

Press Release

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Initiative against Military Research sends apologies to Noam Chomsky

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Regional political forces in the German state of Baden-Württemberg are trying to misuse the good name of U.S. peace scientist Noam Chomsky for their policy of militarization. This is a scandalous treatment of a personality who is highly respected worldwide. The Initiative against Military Research at Universities absolutely rejects all such attempts. What happened?

The Center for Art and Media Technology ZKM at Karlsruhe had invited the renowned U.S. linguist and peace scientist Noam Chomsky to lecture on "Driving forces behind U.S. policy" on 30 May, 2014. He spoke to an audience of 2000 people, it was one of the largest ZKM events ever. The very size of the audience, many of them students, demonstrated that Noam Chomsky is a highly respected person here, and also expressed a desire for peace.

During the discussion, a spokesperson of our Initiative referred to military research at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology KIT – which is rejected by the students –, and requested Noam Chomsky, as a Professor of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology MIT, to explain what he thought of the militarization of universities. In a long and detailed response, Noam Chomsky cited impressive examples of "how the economy works" at the expense of taxpayers, for the benefit of powerful private corporations including the arms industry. He explained that military research at universities, financed from public budgets, played a key role here. He described it as an attack on democracy and freedom and supported the Initiative in what they tried to achieve.

The regional press here, however, has reported the very opposite. The newspaper *Badische Neuste Nachrichten* is seriously trying to create the impression that our Initiative tried to urge Noam Chomsky to make a "trite statement of solidarity" and that he had refrained and, instead, explained how useful military research was for the benefit of people.

This incredible distortion of Noam Chomsky's statement should be seen on its political background. Die KIT's administration has been opposed, right from the start, to the students' demand of renouncing military research through a Civil Clause. Military research is taking place at the KIT, with the backing of the "Green-Red" state government of Baden-Württemberg. Our Initiative had drawn attention to three examples in a flyer that was distributed at the beginning of the ZKM event: So-called "pure basic research" for the Pentagon in KIT's computer science sector; Intelligence research for the NSA by KIT's Professor Alex Waibel; nuclear reactor research for the military, which, incidentally, is a violation of the KIT Law of the state of Baden-Württemberg,

Our Initiative is ashamed of such irresponsible journalism in our city. This is outside the due diligence of unbiased journalists and publishers and serves in a biased way the interests of the KIT administration, the "Green-Red" state government and the armament lobby.

On behalf of the local peace movement of Karlsruhe, our Initiative sends apologies to Noam Chomsky. We wish the 85 year old scientist good health and strength for the future.

More information and sources (also in English) will be published in today's edition of *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* <http://www.nrhz.de/flyer/beitrag.php?id=20438> (dt.)
Attached English pdf version <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20140608.pdf> (en. & dt.)

Translation: Lothar Letsche

Karlsruhe: Addendum to moving performance by Noam Chomsky at ZKM

Regional press falsified Chomsky's statement

by Dietrich Schulze

Regional policy in the German state of Baden-Wurtemberg is trying to misuse the good name of U.S. peace scientist Noam Chomsky, a person of international standing, for their policy of militarization. An outrageous, scandalous incident with an international dimension.

As reported in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* [1], the ZKM (Center for Art and Media Technology) in Karlsruhe, at the initiative of its director Peter Weibel, was able to fulfil a dream they always had and brought to life a speech by the famous American linguist and peace scientist Noam Chomsky in this "residence of justice", After some unbiased press coverage before and after the event in an interview [2] about his 30 May lecture, some circles seem to have disliked Chomsky's determined, deeply rooted anti-militarism.

The local paper *Badische Neueste Nachrichten* BNN was the one that expressed this displeasure on June 2, in a report entitled "About Obama and woolly statements" [3] In the lively discussion that followed Chomsky's speech and longer than the lecture itself, he was asked by the author of this article what he thought about military research at universities, especially the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology KIT.

BNN's comment: "What struck the audience was Chomsky's calm analysis in his arguments and the precise clarity with which he draws attention to hidden contradictions. In his reply to a question on "civil clauses" that would prevent universities or institutions such as the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) from carrying out military research, Chomsky refrains from a trite statement of solidarity, but points to a little-known connection: it was research contracts from the Pentagon which boosted the development of information technology, from which corporations such as Microsoft or Google benefit today. In other words: it was public funds that allowed an individual like Bill Gates to become a multi-billionaire." Reader are given the impression that Chomsky emphasized how useful military research is for the human race. Fortunately on June 5, the ZKM had made a video of the lecture [4] and complete discussion [5] available on the web. Lothar Letsche was able to transcribe and translate the authors's question and Noam Chomsky's response [6]. Here is the question and two quotations from the lengthy statement:

