



# Merchants of Death Tribunal Study Guide

The story of big military-business crimes against Gaza, Iraq, Syria, and beyond.

***A five part screening and discussion series***

dictated by the Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal for use by students of Imperialism to deepen your understanding and fuel your fighting spirit.



# Merchants of Death

The Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal will hold accountable — through testimony of witnesses — U.S. weapons manufacturers who knowingly produce and sell products which attack and kill not only combatants but non-combatants as well. These manufacturers may have committed Crimes Against Humanity as well as violated U.S. Federal criminal laws. The Tribunal will hear the evidence and render a verdict.

Lockheed-Martin

Boeing


Raytheon

General Atomics

**"Come War Profiteers, Give Account."**

[www.merchantsofdeath.org](http://www.merchantsofdeath.org)

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A kite with a long tail and several colorful bows (yellow, orange, pink, blue) is flying against a sky filled with large, billowing clouds illuminated by the warm light of a sunset or sunrise. The sky transitions from a pale blue at the top to a deep orange near the horizon. The kite's tail is long and thin, trailing behind it as it flies.

*"We render you, corporations  
obsessed with war profiteering,  
accountable; answerable!"*

**- Cornel West, Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal Member**

# CONTENTS

## CONTENTS

The following materials are for use by the student activists leading the movement for Palestine, and liberation movements across the world. For students of U.S. American imperialism, the Merchants of Death War Crimes Tribunal seeks to contextualize and deepen knowledge about the United States political and military industrial enterprise and its 20th and 21st century crimes against humanity, in Palestine and beyond.

The presentation consists of FIVE episodes of Tribunal evidence:

Operation Cast Lead (The Gaza War) 25:57

Shock and Awe: Episode 1 34:52

Shock and Awe: Episode 2 24:55

Why the U.S. Military Is In Syria 21:27

Lobbyists and War 1 49:18

# THEMES



The strength and continuity of student movement for Palestine with past movements against colonialism, what comes next?

The beginning, growth, peak, and decline of U.S. Imperial power particularly in the Middle East.

The tactics of U.S. business abroad, and the mercenary nature of our armed forces for corporate use.

The conscious profiteering and long-term planning for international conflict by Lockheed Martin, Boeing, Raytheon, General Atomics as the four main defendants of the tribunal, as well as their political and corporate media collaborators.

The mechanisms and products of war, the movement of money for their sale and use, and the actors that profit from this cycle.

The opportunities and means by which the American public can support the international movement against their own military industrial enterprise.

The necessity to humanize, empathize, and understand the movements abroad that have developed to respond to U.S. imperialist violence.

A black and white photograph showing a conflict zone. In the foreground, two soldiers in full combat gear, including helmets and vests, are seen from behind, walking away from the camera. In the background, a large bus is parked on a street. Other people, including a man in a white thobe, are visible in the distance. The scene is filled with the atmosphere of a war-torn area.

# ***BROAD QUESTIONS***

# ***BROAD QUESTIONS***

How many of these conflicts have you heard of before? Which do you have extensive knowledge of, and where did you acquire that knowledge?

Do you know people who work in the U.S. armed forces or have served in a previous conflict? Where were they? What have they told you about it?

On April 30, when Columbia University student protesters took over Hamilton Hall, they renamed it “Hind’s Hall,” dropping a large banner out the windows above the building’s entrance. This was a hall famously **occupied** by students in the 1968 protests against the Vietnam War and against Jim Crow racism in the United States. The students are risking suspension and expulsion, and a very real blacklist has already been generated against them, with Congress joining in to **define** criticism of genocide as a form of antisemitism that state universities and state-linked employers will not be allowed to tolerate.

I believe their love for **Hind Rajab** guides the movement so desperately needed to resist militarism. Hind was six years old when Israel used U.S.-supplied weapons to kill her.



# Our Demands

1. **DIVEST**

2. **REINVEST**

3. Full **TRANSPARENCY**

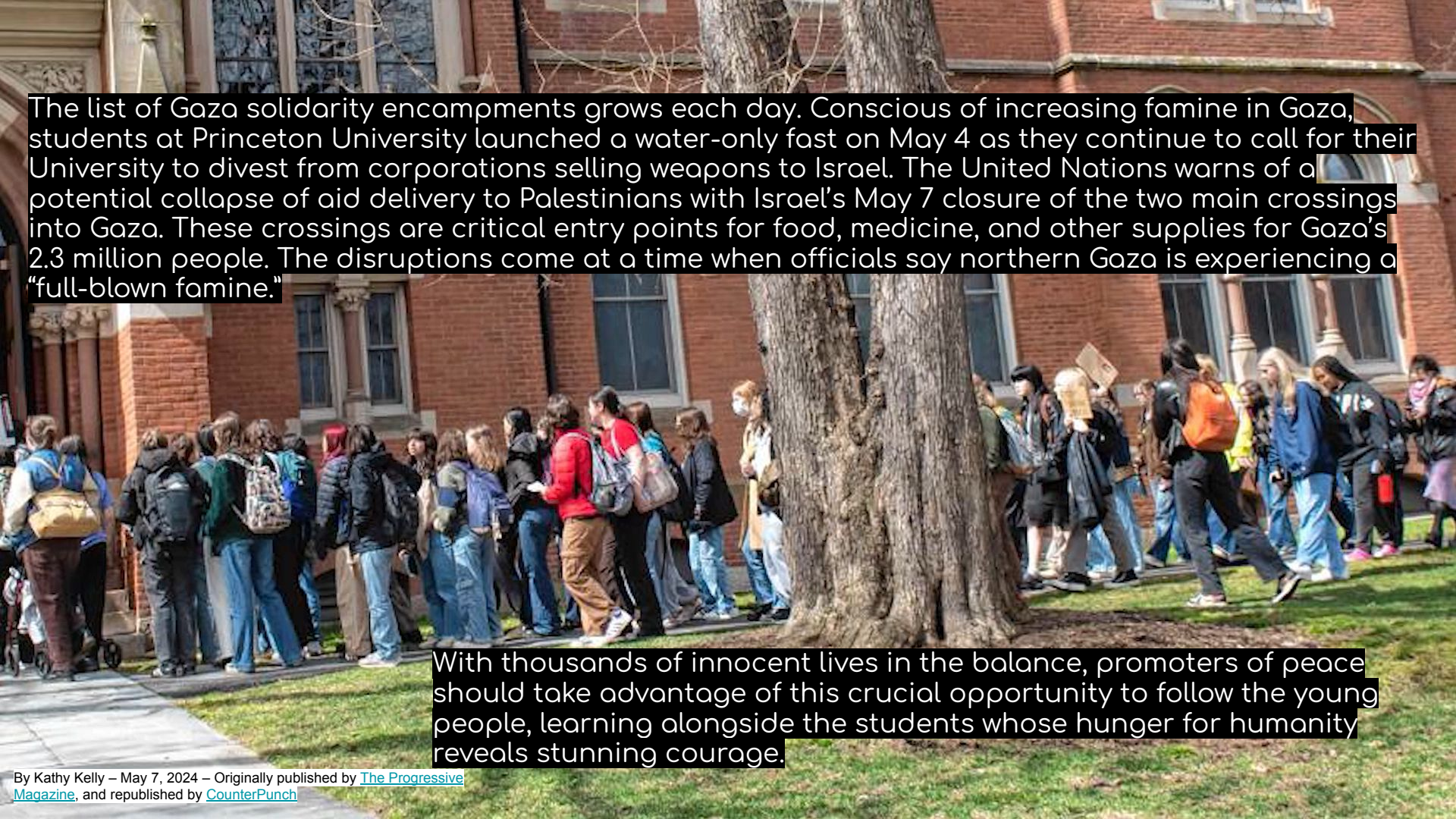
Universities should, in theory, be places to learn things of importance, and we can learn from the students of Hind Hall to throw comfort and ambition out the window while keeping hold of love, as the students clung to that banner and to the name of Hind Rajab. We can learn to keep hold of our humanity. We learn by doing, as these students are learning to do, drawing wisdom from people like Phil Berrigan who famously said, "Don't get tired!"

