



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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December 5, 2007

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan
Chairman, Senate Appropriations Energy
and Water Development Subcommittee
U.S. Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I urge you to delete all funding for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program from the upcoming omnibus appropriations bill. For decades, the U.S. Catholic Bishops have called for a reduction of nuclear weapons, with a goal of eliminating nuclear weapons through verifiable mutual disarmament. The RRW program, by creating new nuclear warheads, moves our nation in the opposite direction.

Our nation and world face serious threats to security from the proliferation of nuclear weapons materials and technologies. The creation of new nuclear weapons through the RRW program sends a dangerously mixed signal to the rest of the world and erodes our nation's credibility and leadership on the issue of nonproliferation. Other nuclear powers may seek to enhance their own nuclear deterrents and non-nuclear nations may be tempted to ignore their non-proliferation obligations.

Our Conference echoes the call of the Holy See to stop the development of new nuclear weapons. In an Intervention at a UN Conference on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Church reiterated, "The Holy See is convinced that, in the sphere of nuclear weapons, the banning of tests and the further development of these weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international controls." (November 11, 2001) The moral task today is to proceed with deeper cuts and ultimately to ban nuclear weapons entirely, not to create new ones. Just war moral criteria require that the use of force be proportionate and discriminate, minimizing harm to civilians. The use of nuclear weapons cannot meet these criteria in any meaningful sense.

Proponents of the RRW program suggest that our nation's nuclear arsenal will become unreliable and ineffective; however, a recent independent study commissioned by the National Nuclear Security Administration concluded that our current nuclear weapons will remain stable and viable. The panel closely examined plutonium pits, a key warhead component, and concluded that the majority of plutonium pit types have credible lifetimes of at least 85 years. In addition to being a precarious backward step, the panel's findings demonstrate that the RRW program is unnecessary.

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In light of the adverse impact the RRW program could have on our international nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation efforts, the USCCB urges you to eliminate funding for the RRW program. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and a distinct "W".

Thomas G. Wenski

Bishop of Orlando

Chairman, Committee on International Policy

cc: The Honorable Peter V. Domenici
The Honorable David L. Hobson
The Honorable Peter J. Visclosky