Question of the author:

"Mr. Chomsky, it was a great speech and I have only a small question, concerning an international appeal, which you signed three years ago, that all universities should reject military research worldwide. A big vision - but if one repeats visions, they can become true. In this city, there is a research institution KIT - sounds similar as MIT, from where you come -, and you know what militarization there is. This KIT is doing military research, and if you would repeat your



FULL HOUSE - DER ANDRANG IM ZKM KARLSRUHE WAR RIESIG: Besucher aus ganz Europa kamen zum Vortrag des 85-jährige Wissenschaftlers Noam Chomsky, der über drängende politische Themen sprach und anschließend Fragen beantwortete. Fotos (2): Artis

Source: Badische Neueste Nachrichten BNN No 125 of 06.02.2014



The author moving back to seat after his question to Prof. Noam Chomsky
Standing: ZKM director Prof. Peter Weibel. Source: ZKM video [5]

appeal to the KIT administration, that could be a good point for all of us and for peaceful science.”

From the reply by Noam Chomsky: „.... Well, military research is a device for compelling the population to fund the profits of high-tech industry. That’s one its major functions. So you take a look at, say, computers, the Internet, lasers, microelectronics, satellites, run through the whole ...[?] – where do they come from? They come, mostly funded by the Pentagon, at institutions like the MIT, taxpayers pay for it, because “the Russians are coming” so you have to pay for it , and the end result is that, you know, Bill Gates is the richest man in the world, Steve Jobs could set up Apple. That’s the way the economy works. It’s a very .. if you read the newspapers, the Financial Times, German economic newspapers, constantly talking about "free enterprise" and markets and so on, I mean, there are some crucial facts about markets, you can like them or not, but there are some properties which they have. And one property is, say, if you invest in a risky enterprise, then you invest for decade after decade and risky and costly, and if after all this there’s some profit, it’s supposed to go back to you. That’s not the way the economy works. The taxpayer is extorted, essentially, to pay for the risky and costly developments, literally for decades, and does not get any back for it, all the profits go to private enterprise. That’s our free enterprise economy. And the Pentagon was a funnel. **But you’re right about military research. It should not be on campus.** Actually, I don’t think this should be there either, for different reasons. **It’s an attack on democracy and freedom.**”

Unbiased readers will agree that Chomsky’s message was the opposite of what BNN tried to convey.

Chomsky had actually supported the rejection of military research at universities including KIT, as was pointed out in a flyer of the "Initiative against Military Research at Universities", which the author distributed before the event [8]. What Chomsky had explained, quoting the example of the United States and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology MIT, is “how the economy works” in a devastating way, at the expense and to the detriment of taxpayers, for the profit of powerful private corporations and the arms industry.

The KIT administration had abundantly demonstrated their attitude towards a commitment to peaceful research (civil clause) and rejection of military research at a panel discussion on May 18 [9] (video) [10]. It is a fact that military research is being carried out at the KIT, and the flyer [8] had drawn attention to three examples:

- So-called "pure basic research" for the Pentagon in KIT’s computer science sector.
- Intelligence research for the NSA by KIT’s Professor Alex Waibel.
- Nuclear reactor research for the military, in violation of the KIT Law of the state of Baden-Wurtemberg,

It is precisely this orientation which BNN tries to support by concealing justified criticism and - in line with that, as was demonstrated here - distortion of the positions of opponents. This is an act of irresponsible journalism in favor of the KIT administration, the “Green-Red” state government of Baden-Wurtemberg, and the armament lobby.

Sources:

- [1] <http://www.nrhz.de/flyer/beitrag.php?id=20412>
- [2] <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20140531.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20140603.pdf>
- [4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_Z9bslsANw
- [5] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Av8uFvDTvw4>
- [6] <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20140607.pdf>
- [7] <http://www.inesglobal.com/commit-universities-to-peace.phtml>
- [8] <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20140530.pdf>
- [9] <http://www.stattweb.de/files/civil/Doku20140520.pdf>
- [10] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRXJ42zj5JM>

Dr.-Ing. Dietrich Schulze (born 1940) was after 18 years of research in the field of applied high-energy physics from 1984 to 2005 chairman of the workers council of the former Research Center Karlsruhe. In 2008 he founded with others in Karlsruhe the “Initiative against Military Research at Universities” (WebDoku <http://www.stattweb.de/files/DokuKITcivil.pdf>) and today he is their spokesman. He is a board member of Scientist Initiative for Peace and Sustainability, as well as in the Initiative "Universities of Peace - Yes to the Civil Clause", BdWi member and journalist.