking place while the massive U.S.-south Korea military exercises are being held during the months of March and April. The Key Resolve/Foal Eagle war games are aimed at launching a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the DPRK as a prelude to invading and occupying that country.

According to the U.S. military, the 2017 Key Resolve/Foal Eagle exercises will be the largest of their kind so far and will for the first time incorporate “4D (Detect, Defend, Disrupt, and Destroy) Concepts and Principles Implementation Guidelines (CPIG), which will strengthen the Alliance’s counter-missile strategy in the wake of a growing North Korean ballistic missile threat.” Close to 300,000 thousand south Korean troops and 30,000 U.S. troops will be involved with live military drills and computer-simulated military exercises. The Nimitz -class super aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson has also been brought in to participate in these exercises from its marauding presence in the South China Sea to challenge China.

*Voice of Revolution* condemns these war games and demands instead that the U.S. withdraw all troops from Korea and sign a peace treaty now! The U.S. already has nuclear weapons on bombers and submarines in the region and placing yet more on land in south Korea only serves to increase the danger of world war. The U.S. evidently thinks it can subdue China by invading Korea, but it has clearly forgotten its own experience — defeated by the Koreans in 1953. Fierce resistance by the Korean people standing as one will no doubt meet any unilateral action.

Both the war games and open propaganda for war and assassination are crimes against peace. The final verdict of the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal which tried the Nazi war criminals described crimes against peace as “planning, preparation, initiation or waging of a war of aggression, or a war in violation of international treaties, agreements or assurances, or participation in a common plan or conspiracy [to do so].” It was the very first charge brought against the Nazis. The final verdict at Nuremberg also defined crimes against peace as “the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

The Foal Eagle exercises began in 1997 and evolved into the Foal Eagle/Key Resolve joint military exercises in 2008. The main cost of these massive war exercises is borne by the south Korean people. The U.S. has also brought Canada, Japan and Australia into these exercises. These U.S.-organized military exercises are also a violation of the Korea Armistice Agreement (KAA) signed between the U.S. and the DPRK on July 27, 1953 to bring an end to the fighting in the Korean War. Since that time the U.S. has adamantly refused to sign a peace treaty with the DPRK as mandated by the



KAA and demanded by Koreans and peace-loving peoples worldwide. A peace treaty would end the Korean War and contribute to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Instead, the U.S. imperialists have increased the beating of the drums of war. It plans to put the THAAD anti-missile system in south Korea, a blatant threat to the DPRK and China. The plan is widely opposed by Koreans, south and north, and the Chinese.

The U.S. also promotes the blatant disinformation that the DPRK is the aggressor on the Korean peninsula and is the one posing a nuclear threat, when it is the U.S. that poses the danger to Koreans and all the peoples of the region, as its war games indicate. It is the U.S. that has nuclear weapons in the area and now plans even more. The DPRK has for decades been the target of nuclear threats, including U.S. presidents repeatedly saying a first strike nuclear attack is “on the table.” She has also withstood crippling economic and political sanctions as she defends her right to determine her own affairs. Unlike the U.S., the DPRK has no troops on foreign soil and no record of worldwide aggression and war crimes.

It is completely unjust that many written appeals from the DPRK to the United Nations Security Council to put Key Resolve/Foal Eagle on the Council’s agenda for discussion and resolution have not been given the courtesy of an answer. António Guterres, recently selected as the new UN Secretary-General, far from intervening to stop these U.S. crimes against peace has joined the chorus from the U.S. to condemn the DPRK for launching four missiles on March 6 — which were both a routine test as well as a warning to the U.S. and south Korean aggressors at their doorstep.

The ongoing war preparations and acts of aggression and provocations by the U.S., including the hysteria of the warmongers in the Trump government are causing the danger of a nuclear war breaking out in the Korean peninsula. The situation is dangerous. Now is the time to reject U.S. crimes against the peace and organize for a political settlement, beginning with withdrawal of all U.S. troops and signing a peace treaty.

*No to the Foal Eagle/Key Resolve War Games!  
Sign A Peace Treaty with the DPRK Now!  
U.S. Troops Out of Korea Now!*

A SEONGJU RESIDENT'S STORY

# Strengthening the Fight Against U.S. THAAD Deployment in Korea — National Speaking Tour

*Task Force to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific*

The Task Force to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific is sponsoring a National U.S. Speaking Tour April 4-16 by the Reverend Sunghye Kim, co-chair of the Seongju Struggle Committee to Stop THAAD deployment. Right now, the U.S. and south Korean governments are trying to deploy the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system in South Korea – despite the daily protests against it.



## Background

Villagers in Seongju and Gimcheon, South Korea have been protesting every day since July 2016 when the plan was announced, as their farms, homes and livelihoods are endangered. Their daily protests against THAAD in South Korea have helped to impeach the current South Korean president, Park Geun Hye.

The residents of Seongju had successfully fought off THAAD deployment in their village – only to see it now being attempted in a neighboring area. The U.S. government is already sending mobile launchers to Korea, so the protests have heightened.

The National Tour is hosted by the Task Force to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific, and supported by Korea Policy Institute, Channing and Popai Liem Education Foundation, and Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space.

You can also find the full tour listing on the StopTHAAD.org website, and see coverage of the tour from Zoom in Korea, where you can also read news and analysis about Korea.

## National Speaking Tour to Oppose THAAD Deployment in south Korea

Starting April 4, the U.S.-based Task Force to Stop THAAD will launch its national speaking tour on the Korean people's fight against the deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system. It is collaborating with dozens of local peace and justice organizations in cities across the United States to educate people about the dangers of U.S. missile defense.

