

Amazing works of technology

By Brian Lockhart

When you're on the road as much as I am, one of the most useful tools you can ever have is a GPS unit.

Whether it's built into your car or mounted on the dashboard, a modern GPS makes an old style road map look like something that Fred Flintstone chiseled into a rock tablet.

I still have road maps in my glove compartment but since I bought my GPS I haven't opened a single one.

They are amazing works of technology that have mapped every city, street, address, pool hall, coffee shop, dance hall, honky-tonk, restaurant, and government building to within a couple of feet or less, of the exact location.

I've been in a few out-of-the-way rural places and relied on my GPS to steer me over a few concessions to my destination when all I could see was trees. I've also used it to pinpoint a Tim Horton's when in an unfamiliar town hundreds of miles from home, find a beer store, and locate a hidden business in the back of a mall in a large city.

Somewhere, somebody, or most likely thousands of people, collected this incredible amount of data, analyzed it, categorized it, plotted it, and put it into a program. I don't think we really appreciate the amount of work that went into a small device that can pinpoint your exact location on the planet.

Within seconds of powering up your GPS, your position is located through a process called trilateration by which three satellites 20,000 km away send a signal and your device plots your coordinates to tell you exactly where you are on planet Earth.

My GPS unit cost around \$110 retail. Mostly likely it was produced for under \$30, maybe less. It's a pretty good deal for all that technology.

I recently watched a news item where the U.S. Armed Forces were refurbishing thousands of Vietnam era heavy bombs ? 500 lbs, to 1000 lbs ? and fitting them with GPS guidance systems to create 'smart bombs' so they can be dropped on Syria and the surrounding area.

The cost of the upgrade - \$20,000 per bomb. The bombs themselves are not complex devices. They are free falling steel cases packed with explosives and a fuse and were designed for gravity release high altitude bombing runs.

The 'smart' component of the bomb is a guidance system that pinpoints a location and controllable fins on the tail direct the bomb towards a target.

How is it they can have a consumer GPS manufactured for \$30, but the same technology used to pinpoint a location for a bomb costs \$20,000?

The war against ISIS should have been over long ago. They are a ragtag, poorly trained group who's maximum numbers at their peak was only around 20,000.

Surrounding countries could have easily amassed 200,000 troops, surrounded them, and ended it all very quickly. But it hasn't happened.

As the U.S. is still involved in this conflict either directly or indirectly and a supplier of weapons either directly or indirectly, it seems this state of perpetual war that the world is embroiled in is not going to go away. At least not as long as arms manufacturers, dealers, and suppliers are getting rich off of it.

The last few major conflicts in the region were never really finished ? and most likely on purpose.

What better way to make more money on arms deals than to ensure a conflict continues ? the longer the better if it's your bank account that is profiting.

The moral dilemma of dropping bombs is that more likely than not, you're going to kill innocent civilians.

That moral dilemma doesn't seem to weigh heavy on the minds of these companies that produce \$20,000 guidance systems.

There is of course a need for the military and the arms to supply them, however, when military weapons and the need to use them become a business reliant on the constant and perpetual war situation that is now occurring, we are edging closer to a world teetering on disaster on many levels.

The fat-cats in the arms business may be relaxing on piles of money and smoking big stogies in their mansions, but it is naïve young soldiers and countless innocent civilians who are paying for it all with their lives.