with input from  
the Smith Community

with the  
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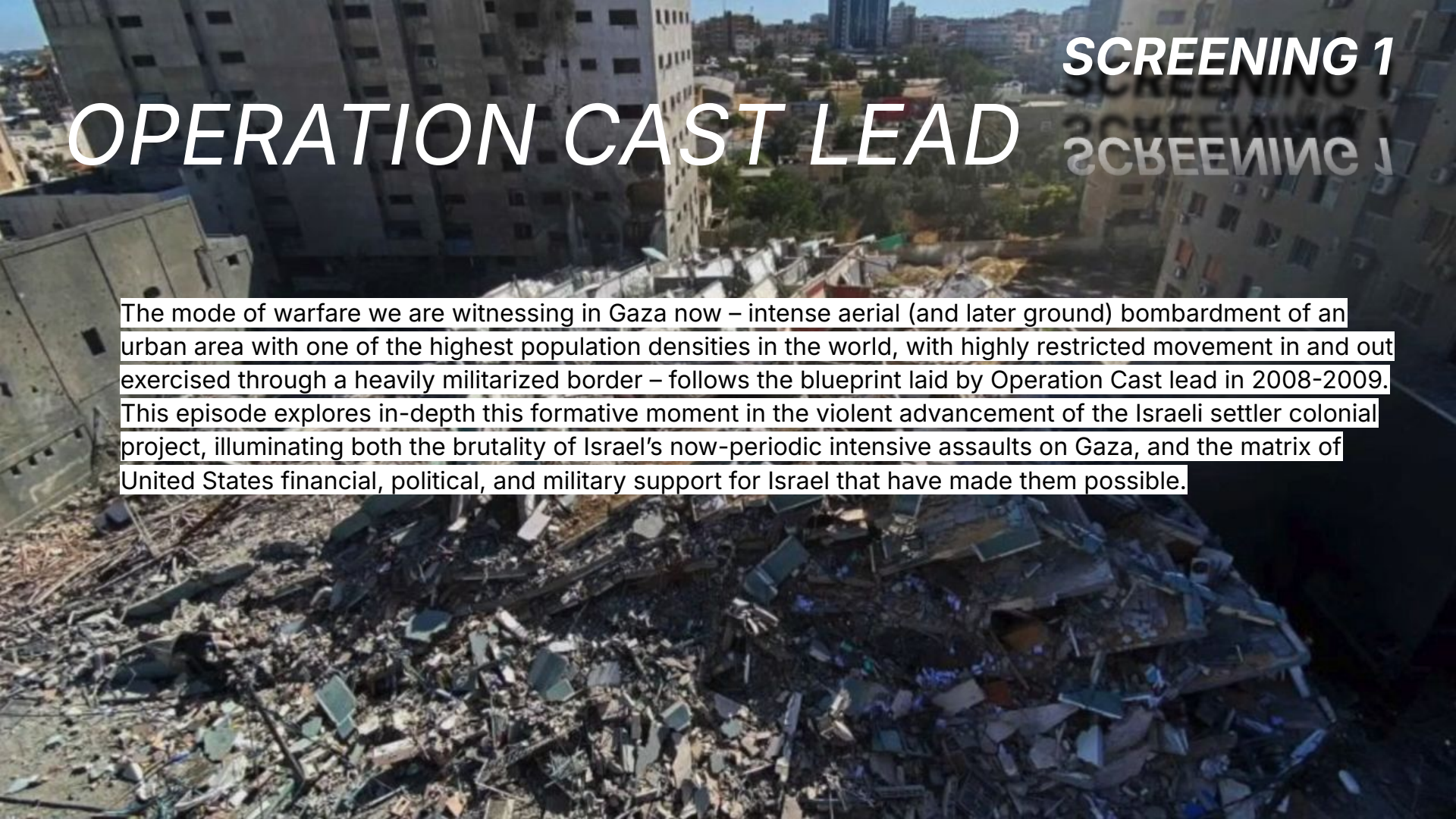
A large group of students is gathered on a campus lawn in front of a brick building. Many students are wearing backpacks and some are holding signs, suggesting a protest or solidarity event. A large tree trunk is visible in the foreground, and the scene is set outdoors on a sunny day.

The list of Gaza solidarity encampments grows each day. Conscious of increasing famine in Gaza, students at Princeton University launched a water-only fast on May 4 as they continue to call for their University to divest from corporations selling weapons to Israel. The United Nations warns of a potential collapse of aid delivery to Palestinians with Israel's May 7 closure of the two main crossings into Gaza. These crossings are critical entry points for food, medicine, and other supplies for Gaza's 2.3 million people. The disruptions come at a time when officials say northern Gaza is experiencing a "full-blown famine."

With thousands of innocent lives in the balance, promoters of peace should take advantage of this crucial opportunity to follow the young people, learning alongside the students whose hunger for humanity reveals stunning courage.

If our civilization survives a looming ecological collapse that is helping to drive catastrophic nuclear brinkmanship, I hope future generations of students will study the “Hind’s Hall” occupation in the way that students of the civil rights movement have studied the [Edmund Pettus Bridge](#) and the story of [Emmett Till](#). Hind’s story is tragically emblematic. Her cruel murder has befallen many thousands of children throughout the decades of Israel’s fight to maintain apartheid. Just in our young century, from September 2000 to September 2023, Israel’s B’tselem organization [reports](#) that 2,309 Palestinian minors were killed by Israelis and some 145 Israeli minors were killed by Palestinians, with these numbers excluding Palestinian children dead from deliberate immiseration via blockade or traumatized as hostages in prisons. We hear reports that thirty-eight Israeli children and some 14,000 Palestinian children have been murdered since October 7, deaths which can all be laid on the doorstep of the ethnostate project so lethally determined to keep one ethnicity in undemocratic governance.