Reverend Sounghey Kim, Co-chair of the Seongju Struggle

Committee to Stop THAAD Deployment in South Korea is a main speaker. She has been at the forefront of the fight against the THAAD deployment since July 2016, when the U.S. and south Korean governments first announced the deployment plan. She has been a part of the daily candlelight protests in Seongju and the recent overnight prayer sit-in's on Jinbat Bridge, which leads to the site selected for the THAAD deployment.

Ramsay Liem, a member of the Task Force organizing the speaking tour, spoke about the importance of highlighting the Korean people's anti-THAAD struggle:

“We will convey our solidarity with the citizens of Seongju County, South Korea and protest the THAAD deployment to officials in Washington D.C. We also want to take advantage of the tour to build stronger relations with the Boston-area peace movement and to ensure that Korea and Northeast Asia are squarely on the agenda of anti-war activists.

“For most Americans, Korea is a problem ‘over there.’ The deployment of THAAD in Seongju is just the latest example of U.S. intrusion into Korean affairs to further its own geopolitical interests. The national tour will inform Americans about escalating U.S. militarism in Northeast Asia, its threat to the health and safety of local residents, and the daily actions of a broad coalition of citizens groups to stop THAAD.”

Juyeon Rhee, also a member of the Task Force and the New York-based Nodutdol for Korean Community Development, says people in the U.S. should also be concerned about the consequences of the THAAD deployment:

“The fight against the THAAD deployment is still an

## U.S. TROOPS OUT OF KOREA

obscure issue to many peace activists in the U.S. And while the THAAD deployment will most directly impact the people of south Korea, it is also a piece of a larger puzzle that will only expand the network of U.S. missile systems around the world. Eventually, these provocations of U.S. militarism will lead to war that could come to the shores of North America. And our tax dollars are being used without our consent to feed these military enterprises.

Rhee says increasing military build-up will not lead to genuine peace or security:

“Rather than trying to reduce the weapons that could trigger nuclear warfare and focus on working towards peace with north Korea, the U.S. is going in the opposite direction. And just as the U.S. military is not considering the negative impact of the THAAD deployment on the livelihood of south Korean people, it is also dehumanizing the lives of north Korean people by designating the country as a target of military invasion.”

In addition to deploying troops and weapons like the THAAD system, the U.S. frequently conducts military exercises in south Korea, rehearsing the invasion of north Korea and the “decapitation” of its leadership to provoke regime collapse. These provocations in the name of “defense” and “security” have only led to greater war tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the Northeast Asia region.

The Task Force to Stop THAAD in Korea and Militarism in Asia and the Pacific seeks to use the upcoming speaking tour as an opportunity to build greater solidarity between anti-war/peace movements in the United States and south Korea. For more information on the “Stop the U.S. THAAD Deployment in South Korea” National Speaking Tour, visit: [stopthaad.org](http://stopthaad.org)

### Events in Nine Cities from April 4 to 16:

April 4, 2017 (Tuesday), 7:00pm – Berkeley/Oakland



University Lutheran Chapel, 2425 College Ave., Berkeley, California

April 6, 2017 (Thursday), 7:00pm – Los Angeles  
LA Won Buddhist Temple, 401 Shatto Pl. #200, Los Angeles, California

April 8, 2017 (Saturday) – Huntsville  
Springhill Suites Hotel, 745 Constellation Place Dr, Huntsville, Alabama

April 10, 2017 (Monday), 7:00pm – Boston  
Boston College, Devlin Hall 101, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts

April 11, 2017 (Tuesday), 7:00pm – Philadelphia  
Calvary Church (Basement), 801 S 48th St, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

April 12, 2017 (Wednesday), 7:00pm – Rutgers  
Rutgers University–New Brunswick, Frelinghuysen Hall Room B4, 611 George St, New Brunswick, New Jersey

April 13, 2017 (Thursday), 6:30pm – New York  
New York University, King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center (KJCC), 53 Washington Square South, New York City

April 15, 2017 (Saturday), 2:00pm – Washington DC  
Justice Center, 617 Florida Ave NW, Washington, DC

April 16, 2017 (Sunday), 6:00pm – Fairfax  
William Cho Peace Center, 3883 Plaza Dr., Fair-



### I • Educate to Change the World

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through developmentally inappropriate material; through requiring teachers not to discuss any of the content nor receive any specific information about their students; through turning students, human beings, into numbers, like prisoners, and far more. The tests are rightly called child abuse by many and are being refused in large numbers.

In many areas, like Chicago, Buffalo and Philadelphia, the testing is also used to justify state takeover of public schools, removing the public from any say over their public schools. Refusing testing is a means to block state takeover and put forward the demand that these are *Our Schools, We Decide!*

In addition many are also taking their stand against “personalized learning,” which is based primarily on one to one learning, student to computer, not student to teacher. “Personalized learning” relies on computer technology, with software programs designed by the monopolies, for the monopolies. Students are numbers, things, not human beings with rights. The key role of the human factor — including collective work and learning together of teachers and students alike — is removed. These programs also closely track students from kindergarten through college and continually force them in specific directions. The massive data being collected is not for learning purposes, but rather for control purposes, to keep students on the narrow path desired by the monopolies and their requirement for good and willing slaves. As many teachers put it, it is training for non-thinking drones, not for thinking human beings with rights. It is rightly being rejected by parents, students and teachers alike, who are fighting for education to change the world and to be empowered to decide all matters of education.

The state testing and “personalized learning” do not serve to raise the quality of education, but rather are means of punishment and control. The governance of education increasingly takes the form of policing. More and more, school is about compliance, organized via tests and “data” of some kind, such as that gathered through “personalized learning.” Punishment, of students, teachers and whole school districts, is a means to



force teachers and students alike to submit to tests they know to be harmful and invalid. The “personalized learning may well use a different form for the testing, but the aim remains the same — removing education for enlightenment and ensuring compliance.

