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SAY NO TO NEW NUKES

OUR NUCLEAR ARSENAL IS FAR FROM GONE

by Katherine Magraw

IF YOU THINK WE GOT RID OF OUR NUCLEAR WEAPONS WHEN THE COLD WAR ENDED — think again. Yes, the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s; but by that time both the U.S. and the Soviet Union had spent decades building up vast nuclear arsenals. We're still dealing with this fact today.

There's some good news. After the fall, both the U.S. and Russia started to reduce the stockpile of nuclear weapons, and to downplay their role in military policy. This made good sense: one of the most pernicious aspects of the Cold War was the dangerous and wasteful competition to build ever more sophisticated and powerful nuclear weapons — all in the name of “detering” one's Cold War adversary from using their nuclear weapons.

However, there's also some bad news. There's a pro-nuclear weapons establishment in the U.S. that has resisted the move to get rid of nuclear weapons, and has actively sought new missions for them. (This include the nuclear weapon laboratories, and some military and political leaders.) Indeed, they are actively seeking funds to develop new and more sophisticated weapons of mass destruction.

The really bad news: In the current political climate, their efforts are gathering steam.



The administration is taking the following steps to revitalize America's nuclear weapons programs:

- **Research and preliminary development of new nuclear weapons to use on the battlefield.** The administration is pursuing the so-called nuclear bunker buster, intended to penetrate into the earth before exploding.
- **Preparation of the Nevada Test Site to shorten the lead time required to resume testing nuclear weapons.** The U.S. hasn't tested a nuclear weapon since 1992, and has pledged to observe a global moratorium on testing.
- **Planning for a Modern Pit Facility.** The Administration is researching a \$4 billion plant to build new pits (or cores) for modern thermonuclear weapons. This facility would be able to produce 125-450 pits per year.

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WAND Education Fund educates the public and opinion leaders about the need to reduce violence and militarism in society, and redirect excessive military spending to unmet human and environmental needs.

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DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO

PURSUIT OF NEW NUKES HURTS U.S. EFFORTS TO STOP SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

RIGHT NOW, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS PLACED THE U.S. IN A STANCE THAT RELAYS: “DO AS I SAY, NOT AS I DO.” This weakens our ability to dissuade other countries from acquiring nuclear weapons.

If a military powerhouse like the U.S. breaks a long-standing promise to move toward eliminating our nuclear arsenal, we will have a hard time convincing other states to comply with their commitments. We will weaken the entire system of international rules and restrictions that blocks the spread of dangerous nuclear weapons materials, equipment and know-how.

NEW NUCLEAR WEAPONS DO NOT MAKE US SAFER

Nuclear weapons serve no practical role in countering threats from extremists who are willing to use terrorist tactics. You can't nuke a network or an extremist ideology.

The U.S. already has more than enough nuclear weapons — including 6,000 deployed strategic (or intercontinental) nuclear weapons and about 10,000 tactical (battlefield) and reserved weapons.

Further, using nuclear weapons on the battlefield could put our own troops at serious risk — for injury, trauma, longterm illness, or death.

WHAT IS A NUCLEAR BUNKER BUSTER?

Formally known as the “Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator” (RNEP), the bunker buster is a proposed new warhead intended to destroy deeply buried military facilities or storage bunkers by burrowing underground before exploding. The Pentagon suggests that a nuclear weapon can do this job better than a conventional weapon. In 2004, Congress denied the administration funds for research into the bunker buster. Nonetheless, the Pentagon has asked for money again in the fiscal year 2006 budget.

THE BUNKER BUSTER IS UNNECESSARY AND UNJUSTIFIABLE

Contrary to the administration's claims, an earth-penetrating warhead capable of destroying deeply buried targets would generate substantial fallout. The explosion would dig out a massive crater of radioactive dirt that would rain down on local populations.

Further, the bunker buster is an extremely lethal weapon. The bomb dropped on Hiroshima had a yield of 15 kilotons; the bunker buster would have a yield of 100 kilotons.

The U.S. already has conventional bombs that are used on underground targets. Use of a nuclear weapon will not improve upon the conventional weapons' lethality. Instead, using such a weapon would legitimate battlefield use of nuclear weapons and cause additional death and long-lasting contamination from radioactive fallout.



WHAT IS A MINI-NUKE?