No six-year-old poses any threat to anyone. Like the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children [starved to death](#) during the U.S. imposition of economic sanctions against Iraq, none of these children could be held accountable for the actions of their government or military.



SCREENING 1

# OPERATION CAST LEAD

SCREENING 1

The mode of warfare we are witnessing in Gaza now – intense aerial (and later ground) bombardment of an urban area with one of the highest population densities in the world, with highly restricted movement in and out exercised through a heavily militarized border – follows the blueprint laid by Operation Cast lead in 2008-2009. This episode explores in-depth this formative moment in the violent advancement of the Israeli settler colonial project, illuminating both the brutality of Israel's now-periodic intensive assaults on Gaza, and the matrix of United States financial, political, and military support for Israel that have made them possible.

# OPERATION CAST LEAD

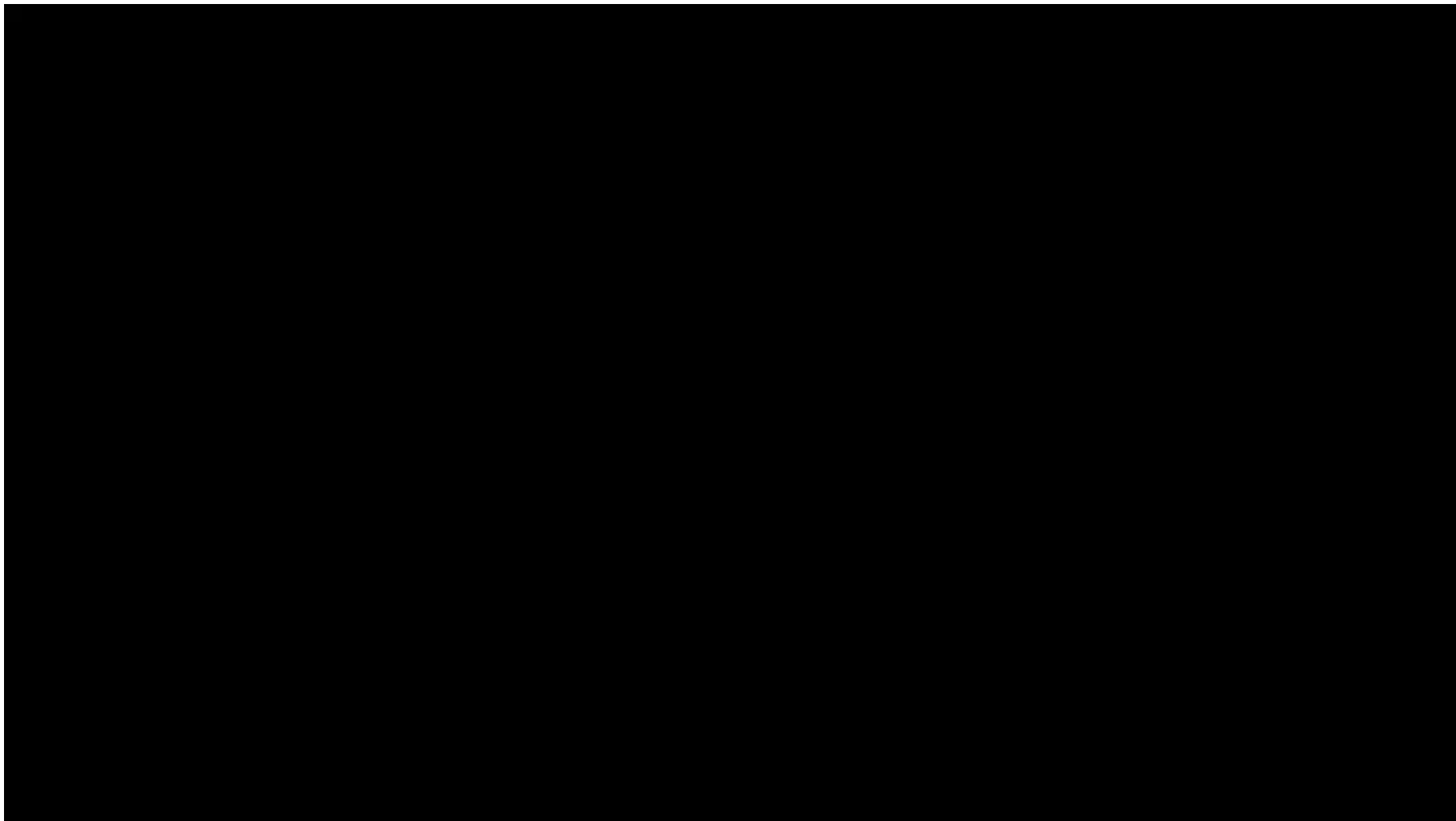
A military helicopter is shown from a low angle, flying over a large, intense fire. The helicopter's rotors are visible at the top, and its landing gear and armaments are clearly seen. The fire below is bright orange and yellow, with thick smoke rising. The overall scene is dramatic and suggests a military operation in a conflict zone.