It is no accident that developments like Common Core and common standards come directly from the Pentagon and are integral to its war machine.

President Bill Clinton signed an Executive Order in 1999 to allow the Department of Defense to begin studying an implementation plan for Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL). The Pentagon report talked about how to implement this new learning system for the military, but also promoted its use more generally: “The Department of Defense (DoD) has developed its ADL Strategic Plan that describes how it expects to use information, computing, and communications technologies to modernize military education, training, and performance

support. Importantly, the ADL Initiative’s underpinnings and applications are germane not only to the Department of Defense, but to other government organizations, academia, and the private sector, as well. The ADL Initiative, therefore, is a cooperative effort between the public and private sectors to develop and share common standards, reusable learning tools, and content.” This implementation plan came out in 2001, planting the seeds for a future learning environment that depends on technology and “common standards,” like Common Core.

A main feature of the test and punish regime, including its “personalized learning guise” is to repeatedly force all to submit to actions — and a future — that no one wants. A main feature of refusal is to reject this direction and stand up for a bright future for youth by defending their rights and rejecting all efforts to force them into war, into prisons, into “personalized” slave labor camps.

*Voice of Revolution* encourages all to join in strengthening efforts to refuse state testing and refuse “personalized learning.” Stand up for education to change the world and reject every effort to control, punish and militarize our schools and our youth!



# Opt Out 2017: Refusing Education as a Police Power

Dr. Mark Garrison, [markgarrison.net](http://markgarrison.net)

The Opt Out movement is more important than ever. Why? There are several reasons. First, despite what the New York State Education Department (NYSED) is saying, and despite promises that the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* will reduce testing demands, this year's tests already have and will continue to negatively affect students, teachers, principals and parents in numerous ways. The tests still narrow how and what teachers teach, and what students are supposed to learn. Test results will be used to determine school status under the state's receivership law. This will affect the fate of hundreds of schools across the state, including the possibility of school closure or conversion to a charter school. Further, as NY's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) still remains law, this year's scores could be used to evaluate educators in subsequent years, when the moratorium on the use of test data to evaluate educators is ended.

The undemocratic and harmful Common Core standards remain, and annual testing remains a main vehicle for their imposition. NYSED has also indicated that it plans to require a statewide computer-based testing system. Among other things, this is a means to facilitate the collection and sharing of individually identifiable student data (recall inBloom). Schools continue to be pressured to teach to the test, and some teachers and administrators are pressuring parents to have their child(ren) take the tests.

All of this harms the quality of education and does nothing to solve the real problems that concern parents, educators, students and their communities. A summation of existing research suggests that test-based accountability systems do not serve to improve the quality of education; annual testing has not been demonstrated to help educators do a better job. Yet, state and federal authorities continue to pursue a direction that the vast majority of students, parents and educators have clearly opposed. Test refusal is an important means to block this undemocratic direction and for building public consensus regarding an alternative.

## Testing as a Police Power

But there is something far more significant going on. The particular form of contemporary testing and the particular manner in which it is now being used reveals and is consistent with much larger governance changes.

As has long been recognized by students, parents and educators, the essence of test-based education policy is not accountability but *punishment*. Punishment is about control, about regulation; the right to punish is a police power. The governance of education increasingly takes the form of policing. More and more, school is about compliance, and more and more, this compliance is organized via tests (and "data") of some kind.

Tests are less about demonstrating what one knows, understands or is able to do, and more about enforcement of a particular



future that no reasonable person accepts or wants. For example, few will argue that schools should narrowly focus on preparing students for "college and career" — parents have long desired an educational experience that is well-rounded, preparing their children not only for work and future study, but for a wide variety of adult roles and activities, including art, music, sports, etc. Much of the opposition to the Common Core originated in the fact that it portended a future for youth limited (at best for most) to being a robot temp worker in the global economy.

Let us be clear: the issue is not whether or not educators should use data to make decisions regarding what is taught and how teachers should go about their work. The issue is that "the data" (whether test score, attendance record, or a student's "grit score") has become a means by which students and educators are *policed*. (Scientists do not use data to punish the subject of their investigation.)

Federal and state policy on use of data is in fact bad science. For example, *ESSA* demands that states rank their schools on the basis of data such as test scores, attendance, and teacher absenteeism. Mass confusion has been created by NYSED and others who render the issue as one of which indicators are most valid for ranking purposes. Yet, ranking is not nor can it ever be a form of measurement; ranking schools is both fraudulent and harmful no matter what indicators are used (e.g., some are proposing "opportunity to learn" metrics).

All this is a means to block students, parents, educators and community members from having a say and having an active role. This point is made very clear by the data-advocacy of the notorious consulting firm McKinsey & Company. Data and algorithms, they say, should replace human decision making.

## Data as Behavior Enforcement

At nearly every turn, "the data" is not used to shed light on a situation, but rather to impose a view of the world consistent with the "reformers' vision" (e.g., educators should ignore racism and

poverty and instead focus on “achievement gaps” and “growth mindsets”). This “data” constitutes the stimulus to which educators are told they must respond. Those who do “what the data tells them” are promised (but frequently do not receive) rewards; those who do not comply face punishment and humiliation.

In other words, the “data” connected with all the testing — benchmarks, formative tests, end of course tests, state tests, nationally normed tests, common core aligned or not — is not about providing information. We are to be data managed, not data informed. In fact, the above pattern now applies to many spheres of life: credit card points and credit scores; health records and the various incentive schemes of insurance companies; the use of social media to regulate conduct. (And the metrics for each scheme are suspect.) All of these are forms of policing, and they are done outside the bounds of publicly legitimated law or public oversight. These are non-public means for regulating behavior.

