

Preparing for great-power war, France creates space command

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31 July 2019

French President Emmanuel Macron's administration announced this month the creation of a military space command and detailed plans to place anti-satellite weapons systems in orbit. The announcement is the latest step in a military build-up by France and the EU imperialist powers, and part of preparations to wage "great power" wars, including between nuclear-armed states.

The new military branch, whose creation was signaled by Macron on July 13, will be merged into the Air Force, which will henceforth be called the Air and Space Force. Defense Minister Florence Parly outlined the details of the new division in a speech to over 100 air force military brass at the Air Base 942 in Lyon on July 25.

"Space is a new front to defend, and we must be ready," Parly declared. "Seeking to one day become a space general will no longer be a fantasy, it will be a credible ambition."

This first stage of the command's operations will involve the deployment of a new generation of Syracuse satellites equipped with visual cameras to identify other nearby satellites. In the second stage, so-called nano-satellites that are more difficult to shoot down, and satellites equipped with submachine guns and lasers capable of destroying or incapacitating rival satellites, will be deployed.

The obvious implication of these announcements, ignored and covered up by the media, is that the ruling class is preparing to wage wars not only against impoverished and former colonial countries in the Middle East and Africa, targeted under the fraudulent banner of the "War on Terror"—which have no capacity to launch attacks using satellite technology or destroy French satellites—but against militarily-advanced nuclear-armed powers, like Russia, China and the

United States, which rely heavily on satellite technology for their operations.

This insane perspective is being worked out with no public discussion and entirely behind the backs of the working class. Summing up the discussions in the French state, *Le Point* quoted an unnamed official from Parly's cabinet stating that "we do not want to launch into a space arms race," but were engaged in "reasoned arsenalization."

In fact, the French announcement will accelerate a growing turn by the major powers to the development of outer-space weapons. Every area of the world, from the Arctic, to cyberspace and outer space, is being transformed into an arena of battle amidst a historic breakdown of the capitalist nation-state system that is driving the ruling elite towards war and accelerated attacks on the social and democratic rights of the working class at home.

In June 2018, US President Donald Trump announced the creation of a new "Space Force," to oversee and expand the more than 20,000 personnel already under the direction of the Air Force's Space Command. Last March, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a blood-curdling address to the nation to announce that India had become the third nation after the US and China to shoot down a satellite, and proclaim that "We are now a space power." China and Russia, the two principal targets of US military aggression to offset its relative economic decline through military force, are building up their own anti-satellite missile systems as well.

The feverish and *Dr. Strangelove*-esque militarism gripping the French ruling class was indicated by an announcement earlier this month that Macron's newly created Defense Innovation Agency has just created a "Red Team" of five to six science fiction authors,

whose task is to imagine and advise the military on futuristic weapons systems.

The development of a French space force is part of Macron's bid to take the leadership of a European army being spearheaded by Paris and Berlin. Their aim is to transform the European Union into a military power capable of waging war, including independently of and in opposition to the United States. Germany, in addition to having no nuclear weapons, does not have an active space program of its own, while the exit of Britain from the EU leaves France as the only EU nuclear power, in addition to possessing—for now—Europe's largest blue-water navy.

The EU's "Strategic Agenda for 2019–2024," adopted at its Brussels summit last month, asserts that Europe must "reinforce its global influence," "influence the course of world events," and "move forward towards a genuine European Defence Union."

Last month, a week after the US Defense Department reached the biggest ever trade deal for the purchase of nearly 500 fighter jets, France, Spain and Germany responded in kind with the signing of agreements for the creation of an integrated European air combat system. The cost of the project—which will include not only a new fighter plane, but an integrated network of fighter jets and unmanned drones linked to naval and land forces—will exceed €100 billion. Some estimate it at over €500 billion by 2050.

Speaking last Thursday, Parly made clear that France expects other European powers to contribute to the program. "France has its independence," but would "not be isolated in this new space of conflict," she said. "We will thus build, with our European partners, a future common capacity of knowledge in the spatial context." Germany and Italy would contribute to radar technology for detecting and identifying satellites, she said, and €700 million is to be reallocated to the Air and Space Command to give a total budget of €4.3 billion.

The Macron administration has boosted military spending and announced a series of major arms projects since coming to office. Last September, France raised total military spending by 5 percent to €35.9 billion, excluding pensions, as part of the EU target of 2 percent of GDP.

Last month, Macron unveiled the first of six Suffren-class nuclear-powered submarines, each of which is to

cost approximately €9 billion. As opposed to its predecessors, the Suffren will be able to remain underwater for 70 instead of 45 days and carry 50 percent more arms. It will be tasked with escorting France's nuclear-armed ballistic-missile submarines and aircraft carriers, as well as conducting espionage operations.

The feverish rearmament of the French and European ruling class for war exposes the fraud of all claims that European capitalism stands in relation to its US counterpart as a kinder and more benevolent version. Under conditions of the deepest economic crisis of the capitalist system since the 1930s, all the imperialist powers are once again preparing for war. The billions of euros necessary to fund these destructive weapons systems are to be extracted from the exploitation of the working class and the relentless imposition of social austerity.



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