SCREENING 1

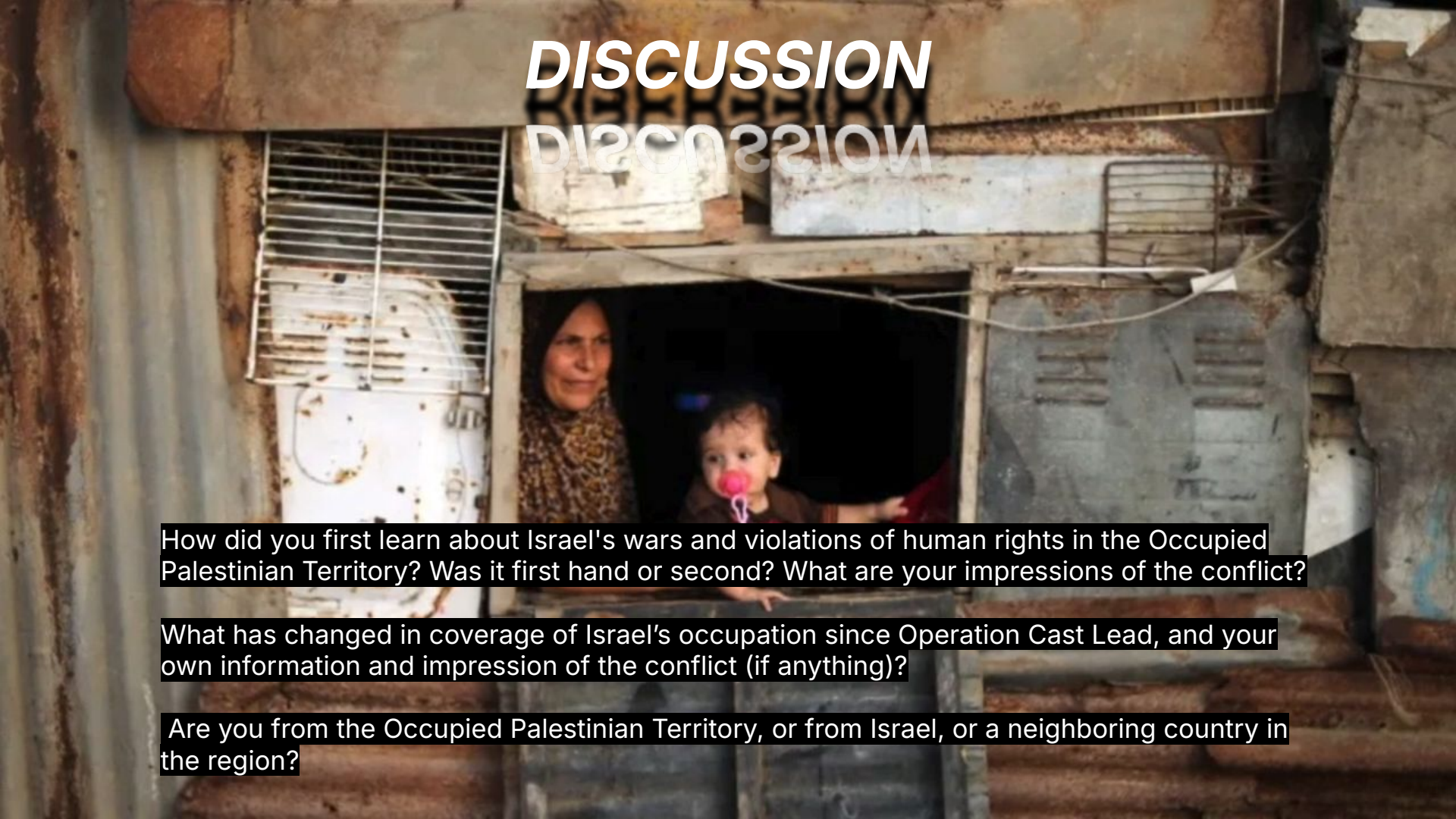
SCREENING 1

SCREENING 1

Providing crucial context for the current escalation of genocidal violence in Gaza, this episode draws out the cruel, defining juxtaposition of modern imperialist warfare: what speaker William Astore describes as the “video game-ification” of war and the continuing development of ever-more lethal and destructive weapons tested on Gazans before their broader deployment worldwide. Join us as we call to account the United States government and the American defense industry with whom they work in concert – companies like Lockheed Martin, General Atomics, and Raytheon – who have engineered mass death, injury, and destruction in Gaza, demanding an end to this slaughter.



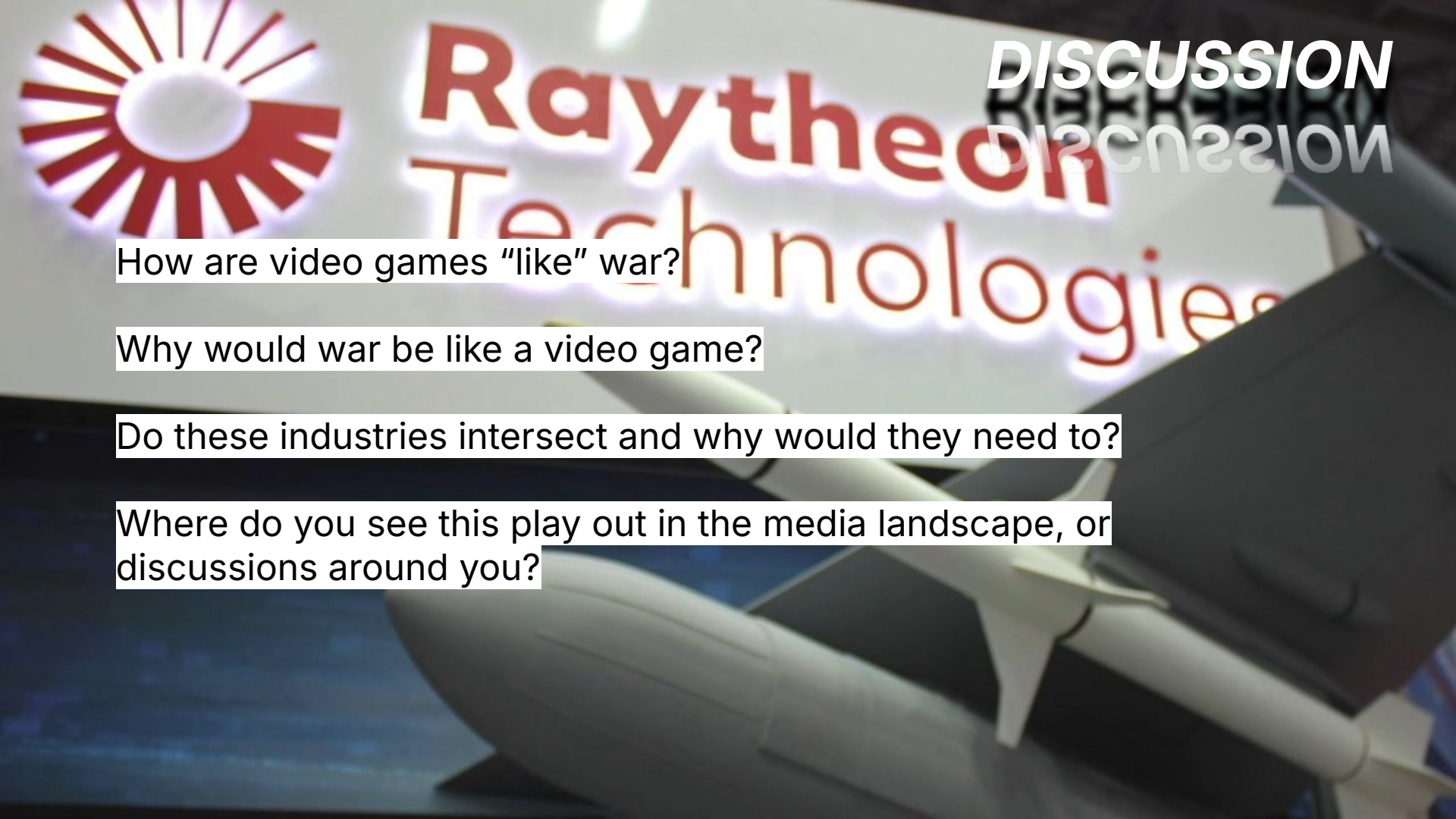
# DISCUSSION

A photograph of a woman and a young child looking out from a window of a dilapidated building. The building's exterior is made of rusted metal and concrete, with a white metal grate over the window. The woman is wearing a patterned headscarf and a dark top. The child is wearing a dark top and has a pink pacifier in their mouth. The scene is set in a shanty town or a similar environment.