Because “data” is not a person, emphasis on “the data” masks who in fact is behind all the policing by way of the data. Data appears as neutral and unconnected to forms of power. This hides the fact that more and more of education is being governed by private entities (e.g., technology monopolies) and various executive authorities outside the public sphere and thus unaccountable to the public. The practices now imposed on schools do not emerge from laws legitimated on the basis of public opinion. Public opinion has long been opposed to the test and punish regime. Police power, it should be noted, is not legitimated on the basis of public opinion, as is law. Police power exists to protect the state.

### The Next Phase of Opt Out

Already in the works are initiatives to move from annual testing to *continuous* testing via various digital online platforms (e.g., Chromebooks, iPads). The advocates of “personalized learning”

and “competency based education” (all rooted in B. F. Skinner’s radical behaviorism and ideas about “teaching machines”) are poised to “transform” education via online courses, “flipped classrooms,” and data “badges,” motivating students with “scholar dollars” via online dashboards. Their goal is for all students to be connected to a device, all the time (see the push for “one-to-one” initiatives subsidized by public dollars).

Various technology and entertainment monopolies (including Pearson and Disney), venture capitalists and even some major teachers’ unions have signed on to this plan. These plans reduce the role of teacher to data watcher and data responder, where curriculum, homework, essay grades, etc., are assigned by the computer. For advocates of “personalized learning” education is characterized by constant and continuous data collection and manipulation — every keystroke, every mouse click is used by the computer to regulate teacher and student behavior. *ESSA* promotes “personalized learning” and the digital takeover of schools.

Opt Out needs to be ready. These powerful “reform” advocates are happy to end the discredited and “one size fits all” testing regime. They are happy to end one-time, high stakes tests. Their rhetoric is emancipatory and seductive, and they have vast resources to push their agenda. It is key that everyone carefully examine the “personalized learning” movement. It is the data they want as it is their means of control. For Opt Out, test refusal will become *data* refusal.

The standard that the Opt Out movement should use to gauge its own progress in bringing about change is the degree to which students, parents, educators and the public have created alternative visions to those of so-called reformers, working out mechanisms for public deliberation, participation and democratic control of education with equal membership and rights for all.

### OPT OUT 2.0

## Adding Tech Concerns to the Conversation

Opt Out can no longer simply be focused on end of year testing. It *must* expand to address student data-mining that takes place throughout the school year via interim assessments as well as use of adaptive learning management systems that “learn” our children. These programs disempower both students and teachers, putting the educational process in the hands of artificial intelligence algorithms.

Resist data collection at all levels, including (especially) surveys and games that gather non-academic, social-emotional competencies. End of year Opt Out is a valuable access point for parents, but it is up to teachers and long-term activists to begin to expand the conversation. The time to do this is now! The Learning Accelerator and Education elements just released an updated communications plan with step-by-step instructions on how to sell “personalized” (digital) learning to community members.

We must not waste this opportunity to begin introducing the dangers of blended learning into the Opt Out conversation. It

is becoming increasingly difficult to opt out of the many online curriculum and 1:1 (one to one, child and device) programs being imposed. While it may not be realistic to Opt Out without leaving public education entirely (which is not something I advocate), we must resist. We need to begin to have conversations about the role of technology in our schools, and we need to do it sooner rather than later.

Each person who shares this concern should be actively seeking out opportunities to spark conversations about technology, educational surveillance, and what it means to prioritize devices and data over human interaction.

In Philadelphia we have the Philadelphia School Reform Commission (SRC). We do not have an elected school board, with our public schools under state control. The meetings are streamed, and I hope to reach parents and teachers in the audience. Carnegie Learning is the topic of my SRC testimony, which follows:

I am here today as a parent to speak against SRC Resolution

B-6 that would increase the contract with Carnegie Learning by \$3 million and extend it through June 2018.

Carnegie Learning develops and sells adaptive software that employs artificial intelligence and cognitive science to “teach” children math. Algorithms in products like Cognitive Tutor and MATHia “learn” our children through intrusive data mining. Carnegie Learning also sells professional development and analytics services that reinforce use of data-driven products. I strongly oppose the SRC’s decision to purchase services from a company that maintains a vested financial interest in “personalized” e-learning solutions that marginalize human teachers and limit student access to face-to-face instruction.

Carnegie Learning developed their products with financial support from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). In 2013, Carnegie Learning was awarded \$1.4 million by the Advanced Distributed Learning initiative (a DoD program) to develop “hyper-personalized intelligent tutors.” Their “MATHia” program was profiled in Chapter 6 of the U.S. Army Research Lab’s 2014 publication “Design Recommendations for Intelligent Tutoring Systems, Volume 2.” The MATHia chapter focused on “personalized” content. Other chapters reveal a troubling trend in e-learning, namely software developers’ desire and capacity to monitor and manipulate the emotions and behavior of program users: “Addressing Behavioral Disengagement with Online Learning,” “Strategies and Tactics to Manage Learner Affect, Engagement, and Grit,” and “Adaptive Interventions to Address Students’ Negative Emotions During Learning Activities.”

Philadelphia’s children must not be plugged into algorithmic educational surveillance systems. They are not meant to be cogs in a data-generating machine. They should not be subject to software systems that have been designed to manipulate them. We must respect the basic right of all humans to learn, in person, in relationship to one another with a human teacher being central to that process. Students deserve an education where they are free to think and explore independently, without fear of being profiled and commodified by the data they generate.

As a parent, it is my duty to speak out against the transition to blended learning that is taking place. In a recent report “Making Blended Work,” Cheryl Logan, Philadelphia’s Chief Academic Support Officer, was among the contributors listed. This industry-funded publication was produced to hasten adoption of online learning by



promoting so-called “best practices.” Featured was Cabarrus County School District’s decision to double the number of students taught by the “best” teachers, reducing face-to-face instruction by half. What are students doing when they are not with a teacher? Why yes, they are online.