Proponents of nuclear weapons like to promote the idea of “low-yield” nuclear weapons (with a yield of less than five kilotons). They believe that these weapons may be perceived as less of a weapon of mass destruction and, therefore, more acceptable to be used on the battlefield.

Still, the concept of “low-yield” is deceptive: at five kilotons, it is half the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

The current official procedures for nuclear weapons (as outlined by the administration in the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review) calls for developing low-yield nuclear weapons with a range of capabilities. These would be to attack movable targets, destroy chemical or biological weapons, and limit so-called collateral damage (that is, killing the local population and destruction of surrounding areas).

RELIGIOUS AND SCIENTIFIC LEADERS AGREE THAT NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE IMMORAL

In March 2005, an international group of religious and scientific leaders launched an appeal to all nuclear states to pledge never to use nuclear weapons, and to re-affirm commitments to achieving nuclear disarmament.

Over 75 prominent leaders signed the appeal — including four Nobel laureates, the head of the U.S. National Council of Churches, and the president of the international Catholic peace group Pax Christi. They called nuclear weapons “inherently immoral,” and called on the U.S. to cease plans to develop a new generation of nuclear bombs.

“When I travel across the country and meet with members and friends, they’re shocked to learn that we still have so many nuclear weapons. However, they’re even more stunned to hear the administration wants to build more, and *actually considers using them*. These are weapons that could wipe out life on this planet. We need to get rid of them, not make more.”

—Tanya Wallace, WAND national field director



“The United States is sick. It suffers from the sickness of being the victor, and it has to cure itself of this disease, this sickness.”

—Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, calling on the U.S. to boost its nuclear disarmament efforts

“Abolishing nuclear weapons is the right thing to do. George Bush Sr. thought so. So did President Vladimir Putin. In 2002 they vowed to reduce to the lowest level possible. They were farsighted and collaborative. In order for the world to trust us now, we should stick to our word.”

—Susan Shaer, WAND executive director

IT'S UP TO US. WE CAN PREVENT DISASTER.

THE U.S. MUST NOT BREAK THE GLOBAL AGREEMENT BAN ON NUCLEAR TESTING

THE ADMINISTRATION'S PURSUIT OF NEW NUCLEAR WEAPON capabilities for new missions could lead to a resumption of nuclear weapons testing. The last U.S. nuclear weapon test was in 1992, shortly after which the U.S. helped negotiate an international treaty to ban all nuclear weapons tests forever. Although the Treaty has yet to enter into force, and the U.S. Senate failed to ratify it in 1999, a global ban on all explosive testing of nuclear weapons prevails. New weapons designs require testing before they can be produced and placed in the arsenal. If the U.S. breaks the test ban, a major barrier to the proliferation of new and more deadly types of nuclear weapons will have been breached.

THE DANGER IS JUST TOO HIGH

If you think nuclear weapons are a bad investment, you're in good company. Indeed, a poll of Americans by AP/Ipsos in March 2005 showed that opposition to nuclear weapons is quite high: two-thirds (66%) said that *no country should be allowed to have nuclear weapons*.

Americans harbor grave fears about possible future nuclear attacks. Over half those polled (53%) believe that in the next five years a terrorist attack using nuclear weapons is likely; 52% say it is likely that one country will attack another country with nuclear weapons within the next five years.

The good news is that we can reduce this threat with sensible, aggressive efforts to control nuclear weapons, nuclear waste, and nuclear materials.

"Nuclear terrorism may be the ultimate catastrophe, but it is also the ultimate preventable catastrophe -- if we have the will to make it so."

— Dr. Graham Allison

What you can do!

ACTIONS TO TAKE TODAY

TALK to your friends, family and neighbors about new nuclear weapons.

SIGN UP for action alerts so you can make your voice heard: www.wandtakeaction.org.

WRITE letters to the editor so others in your community know about the new generation of weapons of mass destruction.

CONTACT WAND Education Fund for advice on what you can do. Visit www.WANDEducationFund.org; email info@wand.org; call **404-524-5999**.

LEARN more and stay informed. For information about the bunker buster, try the National Academy of Sciences: www.nap.edu/execsumm_pdf/11282.pdf



"The U.S. should lead by example. It's the right and smart thing to do. Global teamwork to reduce and eliminate nuclear threats works -- but only when the biggest player on the team does its part. The U.S. needs to help reduce the allure of nuclear weapons -- not increase it by pursuing new nuclear weapons."

—Sayre Sheldon, WAND president emerita; WAND delegate to the UN