How did you first learn about Israel's wars and violations of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory? Was it first hand or second? What are your impressions of the conflict?

What has changed in coverage of Israel's occupation since Operation Cast Lead, and your own information and impression of the conflict (if anything)?

Are you from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, or from Israel, or a neighboring country in the region?

The background of the slide features the Raytheon Technologies logo on the left, which consists of a stylized sunburst or fan-like symbol. To the right of the logo, the words "Raytheon Technologies" are written in a large, red, sans-serif font. In the upper right corner, the word "DISCUSSION" is repeated twice in a white, bold, sans-serif font, with the second instance being semi-transparent. The bottom half of the slide shows a close-up, slightly blurred view of a white jet engine model, highlighting its complex internal and external components.

# DISCUSSION DISCUSSION

How are video games "like" war?

Why would war be like a video game?

Do these industries intersect and why would they need to?

Where do you see this play out in the media landscape, or discussions around you?

# Shock & Awe 1

Kathy Kelly recounts her experience living out of a hotel in the heart of Baghdad with a family whose two young kids were traumatized by the constant barrage of bombs going off in the background. Kelly was part of a peace delegation that included veterans of past American wars, such as Purple Heart winner Charlie Liteky, who tried to encourage U.S. soldiers stationed on the Saudi border to desert from the army so they would not be complicit in U.S. war crimes.

Kelly points out that the planes used for murderous bombing campaigns in 1991 and 2003 were produced by Lockheed Martin and Boeing primarily, and that these companies, therefore, were implicated in major war crimes.

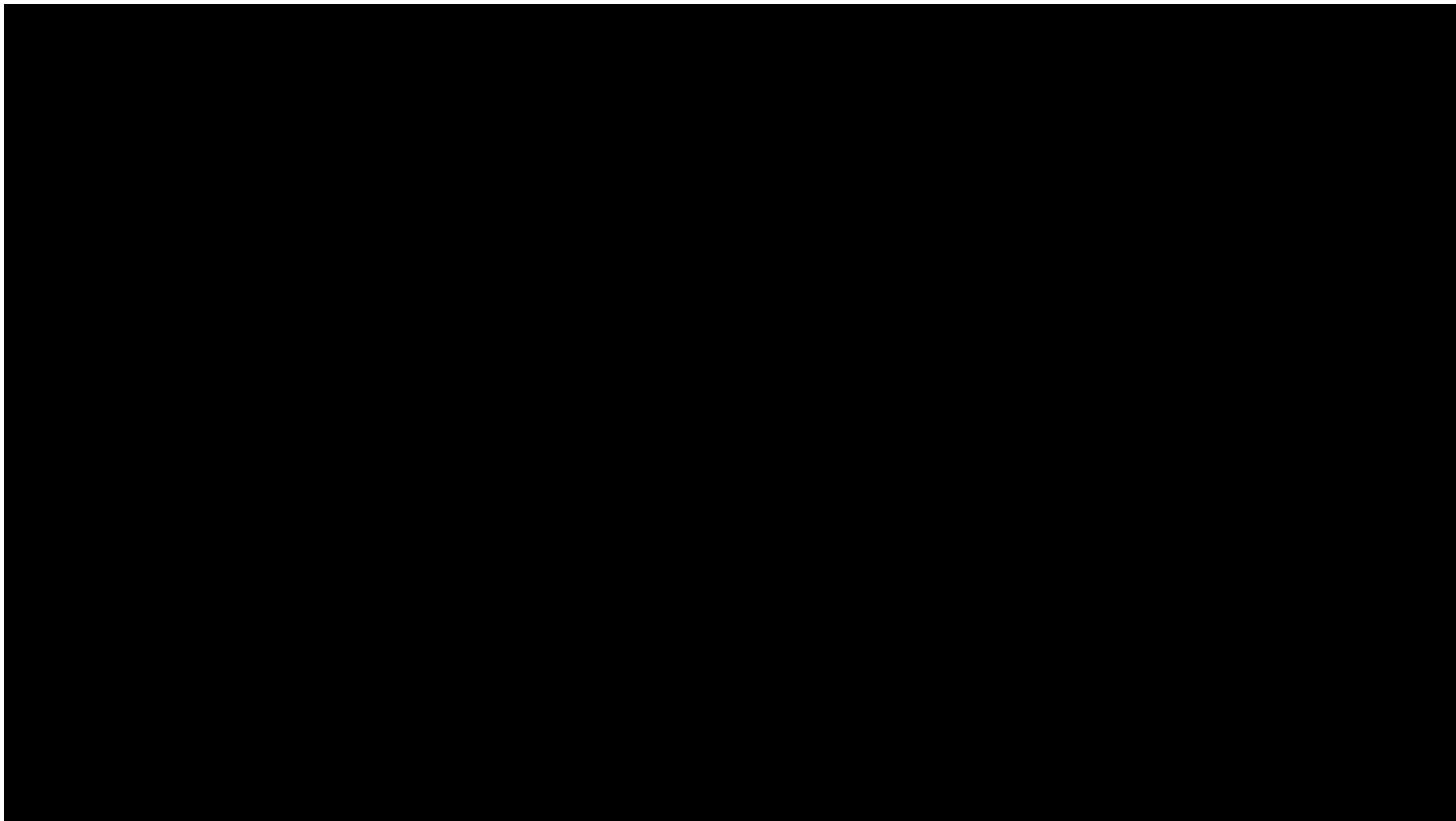
The Iraq body count website estimated that 2,350 Iraqi civilians were killed in the shock-and-awe campaign in March-April 2003, though Kelly believes that the total is far higher. The U.S., she says, unleashed an “epidemic of violence and suffering in Iraq” that has lasted to the present day—all so oil companies could profit from Iraq’s lucrative oil reserves.