Last year the School District of Philadelphia “saved” nearly \$65 million by failing to adequately staff and provide substitute services to our schools. Our teachers are nearing 1,300 days without a contract. At the same time, blended learning grants were awarded, dropping thousands of chrome books into our schools. If we do not fight back now, austerity will push us into a world where automated teaching becomes the norm rather than the exception. [...] There is still time to change course. Invest in people, not devices. And save the \$3 million you had planned to spend on Carnegie Learning’s contract extension. I trust our teachers can find ways to spend those funds that would be far more beneficial to our children. ([wrenchinthegears.com](http://wrenchinthegears.com))

# Personalized Learning: A Threat to Education

## *Opt Our Pennsylvania*

Over the past three years I have opted out. I have helped hundreds of parents and encouraged thousands more to opt their kids out of standardized tests too. Each year our Opt Out movement has grown exponentially. We were well connected, well informed and ready to battle against all things related to standardized testing. We appeared to be well on our way to being a part of a change to the testing climate in schools across the country.

We are at a pivotal turning point in history. There has been a transformation in education that has been slowly and quietly creeping in for decades and we are at the end days of education as we all know it, and we do not even know it.

Parents have increasingly Opted Out because:

- Students are over tested
- Students should have a broader curriculum that includes Arts and Humanities
- Students are unique individuals not standardized.
- Students learn in different ways at a different pace.
- Students are more than a test score.

Ed-tech corporations claim to feel the same way. Students should be assessed as individuals who should be able to learn at their own pace because they are more than a test score!

What do the Ed-tech forces really mean? It is called Competency Based Education (CBE) or Mass Customized Learning

(MCL). Essentially, under the guise of “personalized learning” it is education done with technology (computer devices) rather than humans (teachers) on a large-scale level, like worldwide.

We have it already, every state does. In Pennsylvania where I reside, our schools use Study Island, CDT’s and other similar online programs as well as hybrid courses. Hybrid courses are where students are in a classroom with a teacher for 1-2 days and the rest of the coursework is done online, usually during a study hall or at home. As the transition to more technology-based educational programs is occurring, critical and damaging changes are happening to the student-teacher and student-peer relationships.

High quality certified teachers will be deemed unnecessary in a classroom with increasing class sizes, replaced by facilitators who just need to monitor that students are on task on their devices. Think about that for a moment. Teachers who have 6-8 years of college education, and years of teacher experience in classrooms with student interaction will be obsolete, replaced by low-pay, inexperienced, untrained facilitators. Then add the harmful impact of children being on a device for many hours a day to the physical, mental and emotional health of students — things are moving in the wrong direction, fast!

Opt Out has created the awareness that students are being

tested too much and that the big test in the spring is complicated, unreliable and expensive. With that Opt Out has given parents a way to protect their children from the testing and data mining. [...] Big changes are imminent. Over the next year, with the transition to *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* into each state the educational environment will continue to change and this time it is going to be drastic.

There will not be a big test in the spring to Opt Out of; assessments will be embedded into the curriculum via ‘stealth’ assessments because students, teachers and parents will not know when a student is being assessed. Nor will they know what content is being used with each student — instead an online, adaptive curriculum disconnected from teachers and parents will be used. Online programs created by corporations who have little to no background or training in education, subject content areas or what is developmentally appropriate for children at each grade level will be used. Data-mining will be massive with the capacity to track students at every keystroke.

Soon, parents will not be able to Opt Out. That is intentional thanks to our federal and state legislators and the Ed-tech corporations who create and make billions of dollars off the backs of students.

The time to take action is now. [...]

# Stop! Read this, Opt Out and Oppose Digital Curriculum and Data-Mining

*Wrenchinthegears.com*

Schools in every state are buzzing with talk of “personalized” learning and 21st century assessments for kids as young as kindergarten. The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* and its pilot programs are already changing the ways schools instruct and assess, in ways that are clearly harmful to our kids. Ed-tech companies, chambers of commerce, ALEC, neoliberal foundations, telecommunications companies, and the government are working diligently to turn our public schools into lean, efficient laboratories of data-driven, digital learning.

In the near future, learning eco-systems of cyber education mixed with a smattering of community-based learning opportunities (ELOs) will “optimize” a child’s personal learning pathway to “college and career readiness.”

Opt Out families [could be used] as pawns in this fake “assessment reform” movement. I began to realize this a year ago when our dysfunctional, Broad Superintendent-led school district in Philadelphia was suddenly almost eager to help us inform parents of their rights to Opt Out. It was not until the *ESSA* passed, and I started learning more about competency-based education, out-of-school time learning, and workforce badging that the bigger picture came into focus. [...]

[After a period of high-stakes tests, different testing “solutions,” are being offered by the Ed-tech forces and government.]

While the proposals at first glance seem to address our concerns,

in reality they justify a transition to a standards-driven, digital curriculum that will create comprehensive online databanks of our children’s academic and social-emotional strengths and weaknesses.

The lines in italics below are what we, as caring parents and teachers, have said in response to the harmful end-of-year tests and test-prep imposed on our children. Those lines alternate with the “solutions” we can expect to see forced on us.

*Children should not be standardized.*

Right! How about a “personalized” education? It will use an online learning management system that pulls directly from your child’s own, unique academic, biometric, and behavioral data. It will know *all* your child’s strengths and weakness and record *everything* for future optimization. And we will upload all the data into their personal Learning Record Store so it will *always* be available.

