



Department of Social Development and World Peace Office of International Justice and Peace

Background on Nuclear Arms and Landmines February 2007

What can be said, too, about those governments which count on nuclear arms as a means of ensuring the security of their countries? Along with countless persons of good will, one can state that this point of view is not only baneful but also completely fallacious. In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims.-- Pope Benedict XVI, January 1, 2006

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Reductions. Since the end of the Cold War, the threat of *global* nuclear war is more remote, but we live in a still dangerous time of nuclear proliferation and possible nuclear terrorism. Deployed strategic nuclear weapons have been cut by 40% and intermediate-range nuclear weapons have been eliminated. In 2001, the Bush administration announced unilateral cuts in *deployed* strategic nuclear weapons. In 2002, the U.S. and Russia agreed to a treaty that codifies these unilateral cuts by reducing deployed strategic warheads to 1,700-2,200 on each side by 2012. This is a reduction from the 6,000 warheads permitted under START I and the 3,000-3,500 permitted under START II. As with previous reductions, an undetermined number of the weapons “cut” from the U. S. arsenal would be stored, not dismantled. This is a “good faith” treaty that does not contain verification measures and expires on the date that its reductions become mandatory. There are no plans to further reduce these weapons. The treaty does not cover thousands of tactical (short-range) nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Use. Three U.S. documents issued in 2002 – Nuclear Posture Review, National Security Strategy and National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction – make clear that the United States continues to threaten the use of nuclear weapons in response to the use of chemical or biological weapons by non-nuclear states.

New Nuclear Weapons. In FY 2004, Congress repealed a ban on research and development of new nuclear weapons and appropriated \$7.5 million for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (“bunker buster”) and \$6 million for research on low-yield nuclear weapons. Development of these weapons would require separate Congressional approval. In FY05 and FY06, the Administration requested funds for on-going research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNWP). In a major victory for advocates, Congress deleted these funds in both FY 05 and FY06. The Administration’s FY07 budget does not appropriate funds for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, but there are concerns that funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program may be used to develop new nuclear weapons. The RRW program itself may be unnecessary in light of the efficacy of the Stockpile Stewardship Program and recent studies reviewed by the National Nuclear Security Administration that indicate U.S. nuclear weapons have a much longer lifespan.

Testing. In October 1999, the U.S. Senate failed to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that bans nuclear testing. The Bush administration opposes ratification of this treaty but has committed to maintaining the current U. S. moratorium on testing. At the same time, the Administration requested \$30 million in FY05 to ready the Nevada test site for possible testing.

USCCB Position: The end of the Cold War has led to some progress in reducing nuclear weapons, but these efforts have not been commensurate with the dramatic changes in world politics. The U.S. and other nuclear powers must move away from reliance on nuclear weapons for their security. A global ban is more than a moral

ideal; it should be a policy goal. The positive example of the U.S. will be important to international efforts to address nonproliferation and the successful control of nuclear materials in this age of terrorism.

Arms Reductions. The USCCB has urged the Administration and Congress to view arms control treaties not as ends in themselves but as steps along the way to achieving the goal of a mutual, verifiable global ban on nuclear weapons. Much deeper, more irreversible cuts, in both strategic and tactical weapons, are both possible and necessary. In June 2000, the USCCB joined 18 retired military leaders and 20 other religious leaders in calling for deeper cuts and ultimately a global ban.

Development of New, Usable Weapons. The readiness of the United States to use nuclear weapons, especially against non-nuclear threats, and the potential development of new weapons should be opposed. A minimal nuclear deterrent may be justified only to deter the use of nuclear weapons. It is past time for the U.S. to commit never to use nuclear weapons first and to reject use of nuclear weapons to deter non-nuclear threats. The bishops abhor any use of nuclear weapons.

Testing. The U.S. should ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The CTBT will thwart the development of new nuclear weapons, and will impede efforts of other nations to obtain them.

*Anti-personnel landmines kill and maim countless innocent victims and are a serious obstacle to the economy of the developing countries, since they deprive them of extensive areas of agricultural land that are not yet mine free
....
--Pope John Paul II, November 22, 2004*

LANDMINES

Some 150 nations have signed the 1997 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty, which bans the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel (AP) landmines. President Clinton did not sign the treaty, citing the need for AP landmines in Korea. The Bush administration has no plans to sign the Treaty. The U. S. continues to be a leader in funding global humanitarian de-mining and landmine survivor assistance, but was not even represented at the First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention in Nairobi in November 2004. In the fall of 2005, the Conference and others successfully supported appropriations language to ensure that “landmines alternatives” being developed by the Department of Defense are evaluated for “potential indiscriminate effects” before “any full rate production decision for these systems.” In the last Congress, Senators Leahy and Specter introduced the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act of 2006 (S. 3768); it prohibits the U.S. from procuring such weapons. It does not affect the existing stockpile of these weapons.

USCCB Position: With the Holy See, the USCCB supports securing a U.S. commitment to sign the Mine Ban Treaty to eliminate the scourge of these morally unacceptable weapons that do not distinguish between soldiers and civilians or between times of war and times of peace. USCCB also supported S. 3768 as a modest first step.

ACTION REQUESTED

1. Ask members of Congress to scrutinize the Reliable Replacement Warhead program to ensure that it is not used to develop new nuclear weapons.
2. Ask members of Congress to cosponsor the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act when it is reintroduced in the 110th Congress.

RESOURCES: For more information see links for Arms Control and Disarmament, Arms Trade, Landmines, Nuclear Weapons and War and Peace at this website: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/topicissues.htm>.

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