U.S. troops about to be deployed to the urban warzones of Iraq and Afghanistan often train on virtual games such as *America’s Army* and *Full Spectrum Warrior*. These sophisticated games are also available online to the general public, offering a potent recruitment tool as well as a visceral experience of the forms of hyper-capitalized militarism that characterize U.S imperialism today. In this presentation, I explore the genealogy of these games’ representation of the urban space of empire. Looking in particular at representations of urban space in Algiers under the French during the mid-twentieth century, I argue that U.S. empire-building operations over the last decade have replicated many of the characteristic tropes of urban empires of the past. The visual economy of urban empire was underpinned by a broader representational politics that suggested that Europeans alone had the right to occupy the key institutional sites of city space. Yet urban propinquities meant that the borders established in the colonial city were constantly mutating and being transgressed. The troubling of imperial urban borders in the past plays itself out again today in sites such as Baghdad and Kandahar, as well as in their virtual representations in games such as *Full Spectrum Warrior*. Drawing on analysis of these real and virtual urban environments, I argue that the visual economy of urban empire is constituted by increasingly sophisticated scopophilic representational technologies that paradoxically produce an ever-more disembodied imperial cybernetic subject. If, that is, imperial visual technologies have become far more capable of peeling back the skin of the city to reveal the urban viscera that lie beneath, the colonial gaze remains enduringly phobic about the forms of corporeal propinquity that result. The upshot today is a turn towards forms of virtuality such as robotic warfare that help to legitimate notions of virtuous imperial war.