Plus, hybrid or blended learning offers a great cost-savings for districts on a tight budget. By outsourcing instructional time to computers, we do not need as many human teachers. Be assured that when your child does get to interact with his/her teacher, it is going to be real quality time!

*These end-of-year tests come back too late to meaningfully inform instruction.*

Of course! So now we are focusing on formative assessments — lots of them. We have built them directly into the learning

management system (LMS) so the results appear effortlessly in your child's personal data dashboard! As kids spend more and more time with the LMSs, our teachers (or "mentors" as we now like to call them) will be freed up to dive deeply into those piles of incoming data!

*These tests are too stressful!*

We hear you! And we have come up with a way to extract the necessary data as painlessly as possible. Our skilled psychometricians have embedded tests into the online curriculum. They are called "stealth assessments." At any given point your child will not know whether they are being tested or not. We are even investigating ways to alter children's brains through device interfaces to level the learning playing field for all!

*I think it is important to look at the whole child, not just a test score.*

We agree, and to show you how committed we are to this new approach we are dedicating ourselves to monitoring your child's social-emotional learning and "soft skills," too. Our goal is to start building that data profile from pre-kindergarten on to ensure accuracy and robustness. We want to ensure they get on and stay on the correct pathway to their future place in the workforce.

*All this emphasis on testing has limited our children's access to recess and their ability to play. We need more play in school, especially in the younger grades.*

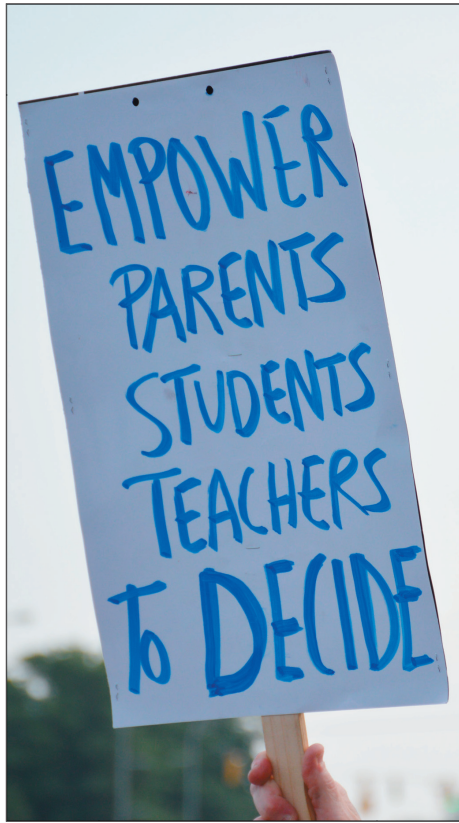
There are a lot of studies that show the importance of play in developing skills like teamwork and resilience. It is unfortunate that we do not realistically foresee having sufficient funds to cover staff supervision of playgrounds. But...we have come up with a number of online games that are designed to build the same skill sets and hit our standards targets. And the side benefit is that they are integrated with our data collection system. It is a win-win-win: fun, competition, and data!

*With all the money our district has been spending on technology required for testing, there is not enough left over to offer our children a curriculum rich in arts and electives.*

We all know that money is tight. But we do value a well-rounded curriculum. And that is why we are working very hard with our "out-of-school-time" community partners to develop ELOs (extended, enhanced, expanded learning opportunities). The plan is to allow students to earn school credit *outside* of school. Because in the 21st century, you can learn any time and any place!

Plus, we just do not see having certified teachers for art and music, coaches, librarians as a good value proposition when we can outsource those functions to community-based nonprofits. Fewer humans on staff equals lower pension payments and lower taxes in the long run, right?

Opt Out families nationwide are encountering these same



deceptive arguments, so now what? Go ahead and Opt Out of the end of the year tests. No child should suffer through them. But we have to expand our definition of Opting Out to protect our children from data mining and stop the shift to embedded assessments and digital curriculum.

In addition to opting out of end-of-year testing, there are other important steps we need to take to safeguard our children's access to human teachers and to protect their data, their vision, and their emotional health. There is no set playbook, but here are some ideas to get us started.

1. Insist that school budgets prioritize human instruction and that hybrid/blended learning not be used as a back door way to increase class size or push online classes.

2. Opt your child out of Google Apps for Education (GAFE).

3. If your school offers a device for home use, decline to sign the waiver for it and/or pay the fee.

4. Does your child's assigned email address include a unique identifier, like their student ID number? If yes, request a guest log in so that their data cannot be

aggregated.

5. Refuse biometric monitoring devices (e.g. fit bits).

6. Refuse to allow your child's behavioral, or social-emotional data to be entered into third-party applications. (e.g. Class Dojo)

7. Refuse in-class social networking programs (e.g. Ed-Modo).

8. Set a screen time maximum per day/per week for your child.

9. Opt young children out of in school screen time altogether and request paper and pencil assignments and reading from print books (not ebooks).

10. Begin educating parents about the difference between "personalized" learning modules that rely on mining personally-identifiable information (PII) to function properly — and technology that empowers children to create and share their own content.

We must prioritize *human* instruction and learning in relationship to one another. We need more face time and less screen time. Parents, teachers, school administrators, and students must begin to look critically at the technology investments we are making in schools. We have to start advocating for responsible tools that empower our children to be creators (and I do not mean of data), *not* consumers of pre-packaged, corporate content or online games.

Every time a parent acts to protect their child from these harmful policies, it throws a wrench into the gears of this machine. The steamroller of education reform does not stand a chance against an empowered, educated army of parents, teachers and students. Use your power to refuse. Stand together, stand firm, be loud, and grab a friend. Cumulatively our actions will bring down this beast!

