

MATH MINUS MILITARISM JMM 2025 RECAP

In the past, the AMS has often remained detached from the political goings-on of the everyday world, and refused to engage with societal impacts of mathematics at its major conferences. But this year something was different. In the year 2025, the first ever themed JMM took place in Seattle with the slogan, "We decide our future: Mathematics in the age of AI". As soon as the *Math Minus Militarism* crew heard about this theme in March 2024, we knew that we had to show up and give our mathematical comrades a chance to show up with us. Thus was born the idea for *Math Minus Militarism bingo*, a game that conference participants could all play, designed with the primary goal of helping mathematicians do exactly what the AMS ostensibly was asking of us: to decide that our future will be one without the NSA.



B I N G O

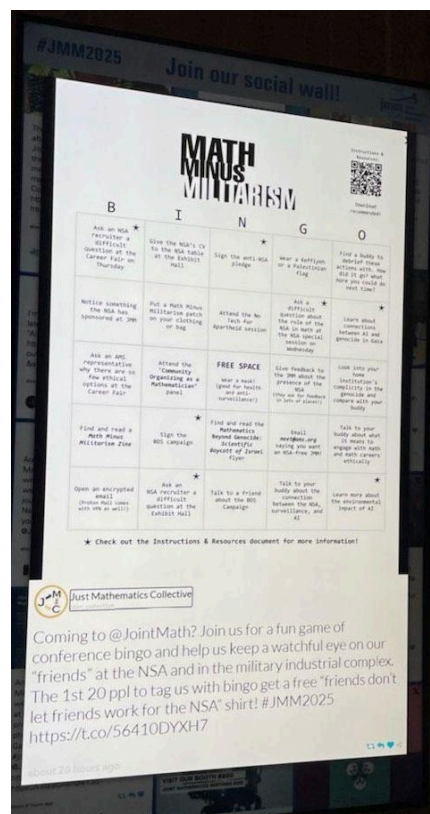
Instructions & Resources



Download recommended!

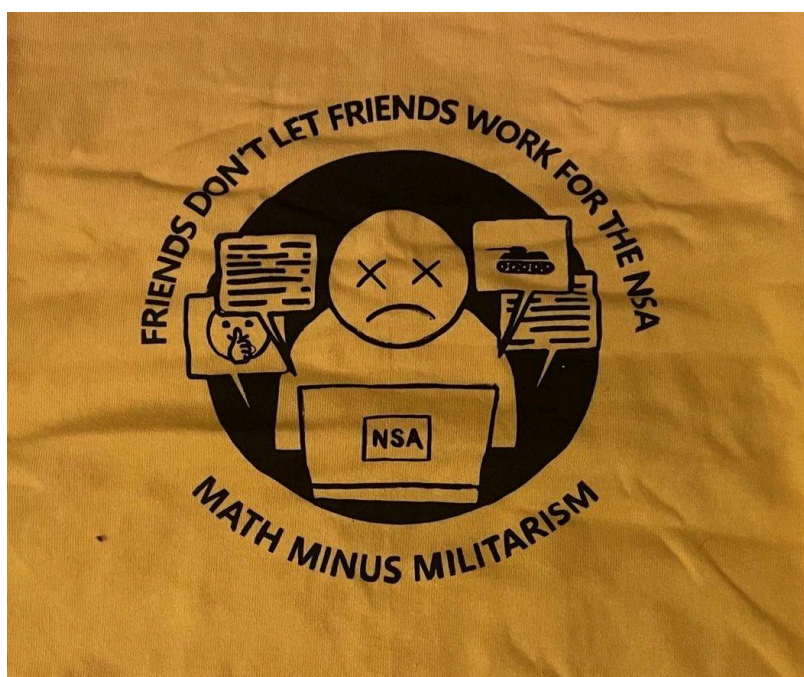
| B | I | N | G | O |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| ★ Ask an NSA recruiter a difficult question at the Career Fair on Thursday | Give the NSA's CV to the NSA table at the Exhibit Hall | ★ Sign the anti-NSA pledge | Wear a Keffiyeh or a Palestinian flag | Find a buddy to debrief these actions with. How did it go? What more you could do next time? |
| Notice something the NSA has sponsored at JMM | Put a Math Minus Militarism patch on your clothing or bag | Attend the No Tech for Apartheid session | ★ Ask a difficult question about the role of the NSA in math at the NSA special session on Wednesday | ★ Learn about connections between AI and genocide in Gaza |
| Ask an AMS representative why there are so few ethical options at the Career Fair | Attend the "Community Organizing as a Mathematician" panel | FREE SPACE (Wear a mask! (good for health and anti-surveillance!)) | Give feedback to the JMM about the presence of the NSA (they ask for feedback in lots of places!) | Look into your home institution's complicity in the genocide and compare with your buddy |
| Find and read a <i>Math Minus Militarism</i> Zine | ★ Sign the BDS campaign | Find and read the <i>Mathematics Beyond Genocide: Scientific Boycott of Israel</i> flyer | Email meet@ams.org saying you want an NSA-free JMM! | Talk to your buddy about what it means to engage with math and math careers ethically |
| Open an encrypted email (Proton Mail comes with VPN as well!) | ★ Ask an NSA recruiter a difficult question at the Exhibit Hall | Talk to a friend about the BDS Campaign | Talk to your buddy about the connection between the NSA, surveillance, and AI | ★ Learn more about the environmental impact of AI |

