



MERCHANTS OF DEATH Q & A

prepared by Syracuse Peace Council

What is a People's War Crimes Tribunal?

War Crimes Tribunals are courts of law established to try those accused of committing atrocities and crimes against humanity during war time. A **People's War Crimes Tribunal** derives its power from the public character of the proceedings, the participants, and the integrity of the procedures. They are not formal legal bodies. These help shine light on situations and gather evidence which could be used later by the International Criminal Court.

What are War Crimes?

The UN Rome Statute states that war crimes include the following during armed conflict. The charge also applies to any person or entity that “aids, abets, or otherwise assists” (including providing the means) for commission of:

- Murder
- Attacking Civilians
- Attacking Humanitarian Assistance
- Attacking undefended buildings, dwellings or towns
- Inflicting long term severe damage to the natural environment

What is the Meaning of “Merchants of Death”?

From Brad Wolf's short piece [War for Profit: A Very Short History](#):

When World War I concluded, “suspicions grew in the U.S. that nefarious business interests had propelled US involvement into the great slaughter. Investigative reporting and congressional hearings were initiated.” Then in 1934 Helmuth Engelbrecht wrote [Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry](#) which exposed the “unethical business practices of the weapons manufacturers and analyzed their enormous profits during WWI...[concluding that] ‘the rise and development of the arms merchants reveals them as a growing menace to World Peace.’”

For more, check out the 11 minute video, [History of the Original Merchants of Death](#).

Which Weapons Manufacturers Are Being Charged?

The Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal has charged four U.S. weapons makers with War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity: Raytheon, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and General Atomics. In November, 2022, the four defendants were served with “[subpoenas](#)” and asked to participate. All four defendants did not respond.

What is the Key Question for the Tribunal?

The question is, have Boeing, General Atomics, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon “aided and abetted” and “provided the means for” war crimes? The Tribunal will hold accountable — through testimony of witnesses and documentary evidence — U.S. weapons manufacturers who knowingly produce and sell products which attack and kill not only combatants but non-combatants as well.

How Has the Evidence Been Gathered?

The Tribunal has spent the last year gathering documentary and video-recorded evidence which will be presented to a panel of judges. Witnesses include Cornel West, Col. Lawrence, Wilkerson, John Pilger, Richard Falk, William Astore, Christian Sorensen, Marie Dennis, Jeffrey Stern, Norman Solomon, Jeremy Kuzmarov, Aisha Jumaan, Matt Aikens, Marie Dennis, Dr. Kelly Denton-Borhaug, and numerous others.

Who Are the Co-coordinators of the Tribunal?

Kathy Kelly is a long-time peace activist and author. She has, among many other things, made over two dozen trips to Afghanistan from 2010-2019, living with young Afghan Peace Volunteers in a working class neighborhood in Kabul. She learned about conditions in Afghanistan through encounters with mothers and children, many of whom were directly affected by war.

Nick Mottern co-coordinates BanKillerDrones.org with Kathy Kelly. He is also a member of the national board of Veterans For Peace, a reporter (having published on Truthout, Common Dreams, Counterpunch and many other websites), and researcher.

Brad Wolf is a former lawyer and co-founder of Peace Action Network of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He is a full-time peace and justice activist and has written for The Progressive, Common Dreams and Counterpunch, among others.

Where Can I Learn More?

Here are a few places to start.

Websites:

- [Merchants of Death War Crimes People's Tribunal](#) to register for the opening session and to see up-to-date information and what is happening. Also check their [facebook page](#).
- [SPC's Beyond War and Militarism Committee](#) for local organizing. Also look at SPC on [facebook](#) and [instagram](#).
- [War Industry Resistance Network](#), especially good for their webinar list

Webinars:

- [Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal](#) is a Jan. 2023 introduction to the vision behind organizing the War Crimes Tribunal. Human rights attorney Bill Quigley talks about the legal end, and Merchants of Death co-coordinator Kathy Kelly focuses on the human impacts of the “products” of the corporations that have been “[subpoenaed](#)”.. Excellent.
- [Meet the Big Five: How the Military-Industrial Complex Controls Politics](#) is another War Industry Resisters Network video that first streamed a year ago. The webinar looks at Raytheon Technologies, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, their partnership with the US government, and their influence over the US Congress and the Executive Branch, under both Democratic and Republican presidents. Speakers were:

- **Neta Crawford**, professor and co-director/co-founder of the [Costs of War Project](#) at Brown University.
- **William D. Hartung**, senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and author of *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex*.
- **Christian Sorensen**, independent journalist mainly focused on the U.S. war industry, and author of *Understanding the War Industry*.

Articles:

- [Where Your Income Tax Money Really Goes Fiscal Year 2024](#) is a good, easy-to-understand two-page flier by the War Resisters League.
- [War for Profit: A Very Short History](#) by the Tribunal's co-coordinator Brad Wolf is a short piece explaining the post-WWI genesis of the term "Merchants of Death" and what came of the movement that sprang up, and also the Congressional hearings investigating whether U.S. corporations, had led the U.S. into WWI.
- [A Hall of Shame of U.S. Weapons Sales](#) by William Hartung is subtitled "U.S.-supplied weaponry has fueled conflicts, enabled human-rights violations, and helped destabilize not just individual countries but whole regions" and gives specific examples.