By Jeremy Kuzmarov – April 10, 2024 – Originally published by [CovertAction Magazine](#)

**Baghdad**  
**Last Night**







DISCUSSION  
DISCUSSION  
DISCUSSION



**Narrator Kathy Kelly was in Iraq on a humanitarian mission to combat the effects of sanctions, often called an economic form of warfare. What are sanctions and how do they affect a population? What are other examples of nations or people under sanction? Why does it matter that Iraq was under sanction before bombardment?**

# DISCUSSION

**Faiza Al-Araji provides a first hand account of the bombing. Put yourself in her shoes and imagine your life if bombing threatened, closed or destroyed all public services necessary for every day life. Imagine schools are closed, work places shut down, and it's impossible to fulfill familial, social and religious obligations.**

# ***Shock & Awe 2***



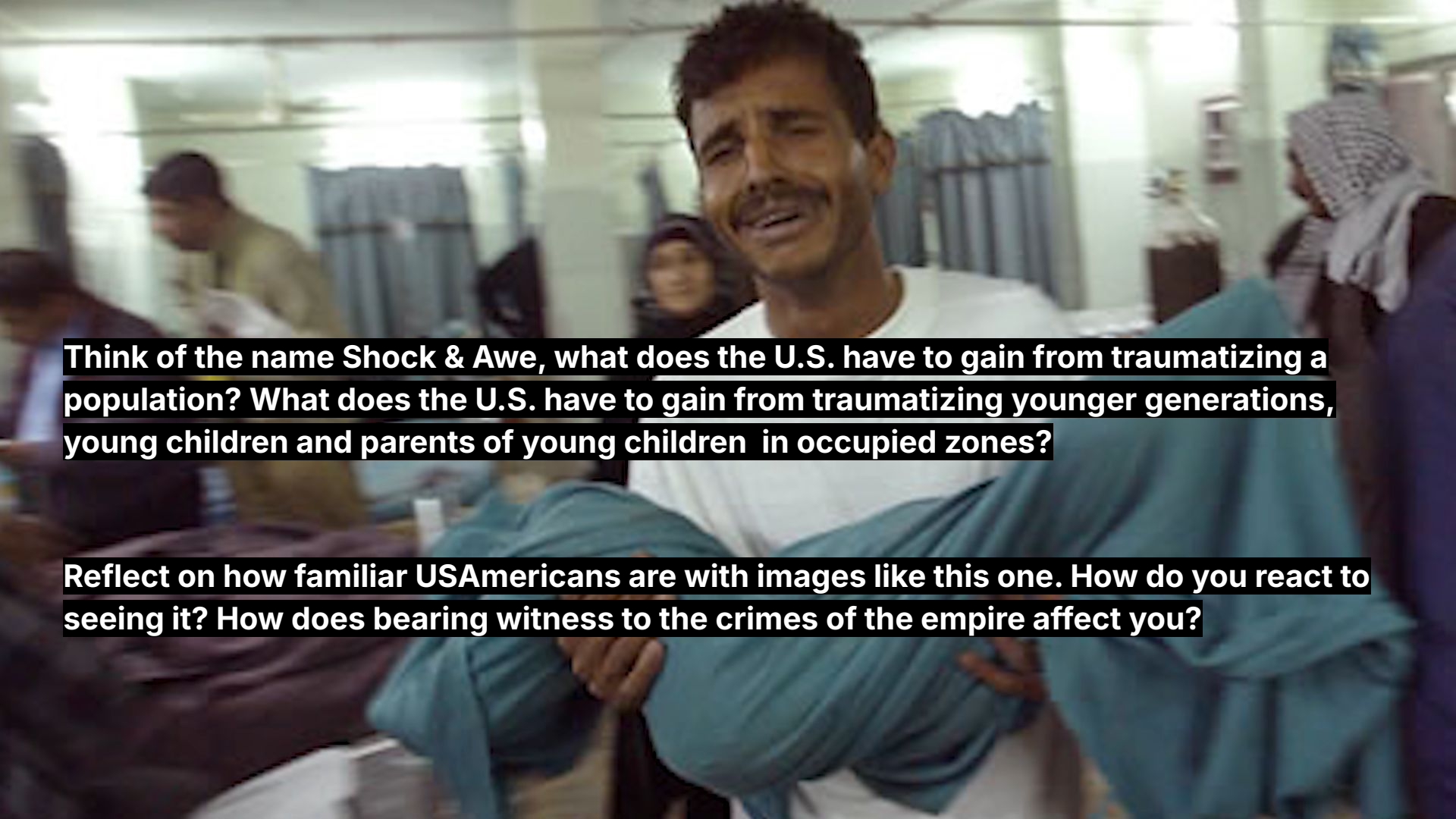


DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION

**How does the U.S. military determine targets for bombing? Why is civilian infrastructure important to destroy? What are other targets, and why?**





**Think of the name Shock & Awe, what does the U.S. have to gain from traumatizing a population? What does the U.S. have to gain from traumatizing younger generations, young children and parents of young children in occupied zones?**

**Reflect on how familiar USAmericans are with images like this one. How do you react to seeing it? How does bearing witness to the crimes of the empire affect you?**

A large, rectangular fishing net is filled with blue fish, likely salmon, and is resting on a wooden pallet. The net is made of a dark mesh and is secured with white and red ropes. The background shows a large, white cylindrical object, possibly a tank or part of a processing facility, and some industrial equipment. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting.