★ Check out the Instructions & Resources document for more information!



[Left: picture of the MMM bingo card, Right: the picture of the bingo card displayed on the JMM digital announcements board]

We hoped to engage as many mathematicians as possible in conversations about the role of the NSA in mathematics broadly and at the JMM specifically. Certainly the NSA was no shrinking violet when it came to making their presence at JMM known. The NSA's logo was prominently displayed on freestanding displays throughout the conference center, and they were one of six organizations recruiting at the pathetic excuse for a career fair, which had no job opportunities available for non-US citizens. As we explored the special sessions happening at JMM, the reason for the AI theme became increasingly clear: unlike years prior, an entire special session was devoted to promoting the NSA and the work of their friends at the Department of Defense along with many national labs. While shoving AI down our throats, the AMS helped the NSA to put on a show, intended to convince us of the verifiably false claim that it's possible to commit time, effort, and mathematical progress towards "national security" without also being complicit in immense harm to humans all around the world.



We decided to make our presence equally known by wearing bright yellow shirts that proudly proclaimed "Friends don't let friends work for the NSA". Unfortunately, we did not receive nearly as warm a welcome from the AMS as the one extended to snitches, weapons manufacturers, and their national lab cronies (but we'll come back to this later). As usual, our action centered around the career fair because we imagine a future where our students and colleagues are offered more options for their non-academic careers than the

NSA, the IDA, or defense contractors like Metron, Inc, all of whom shamelessly discriminate based on citizenship and security clearances (against AMS Anti-Harassment policies claiming to support "equality of opportunity and treatment for all participants, regardless...of immigration status"). However, we remembered from years past how sad and empty the career fair was-- just a handful of militaristic potential employers amongst a giant room full of over a hundred tables-- and so we decided that if we really wanted to talk to as many mathematicians as possible we should also aim for a visible presence outside of the career fair.

When we arrived at the conference center on Thursday morning we broke into two groups. Half of us positioned ourselves at the top of the escalators leading to the registration area, holding our Math Minus Militarism banner and canvassing with conference participants. The other half of us headed straight to the career fair to chat with mathematicians about why the NSA was one of only a handful of career options being presented to them and the responsibility the AMS has to

us to do better. From the get go it was obvious that the NSA and AMS were not happy to see our yellow shirts canvassing in the career fair. We experienced excessive harassment from the AMS itself as well as conference security staff. In fact, it appears that the AMS brought an entire goonsquad of "Computer Specialists," whose apparent role at the conference was to surveil and harass anyone who appeared to be affiliated with our movement, including anyone who just so happened to be wearing a yellow shirt that day. As soon as we arrived at the career fair, AMS staff, including Sarah Bryant, and mathematicians from the NSA began writing down our names and badge information. They even removed (without explanation) bingo cards and fliers that were handed out in special sessions by those sessions' organizers, despite this being normal conference behavior and other sessions having hand-outs that were not confiscated.

