“Drones Over New York City”: A Deadly Drone, Modeled on the Dragonfly… .

NYC's Deal with Israel

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In all the hype about a planned billion-dollar research facility in New York City, there isn’t a hint of a discussion about how it would serve the Israeli war on Palestine.

A DEADLY drone, modeled on the dragonfly insect, with a 9-inch wingspan. Four-wheeled mini-robots with panoramic video-imaging capabilities that perform surveillance without risk of harm to their human monitors. Unmanned armored bulldozers that can demolish property without exposing their distant operators to retaliation.

These are just a few of the weapons in an arsenal developed or under development by New York City’s newest partner–the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology.

A few days before Christmas last year, Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced plans for a $2 billion research campus to be constructed in partnership with Cornell University, Technion and the City of New York.

Proclaiming that “New York City’s goal of becoming the global leader in technological innovation is now within sight,” Mayor Bloomberg pledged $100 million in taxpayer money for the new venture. It will be added to a $350 million gift to Cornell from alumnus Charles F. Feeney to fund construction of the 2 million-square-foot state-of-the-art research institute to be built on Roosevelt Island, which lies in the East River between Manhattan and Queens.

New York’s media, including its “paper of record,” the *New York Times*, ran with the giddy story of the estimated 20,000 construction jobs, 600 new businesses, billions in projected revenue and 30,000 permanent jobs that will supposedly result from the research campus. Touting sophisticated environmental standards of construction and energy use, press releases have also heralded the educational opportunities this campus could offer not just experts, but budding scientists in New York’s public schools.

With rare exceptions like WBAI’s *Law and Disorder* and the website Mondoweiss, the media neglected to mention Technion’s extensive military and political connections to apartheid Israel. Shir Hever, an Israeli researcher, explains that Technion “has all but enlisted itself in the [Israeli] military.”

Technion is a sort of MIT and Harvard rolled into one. Founded in 1923, before the state of Israel, Technion’s first palm tree was even planted by none other than Albert Einstein. The Haifa-based university schools the military and academic elite of Israel.

According to Montreal-based social justice collective Tadamon, 80 percent of Israel's NASDAQ companies and 74 percent of its electronic companies are run by Technion graduates. Active-duty Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, officers and reservists are granted a range of perks by the university–none of which are available to Palestinians, who do not serve in a military that largely exists to maintain and extend Israel's 64-year occupation of Palestinian land.

UNDER THE anodyne classification of "applied sciences," Technion's research accomplishments read like a what's what of science fiction, full of unmanned drones, pilotless surveillance gizmos and driverless bulldozers.

The *Jerusalem Post* reports that Technion's D9 unmanned armored tank performed so magnificently during Israel's massacre of 1,400 Gazans in the 2008-09 Operation Cast Lead that the IDF doubled its order.

Journalist Max Blumenthal reported about the drone plane based on the dragonfly, with a 9-inch wingspan and 8-inch body. According to a quote Blumenthal cited from the American Technion Society website, "The plane's relatively low speed enables it to easily enter rooms through small windows and to send back photos from a miniature camera."

Technion personnel have worked on means to track human eye movements–in collaboration with Elbit, a key developer of Israel's apartheid wall, illegal under international law, that slices through the occupied West Bank.

Technion is also a global expert in developing mini-robots capable of traversing rubble and planting bombs, as well as building "surveillance snakes"–whose goal is to explore the tunnels that are crucial for transporting desperately needed banned goods into blockaded Gaza, where 1.6 million Palestinians barely scrape by.

In this era of neoliberalism, Technion's invention of clever military gadgets that require minimal labor is a budget-cutter's dream come true.

Not surprisingly, Palestinians aren't the only victims of Technion's "applied sciences." North America's own apartheid wall along the U.S.-Mexico border uses surveillance technology developed by Technion. And stealth drones that the U.S. has used to such deadly effect in Pakistan are also developed by Technion.

With U.S. unemployment still devastatingly high–even the right-wing *New York Post* admits real unemployment is 15.6 percent [2]–it's hardly surprising that news of this enormous construction and research project is widely viewed as a boon to New York's economy.

But under the guise of research, this deal would cement a lucrative bond between the financial capital of the U.S. empire and Israel's military-industrial complex.

Protest against this deal has already appeared from the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI). Calling on Cornell to scrap its joint campus project with Technion [3], the USACBI argued:

> They provide the knowledge that undergirds Israel's ongoing colonial project. Technion, like all Israeli academic institutions, is deeply complicit with Israel's military, providing it with the technological infrastructure to maintain and

expand its ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land.

Is it any wonder that an institution best known for stealth technology is hiding its real actions, in cahoots with the billionaire mayor and other city officials, beneath a cloak of academic respectability?

What is true of Cornell's collaboration with Technion is also the case for New York City. Since New Yorkers are being asked to pay $100 million toward this deal, we should at least be able to debate whether we want to bankroll apartheid's wars and ghettos.

We have to question the reason for this research in the first place. Why must there be unmanned contraptions used to spy on and target a hungry, dispossessed population? Why are billions of dollars and great mental effort being directed toward developing machines that kill or maim–or help to do so–surreptitiously anywhere in the world?

True, many major research institutions have contracts with military and espionage outfits the world over. But the architects of this colossal deal, which would use significant public funds, have been mute about the nefarious activities of one of its partners.

Why? If they have nothing to hide, let them pitch the deal for what it is–a contract with apartheid's enforcers.

Why, we have to ask, in a city known the world over for its multiculturalism and diversity, is a research institution that will serve ethnic cleansing even tolerated?

New York City is home to the world's largest Jewish community living outside of Israel–around 2 million people. It is also home to one of the largest Arab communities in the U.S.–more than 370,000, according to U.S. Census figures.

It would be a sick tribute to the militarized profit system if America's foremost urban symbol of ethnic diversity and cosmopolitanism, New York City, winds up home to an institution devoted to stealth warfare to achieve ethnic segregation.

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