

The empire and the robots

A short while ago I dealt with the United States' plans to impose the absolute superiority of its air force as an instrument of domination on the rest of the world. I mentioned the project that by 2020 they would have more than a thousand latest generation bombers and F-22 and F-35 fighter planes in their fleet of 2500 military aircraft. In twenty more years, every single one of their war planes will be robot-operated.

Military budgets always count on the support of the immense majority of American legislators. There is hardly any state in the Union where employment does not depend in part on the defense industries.

On a global level and with constant value, military expenses have doubled in the last 10 years as if there were no danger at all of any crisis. At this moment, it is the most prosperous industry on the planet.

By 2008, approximately 1.5 trillion dollars were invested in defense budgets. The US spends 42% of world expenses in this area --607 billion-- not including war expenses, while the number of people who go hungry in the world has reached the figure of 1 billion.

Two days ago a western news dispatch informed that in mid-August the US army exhibited a tele-guided helicopter along with robots capable of working as sappers, 2500 of which have been sent into combat zones.

A company marketing robots maintained that the new technologies would revolutionize the manner of directing the war. It has been published that in 2003 the US barely had enough robots in its arsenal and, according to AFP, "today it has 10,000 land vehicles as well as 7000 air devices, from the small Raven that can be hand-launched right up to the gigantic Global Hawk, a spy plane 13 meters long and with a 35 meter wingspan capable of flying at great altitudes for 35 hours." This dispatch lists other weapons as well.

While the United States is spending such huge figures in killing technology, the president of that country is sweating buckets trying to bring health services to 50 million Americans who don't have them. There is such confusion that the new president said that he felt he was closer than ever to achieving reform of the health care system but that the battle is becoming fierce.

He added that the story is clear, that every time health care reforms seem closer on the horizon, special interests fight with everything they've got applying their leverage, launching publicity campaigns and using their political allies to scare the American people.

The fact is that in Los Angeles 8000 people --most of them unemployed, according to the press-- turned up in a stadium to receive medical care from a traveling free clinic that provides services to the Third World. The crowds had spent the night there. Some of them had traveled from as far away as hundreds of miles.

"What do I care whether it's socialist or not? We're the only country in the world where the most vulnerable people have nothing", said a college-educated woman from a black neighborhood."

According to the report "a blood test can cost 500 dollars and a routine dental treatment more than 1000 dollars."

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Published on FIDEL Soldier of Ideas (<http://www.fidelcastroruz.biz>)

What kind of hope can that society offer the world?

The lobbyists in Congress make their profits working against a simple law intended to provide medical care to tens of millions of poor people, mostly blacks and Latinos who lack it. Even a blockaded country like Cuba has been able to do it and is even cooperating with dozens of countries in the Third World.

If robots in the hands of the transnationals can replace imperial soldiers in the wars of conquest, who will stop the transnationals in their quest for a market for their artifacts?

Just as they have flooded the world with automobiles that today compete with mankind for the consumption of non-renewable energy and even foods converted into fuel, so too they can flood the world with robots that would displace millions of workers from their workplaces.

Better yet, scientists could also design robots capable of governing; that way they could spare the US government and Congress that terrible, contradictory and confusing work.

No doubt they would do it better and cheaper.

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August 19, 2009
3:15 p.m.

Date:

19/08/2009

Source URL: <http://www.fidelcastroruz.biz/en/articulos/empire-and-robots?page=0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C0%2C25%2C0%2C4%2C0>