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DRONE READYMADE: FINE MILITARY DETRITUS

2011 - PRESENT

THE PERISCOPE PROJECT

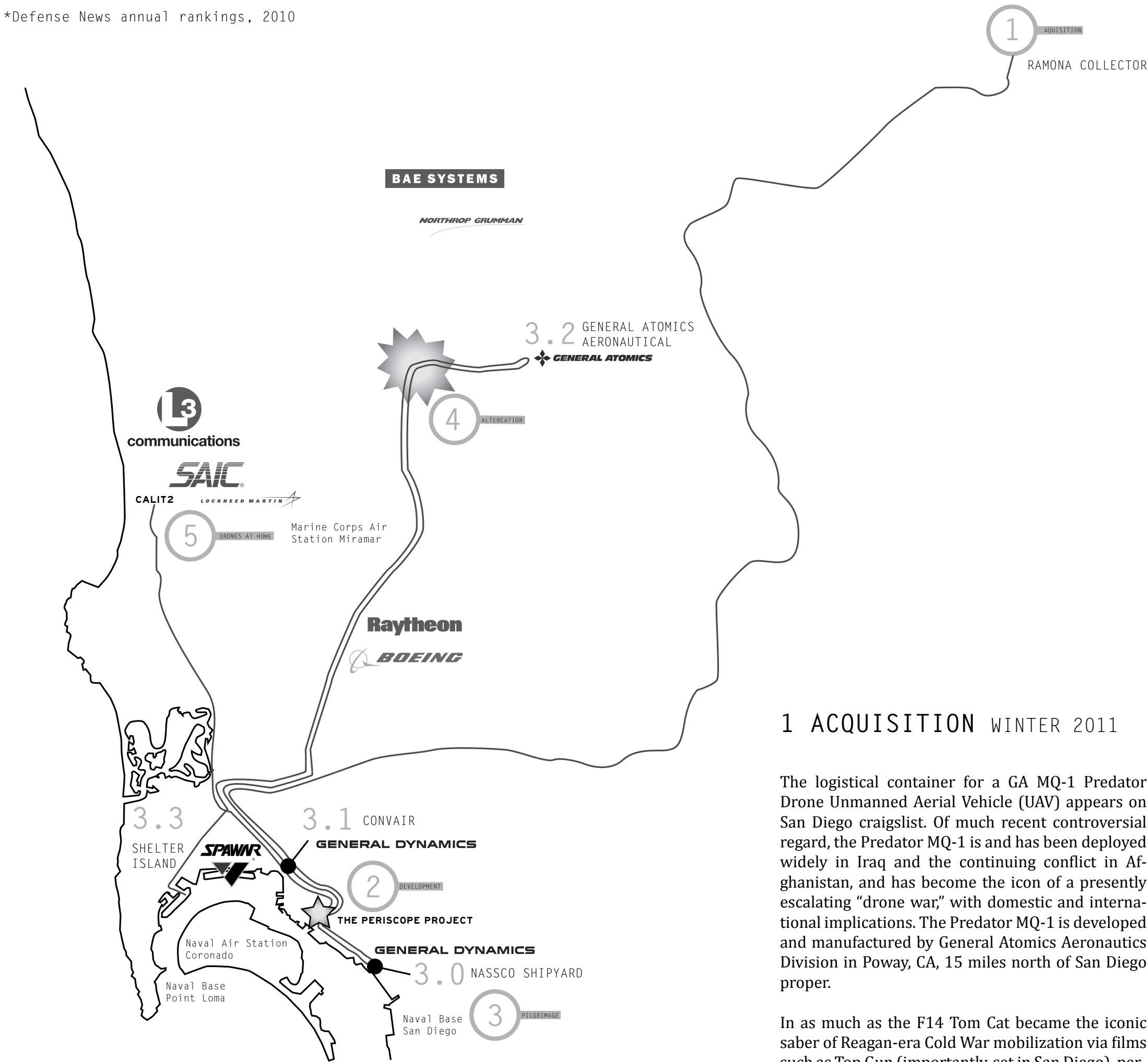


San Diego: A Mobilizing Landscape

8 of the 10 largest defense contracts in the United States are held by companies with significant presence in San Diego.*

A regional cluster of defense contractors established the framework for a series of brief occupations with the drone container living unit.

*Defense News annual rankings, 2010



1 ACQUISITION WINTER 2011

The logistical container for a GA MQ-1 Predator Drone Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) appears on San Diego craigslist. Of much recent controversial regard, the Predator MQ-1 is and has been deployed widely in Iraq and the continuing conflict in Afghanistan, and has become the icon of a presently escalating “drone war,” with domestic and international implications. The Predator MQ-1 is developed and manufactured by General Atomics Aeronautics Division in Poway, CA, 15 miles north of San Diego proper.