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Nonetheless we were undeterred and remained focused on engaging as many of our fellow mathematicians in discussion about the role of the NSA in the mathematics community as possible. We certainly did not want to be expelled from the JMM (as the AMS goons threatened us with) for disseminating relevant information about the role of the NSA in mathematics to conference goers. Each of our canvassers was equipped with a QR code that led to a link tree with resources related to the NSA, math and AI, some relevant JMC campaigns, and more. Despite our care to adhere to the AMS's policy prohibiting passing out information (at a conference!), our mistreatment by the AMS continued. For example, after stepping out of the career fair for a few minutes a couple of our canvassers were prevented from re-entering by conference security staff, the

stated reason being that the security staff had been told not to let anyone wearing a yellow "Friends don't let friends work for the NSA" shirt into the career fair. We emphasized that this is a blatant violation of the AMS's own

"Welcoming Environment Policy" which claims to promote "free expression". What's more, a fellow conference goer and Math Minus Militarism



enthusiast was actually barred from entering the expo hall on Wednesday simply for having a Math Minus Militarism patch hanging from their badge. While we are disappointed by the actions of the AMS in this situation, we are not particularly surprised, since the very presence of the

NSA at the JMM is in conflict with the stated goals of the AMS to provide "equality of opportunity and treatment for all participants."

Indeed, it feels like every year the AMS works harder to suppress the dissenting voices of the mathematical community while aiding the NSA in their endeavour to be the "number one employer of mathematicians". Why does the AMS prefer to funnel its resources into having "IT staff," who clearly had no idea what happens at a math conference and expressed blatant disregard and disrespect for conference participants; their actions included repeated misgendering of attendees, profiling conference goers based on what shirt color they were wearing, blocking conference participants from talking and sharing to other conference participants. ***Why is the AMS repeatedly using their resources to hire extra security to suppress dissent against their national security overlords? Does the AMS serve their financial sponsors or does it serve the mathematicians in their membership? Are our dues being used to protect the NSA or for the good of the mathematics community, including dissenting voices to the status quo?***

The keen reader may be interested to know that our efforts to sway the mathematical community to reconsider its ties with the NSA have not been limited to appealing to the broader mathematical community. We have also done our best to push for change "from within," i.e. through the channels dictated by AMS leadership. Indeed a group of mathematicians met with then AMS president-elect Bryna Kra in March of 2023 to share the perspective of the [#MathMinusMilitarism campaign](#) and to directly ask the AMS to craft an ethical recruitment policy. However, after months of radio silence following this meeting we were eventually informed in October 2023 that the AMS council had declined to put forward a motion to "create a committee to study this". According to the mathematicians of the AMS council, the idea of our national professional organization articulating its ethical responsibilities with regards to the recruitment of mathematicians for jobs is not even worthy of being sent to committee (where it was likely going to die anyway). ***This only makes it even clearer to us that the push to disentangle the mathematics community from the surveillance state will need to be built up by all of us rank and file members of the AMS rather than relying on institutional leadership to imagine a future for us [beyond secrecy and surveillance](#).*** Mathematicians, we don't have to accept the NSA into our community and conferences! We demand the AMS take its responsibility to its members and the general public seriously and protect us from violent institutions who need mathematicians to continue purveying harm across the globe. Those of us who care enough about the mathematical community to worry about its ethical ramifications on the rest of the world, we must be louder and more organized. Join [#MathMinusMilitarism](#) next year at the JMM!

PS: to the [Department of Defense folks that are supposedly studying how to train AI to predict whether a single author or multiple authors wrote a document](#), do not waste precious environmental resources training your AI. No AI is necessary in telling you that this was written by multiple people.