# Digital Curriculum: Questions Parents Should Be Asking

*A Skeptical Parent*

As we enter this new era of blended/hybrid classrooms, the clamor of ed-tech entrepreneurs pitching their digital curricula is getting to be truly overwhelming for parents. Rather than critiquing individual programs, I have laid out a set of ten questions that parents should be asking their child’s teachers and school administrators. Feel free to share and/or print it out and bring it with you to back-to-school night.

1. Does the program require aggregating personally identifiable information (PII) from students to function properly? And even if it does not REQUIRE it, does the program collect PII?

2. Does the program supplement face-to-face human instruction, or function as a substitute for it? How many minutes per day of face-to-face human instruction is being sacrificed or substituted? Will it lead to increased class sizes?

3. Does the program encourage active student-to-student engagement and face-to-face discussion? How does it accomplish this? Or does it create an environment where kids are often working in isolation with their devices? How much of the time are students working alone with their devices?

4. What are the associated costs with respect to your district’s budget (not just the program fees, but the devices required to operate it) and how will participation in the program affect other areas of the student experience? For example given the austerity budgets many districts are experiencing, implementing a 1:1 device program to support digital curriculum could impact a school’s ability to offer art instruction, employ a school librarian, or provide a full range of extracurricular activities.

5. How much screen time is involved, per day? per week? Consider the health impacts of machine-mediated teaching, especially on elementary school-age children.

6. Does the program offer “training” or “education?” There is a difference.

7. Will participating in the program expand student awareness of the larger world and allow them to engage with it on their own terms, or is it a way to channel students into a particular workforce sector?

8. Does the program monitor, tutor, or assess behavior and social-emotional aspects of learning?

9. Assuming the program is used during the school day, what is this program replacing? What aspect(s) of instruction formerly offered will be eliminated if this program is implemented?

10. How does adopting a blended/hybrid learning program, which has been developed by outside interests, impact local control and autonomy within your school and district?

What percentage of instructional time is being turned over to outsourced online education, which results in your neighborhood school no longer fully being YOUR school? 10 percent? 25 percent? 40 percent?

Many ed-tech proponents like Reed Hastings are looking to remove local control of schools due to their “inefficiency.” Would adopting this program in your school further that agenda? (from wrenchinthegears.com)

## ABCs of Classrooms at Risk: Expand #OPTOUT

*Cheri Kiesecker*

What are we doing to our kids?

Cancer does not care if you are Democrat or Republican. The dollars invested in the Ed-tech industry do not care if your child is Democrat or Republican either. Why then do we let this broken two party system divide us when it comes to education and doing what is best for our children? Put children’s health and safety first. Always.

**A is for always protect kids and for the American Academy of Pediatrics.**

We know, despite campaigns from the tobacco industry that said otherwise, smoking cigarettes does have a direct link to causing cancer. The sugar industry certainly has helped to prove the point recently; that data can be manipulated and studies and media can be bought. So now, ask yourself this, remember

those warnings from pediatricians about too much TV and limited screen time? According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), 2015, kids were astonishingly spending 7 hours a day on “entertainment” media.

“The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released these guidelines for children and adolescents using media, recommending no more than two hours per day of any type of entertainment screen time for kids ages 3 to 18 and none for children 2 or younger. The guidelines cover media such as Internet and texting as well as TV, movies and video games,” *Washington Post*, March 2014.

*How come we are not limiting screen time in school?*

Instead, the federal government and the broadband industry are teaming up to bring Wi-Fi connectivity (via the FCC’s Lifeline) to all communities and schools. The White House

is also promoting classroom connectivity, 1:1 computers, chromebooks, or ipads for each child. The *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* has freed up billions of dollars to spend on expanding technology use in the classroom. That is *millions* of classrooms full of screens, Wi-Fi, online curriculum, online assessments and student data all bundled together for and by the Ed-tech industry.

The federal government is actually giving grants for every textbook you replace with their “free” online curriculum. The U.S. Department of Ed has been promoting the use of student data badges, since at least 2011. (Data badges are personal and predictive data about the student, that will be shared across agencies and with future employers, colleges etc., starting from pre-school.) Additionally, see President Clinton’s 2013 announcement and commitment to student data badges here.

### **B is for Billions of dollars**

Interestingly, there is now research proving that screen time is addictive, showing dopamine receptors in our brains react to screens equally as strong as receptors react to cocaine addiction. Glow Kids author explains in *TIME* magazine that screens in schools, and all the Ed-tech is a \$60 Billion Hoax that is harming children. We do not see that posted on the U.S. Department of Education or State Department of Education websites. Nor do we see the studies posted that show poor memory retention from screens, lower scores on tests, academic performance actually worse on screens. But we do see the federal government investing millions more into technology and data collection and the Ed-tech industry hungry to gobble up the billion-dollar education market.

### **C is for Cancer**

The Big (C).

Radiofrequency radiation (exposure coming from cell phones, cell towers, WI-FI, wireless laptops and devices) is labeled a class 2B carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Researchers found that cell phone use, exposure to cell phone radiation, increases risks of certain cancers. Remember this study that seemingly got buried after one day? Children are especially susceptible. Increased use of screens and Wi-Fi exposure has also been linked to depression, ADHD, anxiety and obesity in children. Wi-Fi exposure has also been associated with changes in glucose metabolism, cognitive impairment, heart arrhythmia, DNA damage and more.

[Update 9/26/16: The American Academy of Pediatrics Issued New Recommendations to “Reduce Exposure to Cell Phones.”

“In response to the U.S. National Toxicology Program study results finding exposure to wireless radiation significantly increased the prevalence of highly malignant heart and brain cancers in rodents, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has issued specific recommendations to reduce wireless cell phone exposure and updated their online resources for parents concerning cell phones and wireless devices.”