In as much as the F14 Tom Cat became the iconic saber of Reagan-era Cold War mobilization via films such as Top Gun (importantly, set in San Diego), perhaps the Predator MQ-1 occupies a congruent iconic

niche post 9-11: a less heroic, more ethically nebulous and psychologically troubling space of compounding detachment, virtualization, globalization, corporatism and suburbanization. It is compelling to imagine that the shipment case appearing on Craigslist is an empty sarcophagus of sorts, returning to the U.S. as surplus after its original cargo met its fate in central Asia; and that it confronts its repurposing at its place of origin in San Diego.

2 DEVELOPMENT SPRING 2011

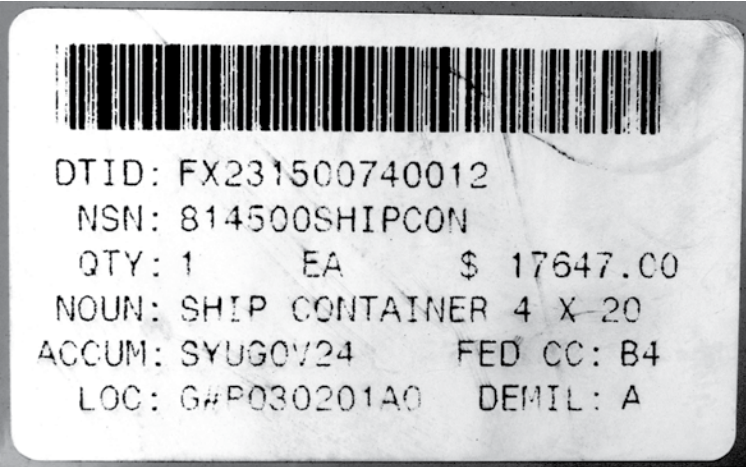
The container was acquired in April 2011 from a reclusive collector, the author of the Craigslist post, in Ramona, CA, 30 miles northeast of San Diego. The owner only confided that he had originally acquired

the container “from a friend at the port, who said he had several and needed to get rid of them.”

In the months that followed, The Periscope Project hosted a series of screenings and informal conversations centered around the Drone “coffin”: a compelling readmade unto itself. The dialogs concerned what to be done with it, and what, exactly, it means—loosely concluding to convert the container into a threadbare mobile living unit, and secondly, to engage the artifact as a sentinel to the embroilment of culture and the military industrial complex in San Diego with a photo-op pilgrimage of the city’s most significant sites.

3 PILGRIMAGE SUMMER 2011

- 1 Winter 2011 -----> Containter appears on Craigslist
April 2011-----> Container acquired by The Periscope Project
- 2 Spring 2011-----> Screening / conversation series, ideation and development
June / July 2011-----> Version 1 of modification
- 3 August 18, 19, 20 2011-----> 1st Pilgrimage and altercation: Nassco Shipyard, former Convair Plant, General Atomics Aeronautical, and Shelter Island
- 4 August 20, 2011-----> Project exhibited: “Adaptable Sites” with Bill Daniel at the Periscope Project
February 2012-----> Project exhibited: “Mapping Occupations” at ARTifact Gallery, Sixth College, UCSD
- 5 February - March 2012-----> Version 2 of modification
March 2012-----> Project exhibited: “Drones at Home”at Calit2, UCSD
April 2012-----> It’s A Drone! KCET Artbound Featured Article
May 22, 2012-----> KCET Artbound Webisode, Based on same article
July 13, 2012-----> San Diego Museum of Art, Summer Salon Series



Sold to The Periscope Project for \$300, original price stickers left on the drone “coffin” indicate it’s original value of nearly \$18000.



From there, the container was transported to General Atomics Aeronautical (a subsidiary of General Atomics, which was once a subsidiary of General Dynamics) in Poway, CA (3 . 2) : the birthplace of the MQ-1 Predator. The container was finally documented on Shelter Island (3 . 3), across the bay from Naval Air Station Coronado, just north of the naval submarine base in Point Loma, with the glittering skyline of San Diego in the background.

4 ALTERCATION SUMMER 2011

In Poway, when an employee of General Atomics witnessed the re-loading of the container into a rented Uhaul truck, he alerted authorities as though a drone

was being stolen. Several miles down the road, at the intersection of Scripps Poway Parkway and I-15, Poway Sheriffs, responding with severity consummate to dealing with suspects who were presumed to have stolen critical military ordnance, apprehended the artists. Charles G. Miller and Keith Muller, the driver and passenger of the rented truck respectively, surrendered face down on the asphalt before a shotgun and assault rifle, were cuffed and sequestered in separate police cruisers while sheriffs assessed the situation. The spectacle of a potential terrorist plot thwarted was diffused some 45 minutes later, when the authorities finally understood that the artists were in possession of nothing more than a glorified ammo case. Miller and Muller were subsequently released with no charges filed.