**What are the implications of breaking international law? What have been the consequences?**

**THOUGHTS &  
DISCUSSION**

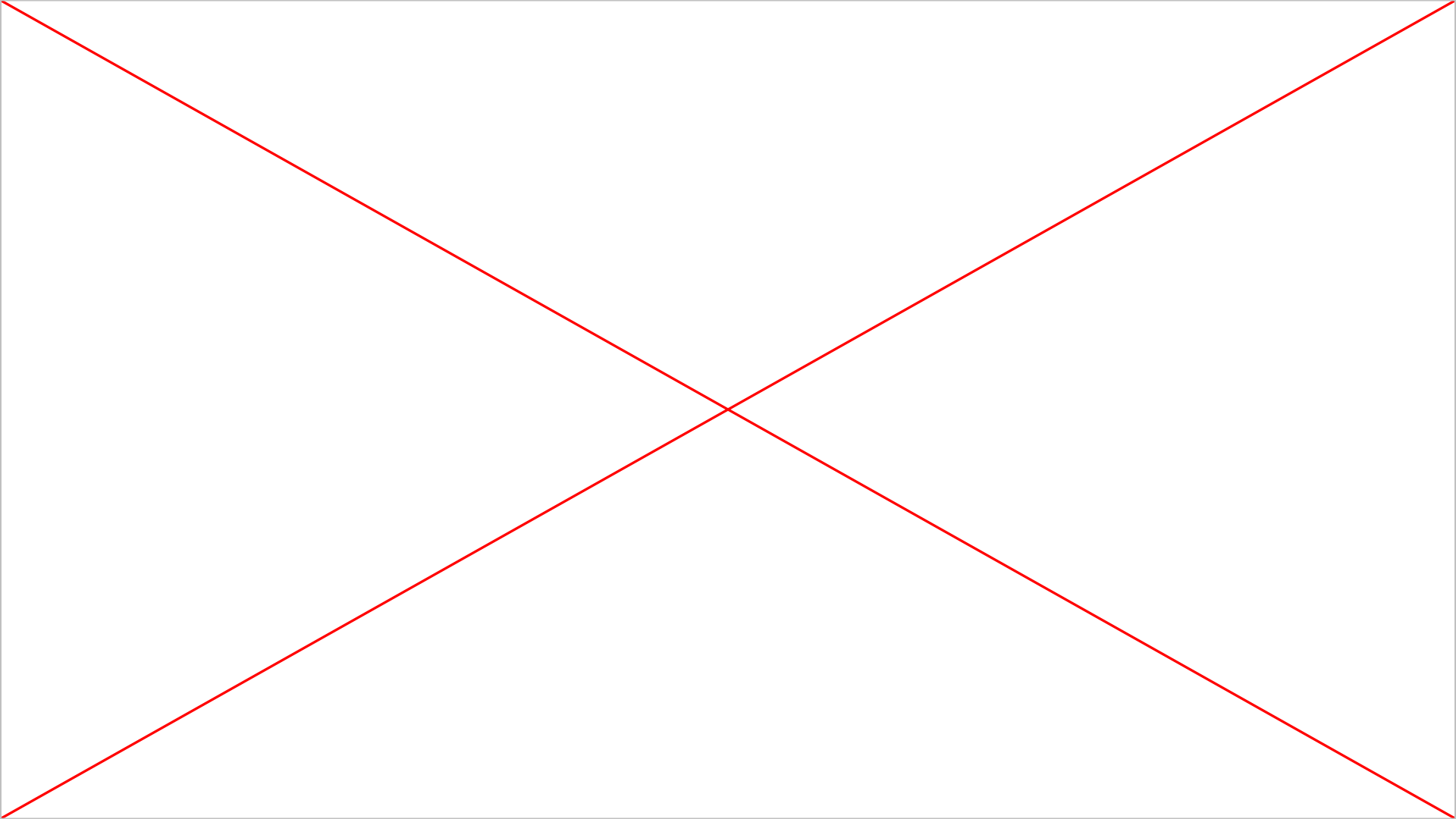




**SCREENING 4**

**SCREENING 4**

**WHY THE US MILITARY IS IN SYRIA**




# THOUGHTS & DISCUSSION

A line of yellow SUVs, likely Toyota Land Cruisers, is driving on a dirt road in a desert environment. In the background, a black flag is visible, and the scene is set against a clear blue sky. The overall atmosphere is one of a military or paramilitary convoy.

**In this episode we see plainly how US foreign policy changes between administrations, and seemingly contradicts itself. For instance, Obama and Trump backing opposing rebel groups. Is this counterintuitive to US military and business relations? Why or why not?**

**In other words, why would the US train, fund, and arm groups on their own TERRORISM watch lists? Can you name other places where this has happened?**

**What extremist groups can you think of that have presence inside the US itself? Imagine the counterrevolutionary mindset, what would it mean to arm and fund these groups?**

A photograph of a large-scale construction project, likely a dam or bridge. In the background, a massive concrete structure is under construction, supported by several tall, white, A-frame pillars. A worker is visible on a platform near the top of the structure. In the foreground, the ground is a mix of dirt, sand, and concrete debris. Several workers in dark clothing are walking across the site. To the left, there are concrete beams and a green metal structure. The sky is overcast and grey.

**We have since seen the fall of the SAA and the government of Bashar Al-Assad, and the subsequent territory grab by Israel. What is your understanding of the conflict today?**

**THOUGHTS &  
DISCUSSION**  
THOUGHTS &

# Let's Talk about Oil

## MILITARY INTERVENTIONS ARE BIG BUSINESS

Weapons makers require field tests, video advertisements, to prove the value of their products. The US military Military interventions create profitable content. With the procurement of oil through genocidal war, the military complex helps itself to the world's oil to refuel for the next invasion. Once US favored regimes are in power, US military companies have secured new customers. When radicalized regimes begin to defect from NATO and US hegemony, the US finds a new enemy and the cycle begins again.

**“The United States Department of Defense is one of the largest single consumers of energy in the world, responsible for 93% of all US government fuel consumption in 2007 (Air Force: 52%; Navy: 33%; Army: 7%. Other DoD: 1%).**

- ***Department of Defense Energy Strategy Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks by Gregory J. Lengyel, Colonel, USAF***

WHAT WOULD YOU CALL THIS PROCESS?

A SPIRAL INDUSTRY? SELF SUSTAINING BUT NOT SUSTAINABLE.

IS THIS THE U.S. GLOBAL CLIMATE STRATEGY?

REACT TO THIS AND CONSIDER:

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS SYSTEM?