“The findings of brain tumors (gliomas) and malignant schwann cell tumors of the heart in the NTP study, as well as DNA damage in brain cells, present a major public health concern because these occurred in the same types of cells that have been reported to develop into tumors in epidemiological studies of adult cell phone users,” stated Ronald L. Melnick, PhD, the National Institutes of Health toxicologist who lead the NTP study design and senior advisor to the Environmental Health Trust. “For children the cancer risks may be greater than that for adults because of greater penetration and absorption of cell phone radiation in the brains of children and because the developing nervous system of children is more susceptible to tissue-damaging agents. Based on this new information, regulatory agencies need to make strong recommendations for consumers to take precautionary measures and avoid close contact with their cell phones, and especially limit or avoid use of cell phones by children.” (For the full press release and safety tips to reduce exposure to wireless radiation, see the American Academy of Pediatrics press release.)

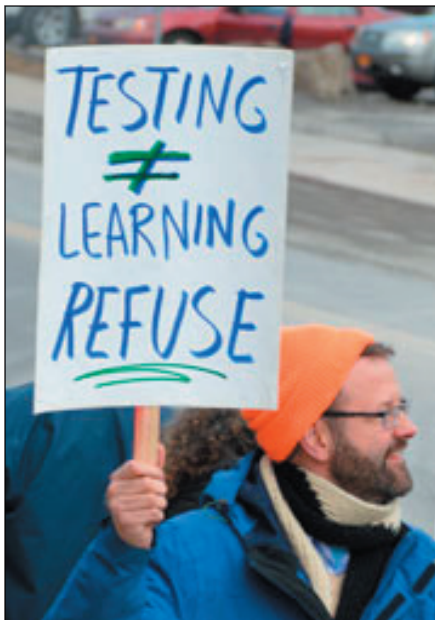
### **D is for Digital and Dementia and Data**

“There’s-an-app-for-that”

#### *Digital Dementia*

According to this report, “South Korean doctors have used the term ‘digital dementia’ to describe a deterioration in cognitive abilities that they believe is caused by the overuse of smartphones and games devices. South Korea is one of the most digitally connected countries in the world, where more than 67% of the population had a smartphone in 2013 – including 64% of teenagers; internet addiction has been recognized as a problem there since the late 1990s.”

If other countries and comprehensive, scientific studies



realize that screen use and exposure is harmful, addictive and say childhood internet addiction must be addressed, why are U.S. schools not also acting on this?

Some, like Norm Alster, say that the FCC, which oversees the broadband internet companies and online tech industry is a “Captured Agency” and controlled by the big and powerful industries it is meant to

regulate. Also interesting that in 1996, President Clinton signed the *Telecom Act*; we suggest you specifically look at Section 704 of that act as it pertains to the wireless communications industry and health.

Section 704 of the TCA states that no health or environmental concern can interfere with the placement of telecom equipment such as cell towers and antenna.

### **E & F ...Follow the Money, Every time.**

In 2005 after years of continued research and formation of non-profits with acronyms like SIF, IMS, SCORM, ADL, Pearson, Lumina, iNACOL etc, the Gates Funded Data Quality Campaign formed with 10 different organizations who share the goal of commonly tagged data standards, Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) databases in every state that would collect, track and share personal data outside of school and across state lines, starting in kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade and into career or college. In 2011, the Federal law FERPA meant to protect students’ personal data was changed, to now allow collection and sharing of student data *without parent permission*, outside of school and across state lines. [...]

And, as the Electronic Frontier Foundation asks, who is spying on students?

### **Opt Out and Do more.**

When you are opting out of the end of year state mandated test, that we all know will be replaced by embedded and hidden daily online curriculum/ assessment, do not think that is where it ends. These new online, formative “personalized” and adaptive tests are known as competency based education (CBE). See this excellent overview of the dangers of “personalized” learning, algorithms, and CBE that will be used to predict and track your child’s behavior and online activity. The Ed-tech industry and government hopes these embedded assessments

will be difficult if not impossible to opt out of. Don’t give in. Refuse the online embedded tests. Stand your ground. Ask for paper pencil. Keep textbooks and teachers. Do not settle for the switch to everything online and cyber-taught.

In a digital environment, everything your child does online can be captured, connected and catalogued. The LearnSphere project funded by the National Science Foundation and handled by Carnegie Mellon, explains this plan:

“There are several important initiatives designed to address these data access challenges, for individual researchers as well as institutions and states. LearnSphere, a cross-institutional community infrastructure project, aims to develop a large-scale open repository of rich education data by integrating data from its four components.[17]

“For instance, DataShop stores data from student interactions with online course materials, intelligent tutoring systems, virtual labs, and simulations, and DataStage stores data derived from online courses offered by Stanford University. Click-stream data stored in these repositories include thousands and even millions of data points per student, much of which is made publicly available to registered users who meet data privacy assurance criteria. On the other hand, MOOCdb and DiscourseDB, also components of LearnSphere, offer platforms for the extraction and representation of student MOOC data and textual data, respectively, surrounding student online learning interactions that are otherwise difficult to access or are highly fragmented. By integrating data held or processed through these different components, LearnSphere will create a large set of interconnected data that reflects most of a student’s experience in online learning.” <http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/student-data-in-the-digital-era/>

*What you can do:*

Ask your school what online vendors (like Knewton) they use. Ask to see data contracts, the data collected and shared. Ask why your child is exposed to more and more screen time, and industrial strength Wi-Fi at school. Ask to have the radiation levels measured, and ask to follow these best practices when using Wi-Fi. Ask to have amount of screen time documented and limited to pediatrician recommended limits. Remember your child’s classroom, your child, is being subjected to much more than just one end of the year test.

When you think Opt Out, think big. Think more. Think Protect the Child... all year.

