

PM: Good and Not So Good News

By Polly Mann

We're more than halfway through 2015 and how is it progressing? Here is just a sample of some stories, both good and not so good.

Efforts Arise to Ground Drones

The only people on earth who could possibly question that the following is good news are those invested in drone production: It seems that KnowDrones.com and Veterans Democratic Club of Sacramento sponsored a 15-second television ad urging drone pilots (who operate from desktops) to stop killing people. According to KnowDrones: "On February 27, this first-ever TV commercial began a weeklong run on various cable channels in Las Vegas, NV, including CNN and MSNBC, showing viewers living near the Creech AFB [Air Force Base] drone control center what they probably have never seen before—children killed and mutilated by U.S. drones. It's graphic but necessary.

On Mar 31, the same commercial began a month's run on CNN, MSNBC and even Fox News in and around Beale AFB outside Sacramento, CA, a base critical to supporting U.S. killer drone operations." Nick Mattern of KnowDrones.com suggested that activists have focused on appealing directly to the pilots because appealing to the U.S. government has become so hopeless: "The President and the Congress refuse to respect law and morality and stop drone attacks, so we are asking the people who bear the burden of doing the actual killing to put a stop to it."

And then there is this also about drones, from The Guardian, March 16, 2015: The American Civil Liberties Union is filing a lawsuit against the Obama administration over continued secrecy surrounding its controversial use of armed drones to carry out worldwide lethal strikes and assassinations. Jameel Jaffer, deputy legal director for the ACLU, said that "over the last few years, the US government has used armed drones to kill thousands of people, including hundreds of civilians. The public should know who the government is killing and why."



"Lost in the Atlantic," Albert Robida, French illustrator, 1908, cover of a paper novel, La Guerre Infernal - The Infernal War

High Tensions in the High North: Norway and Russia

RT reported on March 10 that “unprecedented war games, involving 5,000 Norwegian troops and 400 vehicles, have started in Norway’s northernmost province, bordering Russia.” It is part of a NATO exercise. According to a The New York Times article of April 20, “Norway is returning to Cold War policy as Russian planes are seen in the Arctic. The increase is due to the fact that Russia’s military budget has increased dramatically over the past few years. In 2000, when Putin became president, Russia spent \$9.2 billion annually on its military but this has since risen ten times and will increase again this year.”

The Times article claimed that Norway is worried about possible Russian expansion because of the Ukraine issue. But Russian military buildup has come on the heels of U.S./NATO’s buildup of so-called missile “defense” system in European countries. The system is actually an offensive system designed to obliterate its target with the first strike. According to Defense News of July 17, Norway has confirmed its commitment to NATO, but “it remains to be seen” if this will result in Norway “providing ballistic missile sites to NATO, including warship platforms, or if participation will be limited to capital funding contributions...Russia regards the NATO system as being primarily directed at its military forces.” An important fact to note is that Norway and Russia share the Barents Sea under which lie vast deposits of oil and gas; due to global warming and melting ice, it has opened up more access.

All Is Not Fair

Interpress Service reported this from the United Nations, March 19, 2015: The growing economic inequalities between rich and poor—and the lopsided concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the world’s one percent are undermining international efforts to fight global poverty, environmental degradation and social injustice according to an alliance of nongovernmental organizations (ActionAid, Greenpeace, Oxfam and Civicus) Leading economist Andy Sumner of King’s College, London, says, “we find in our number-crunching that poverty can only be ended if inequality falls.”

The Institute for Policy Studies commented about a New York State Comptroller report released March 11, 2015, comparing Wall Street versus Main Street: The \$28.5 billion bonuses doled out to Wall Street employees in 2014 is double the annual pay for ALL 1,007,000 Americans who work full-time at the current federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Wall Street’s bonus culture creates an incentive for high-risk behaviors that endanger the entire economy. A large share of low-wage earners spend every workday meeting basic human needs, such as providing food services and taking care of the disabled and elderly.

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor and columnist for the WAMM newsletter.