



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



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**The Tail Wagging the Dog**

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“Don’t be evil” was a motto used in Google’s corporate code of conduct around the time it was founded in 1998. Many soon-to-be employees were drawn to the company because of its ethos as espoused by this idea. (Its motto is now “Do the right thing.”)

Lately, it has become evident that an influential group of Google employees considers the United States military to be evil. For the newcomer to reality the U.S. military includes American citizens who saved much of the western world from Hitler and Stalin; not to mention most of East Asia from Japan.

I’ve visited many of these places. For example, East Germany, both before and after the Wall came down---partially thanks to the “evil” military of America. We’ve all read about various deadly despots who have been curtailed and called to answer for their deeds, often because of America’s military.

We’ve made our military mistakes---big time---but they came about because of decisions from the White House and Congress. In numerous instances, the military has acted as a brake on legislative and administrative military initiatives and over-reach. Over the past decade, some members of the high military brass have stated certain military initiatives in congressional districts are not needed, much to the chagrin of pork-barrel politicians.

Due to a cadre of Google employees, this company has cancelled a contact with the Department of Defense called Project Maven (I am basing my sources on Google searches and *Fortune Magazine*, June, 2019, pp. 90-99.)

This cancellation did not come about from the owners (stockholders) of the company (now called Alphabet). It came about because of a powerful group of employees felt betrayed by their company doing business with the Pentagon.

Maven revolves around projects using artificial intelligence (AI) to assist analysts in examining video images taken from drones. The executives at Google have stated Maven is a defensive and not an offensive project. It made no difference. The anti-Maven employees at Google “were worried that Google’s technology could ultimately be used to make drone strikes more lethal and that Maven would lead to additional deals between Google and the military.”

One of Google’s former employees, who quit the company because of Maven, said, “It was such a betrayal. ... We’re pretending to be a happy company that does lovely information organizing, and then you’re building several steps toward killer drones flying around.”

What shortsightedness, perhaps even hypocrisy. This person ignores the huge Google “lovely information organizing” initiative of recording the location of my private residence (and yours), including our back yards, one of the few places in urban America where we are supposed to have some privacy. I suppose this gross invasion of privacy is not on her list of so-called Google betrayals. I have found it disturbing that I know think about my “sanctified” back yard, with protective trees and bushes, and places to sunbathe, are being shared with an Google omnipresent camera.

Perhaps this person also overlooks Google’s massive “lovely information organizing” by capturing personal information on people; an operation that was forbidden by the U.S. Postal Service in those long-forgotten times...that is, a few decades ago.

As social pundits might put it---perhaps a Twain or a Thoreau---selective conscience is a convenient vehicle to carry along in life on the carriage that also transports selective ethical values.

In June of this year (2019), Google announced it would not renew its Maven contract with the DOD, and also vowed not to use AI to create weapons.

Consequently, one of the world’s largest software firms is exiting from a technology that both friends and potential adversaries are plunging into. Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin (Russia) and Xi Jinping (China) are hoisting respectively glasses of vodka and plum wine to another victory to their nemesis.

Let me be clear on this issue. I admire the Google employees who voiced their conscience about the military, some by quitting the company (after they made their millions?...I could not pass this one up.) But to exclude Google from doing work with the DOD places handcuffs on, not just Google, but to America’s defense industry.

Reasonable people wish all nations did not need to spend their precious resources on the military. But the behavior of deadly despots is part of the human condition. We rid our race of murderous dictators in North Africa and parts of the Middle East. Before that time, we displaced Noriega in Panama; before that...on and on; scores of irradiations of malevolent men.

We also abandoned or had eradicated a significant number of well-meaning, competent leaders--part of the Iron Wall curtain that remains closed to the U.S. citizen. Notwithstanding, dangerous dictators are akin to weeds. Once cut down in one place, they spring up in another. (Source: human history.)

Beyond our life spans, I believe we humans will remove pathological aggression from our DNA. But for now, we must deal with the present: to the issue of America’s so-called evil military.

A few weeks ago, I watched Russia celebrate its WWII success with the annual Victory Parade on Red Square (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0dA2Mr9YB8>, see the accompanying figure). A few years ago, I visited Red Square and watched a less-elaborate display of Russia’s military, but it was still a parade showing massive military might. It sent both chills and thrills down my spine.



They’re also building drones.

Obviously, this photo shows the army. My point in this article is that a likely equal or larger number of Russians (and other countries' military organizations) are actively involved in building offensive and defensive military drones. You think President Trump's July 4<sup>th</sup> speech was military-oriented, take a look at this YouTube presentation. In order to understand the power of Russia's prowess (at least on the parade field), watch the entire show. Trump is a military-display-piker.

Putin is a frustrated and cunning operative, who remains deeply disturbed by the demise of the former USSR. Putin is nowhere close to reconciliation to these events; quite the opposite.

For the well-meaning Google employees, again, I admire your idealism. I also lament your naiveté. Nonetheless, for the Google cancellation of a DOD project, pressured by employees who consider the U.S. military as evil, I draw the line in the sand against these ill-informed people. Until human aggression goes away (don't hold your breath), there will be a need for a military defense against the dangerous despots in our race.

Should employees dictate a company's policy? Input from these personnel is important to a company's health, and should not be ignored. However, for this instance, it's the tail wagging the dog.