



Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development Office of International Justice and Peace

Background on Nuclear Arms and Landmines February 2008

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 has receded, 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 codified 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. Under this “good faith” arrangement there are no verification measures, thousands of tactical (short-range) nuclear weapons are not covered, and it expires on the date its reductions become mandatory. There are no plans to further reduce these 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 – indicate that the U.S. continues to threaten the use of nuclear weapons in response to chemical or biological weapons attacks 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 In FY 2004, Congress repealed a ban on research and development of new nuclear weapons and appropriated \$7.5 million for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (“bunker buster”)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. Since development of these weapons requires separate Congressional approval, the Administration requested funds in FY05 and FY06 for on-going research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNWP). However, in a major victory for advocates, Congress deleted these funds in both years. The Administration’s FY07 budget did not appropriate funds for research on the RNWP, but pushed the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program. In December 2007 Congress denied funding for RRW, deeming the program unnecessary given the efficacy of the Stockpile Stewardship Program and studies indicating nuclear weapons remain stable over a much longer lifespan. However, the Administration has again requested funding for the RRW program in FY09.

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 that 143 other nations have ratified (including UK, France, and Russia), but has committed to maintaining the current U.S. moratorium on testing. Yet in FY05 the Administration requested \$30 million to ready the Nevada test site for possible testing and conducted a “subcritical experiment” in Nevada in February 2006.

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. USCCB successfully advocated for the cut in funds for the RRW program in 2007 and will join with other organizations in push-

ing for the U.S. to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. A global ban is more than a moral ideal; it should be a policy goal. The positive example of the U.S. ratifying CTBT will be important to international efforts to address nonproliferation and the successful control of nuclear materials in this age of terrorism.

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. The Holy Father said on January 1, 2008: "It is truly necessary for all persons of good will to come together to reach concrete agreements aimed at an effective demilitarization, especially in the area of nuclear arms."

The Church opposes the use of nuclear weapons, especially against non-nuclear threats, and the development of new nuclear weapons. While possession of a minimal nuclear capability may deter the use of nuclear weapons by others, the Church urges that the policies of nuclear deterrence be replaced with concrete measures of disarmament based on dialogue and multilateral negotiations. The U.S. should commit to never use nuclear weapons first and to reject use of nuclear weapons to deter non-nuclear threats.

USCCB has expressed support for the Global Security Priorities Act being introduced by Congressmen McGovern and Lungren. This resolution will link long-term savings derived from reducing our nuclear arsenal to increased support for nuclear nonproliferation efforts and child survival programs.

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. Neither has the Bush administration signed. The U.S. is a leading arms exporter, but paradoxically provides the most funding for global humanitarian de-mining and landmine survivor assistance. The U.S. did not participate officially in the First Review Conference of the Anti-Personnel Landmine Convention in Nairobi in November 2004 or the Vienna Conference on Cluster Munitions in December 2007. In Fall 2005, USCCB 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 productions decision for these systems." In 2006, Senators Leahy and Specter introduced the Victim-Activated Landmine Abolition Act prohibiting the U.S. from procuring such weapons, but the measure lacked enough cosponsors. In December 2007, as a result of extensive lobbying, the Omnibus Appropriations Act passed including language to ban U.S. cluster bomb exports for FY08. Action is now pending on the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act (S.594, HR 1755) to extend the restriction on cluster bomb exports indefinitely and prohibit use of these weapons by U.S. forces.

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.

ACTION REQUESTED

1. Ask members of Congress to eliminate funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) and any program which develops new nuclear weapons or seeks to maintain the current number of nuclear weapons. Support the Global Security Priorities Act when it is introduced.
2. Ask members of Congress to cosponsor the Cluster Munitions Civilian Protection Act to restrict cluster bomb exports indefinitely.

For further information: visit <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/warandpeaceind.shtml> or contact Virginia Farris, 202-541-3182 (phone); 541-3339 (fax); vfarris@usccb.org (on landmines) or Stephen Colecchi, 202-541-3196 (phone), 202-541-3339 (fax), scolecchi@usccb.org (on nuclear weapons).

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