**SCREENING 5**

**LOBBYISTS & WAR**

**SCREENING 2**





# THOUGHTS & Discussion

supported anti-colonial movements



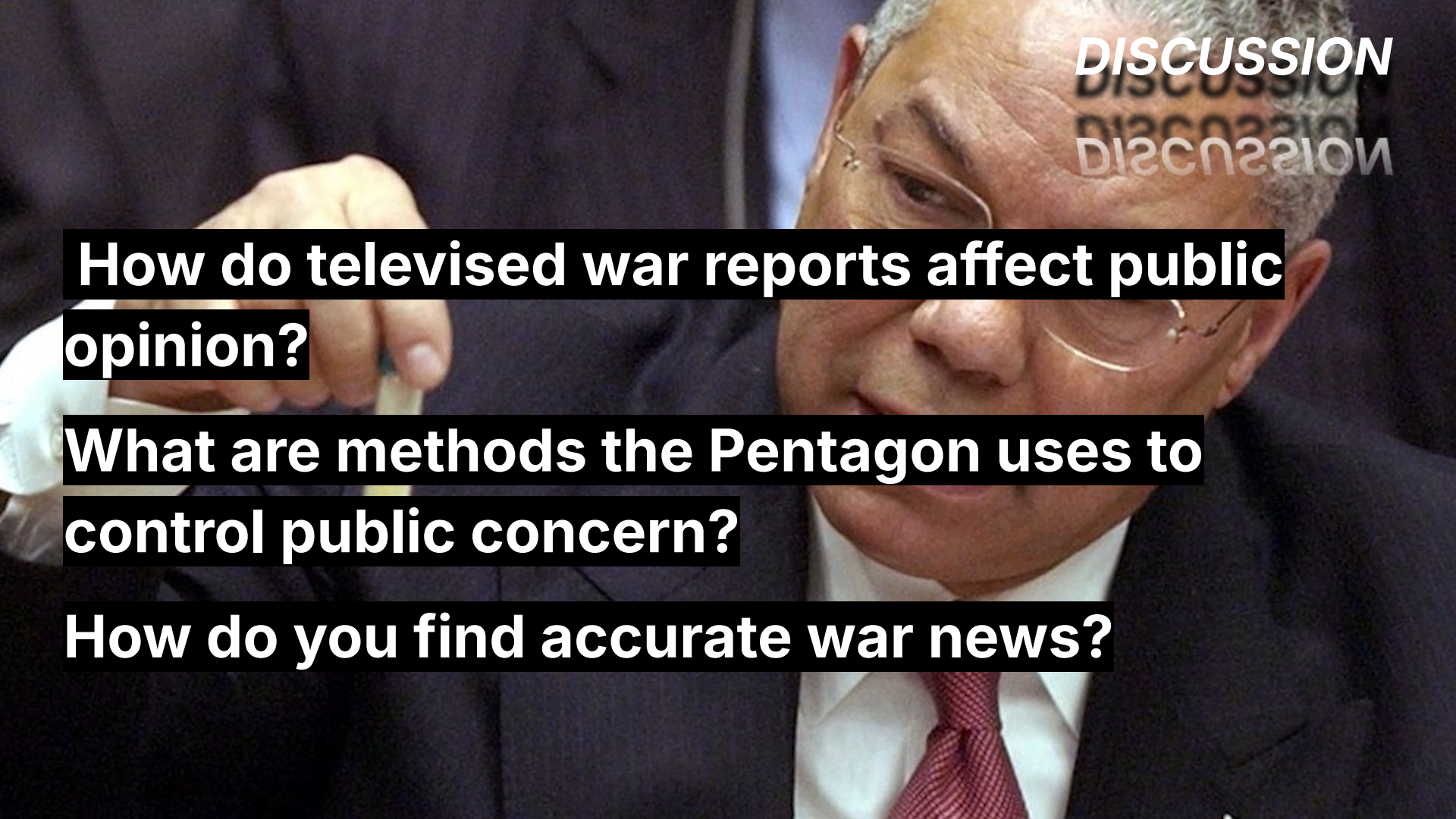


**What are some examples of threats to overseas business interests that have been covered as threats to the USAmerican people? Do you recognize examples from the episode, from your own life or the news?**

**Are revolutions in other countries inherently a threat to the United States people? To the United States project? Why or why not? Do you know anyone who lived through a revolution, what do they remember?**

**What are CIA tactics for fomenting armed conflict abroad?**

**THOUGHTS &  
DISCUSSION**



*DISCUSSION*  
*DISCUSSION*  
*DISCUSSION*

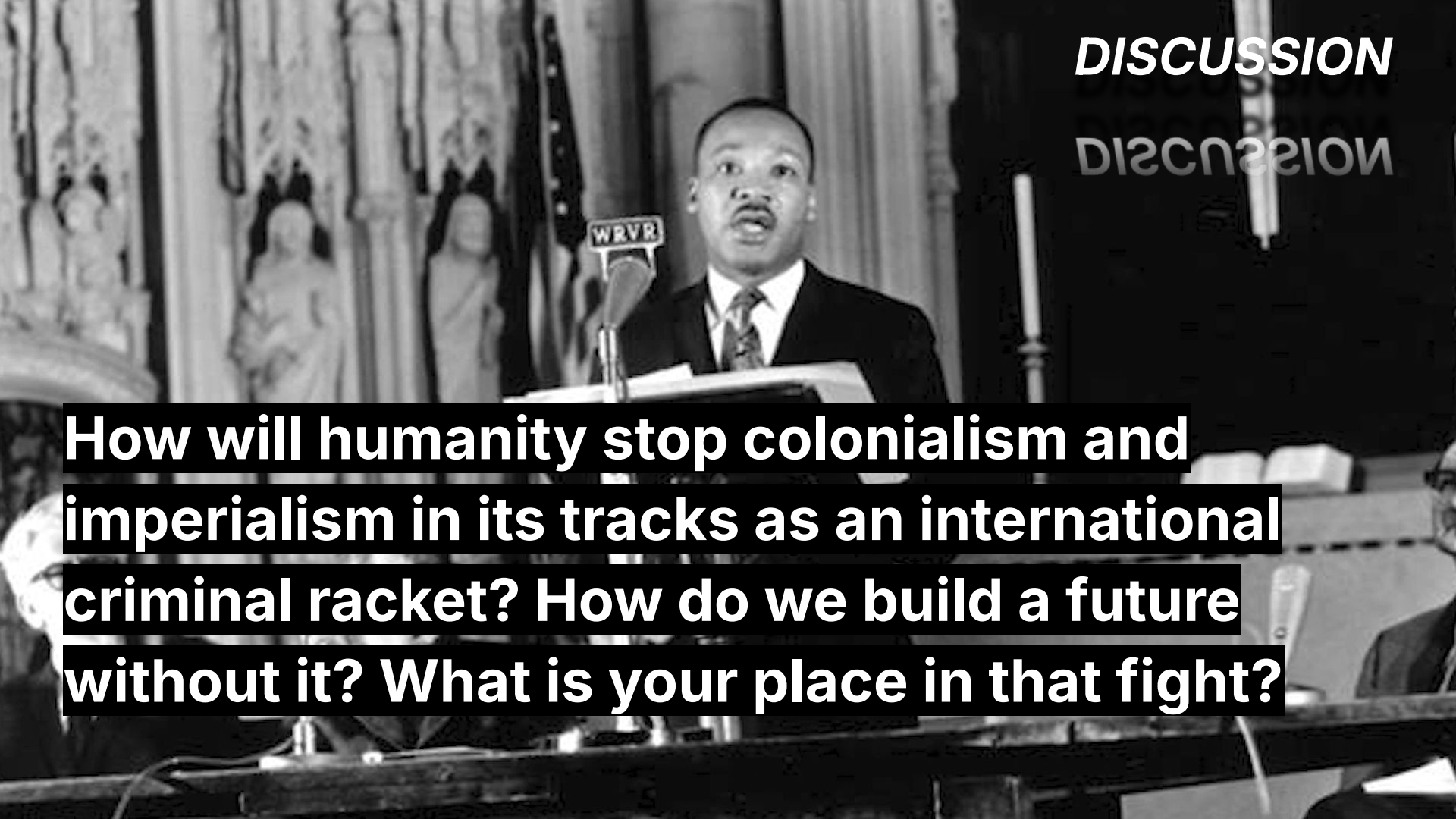
**How do televised war reports affect public opinion?**

**What are methods the Pentagon uses to control public concern?**

**How do you find accurate war news?**

*DISCUSSION*

DISCUSSION



**How will humanity stop colonialism and imperialism in its tracks as an international criminal racket? How do we build a future without it? What is your place in that fight?**