

Nuclear War or Real Security?

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In the months leading up to the debt deal struck on August 2, we grew accustomed to news of our government on the verge of bankruptcy, and news that failing to lift the debt ceiling would trigger a second recession - or worse - and that the best we could hope for was the nightmare of \$2.7 trillion in cuts to Social Security benefits, Medicare and essential social services. Talk about national decline!

Yet, amid the din of debate and despite our president's ostensible commitment to a future free of nuclear weapons, almost nothing was said about a truly mystifying commitment: Spending an *additional* \$185 billion to expand US nuclear weapons production facilities, and "modernize" the US nuclear arsenal and the missiles and bombers needed to inflict nuclear genocide.

When I return to Hiroshima to mark the August 6 anniversary of the atomic bombing that destroyed that city in nine seconds, people will ask, "How can the US plan to spend still more to prepare for nuclear war?"

Here's what I will have to tell them: We can invest to intimidate the world, but not to create jobs, keep people in their homes, or to build the 21st century infrastructure our children deserve.

As in the Bush era, rather than fulfill our Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) commitments to begin good-faith negotiations to eliminate the world's nuclear arsenals, the US today maintains its first-strike nuclear doctrine. As in the cases of the 30-plus times that the US has prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war during international crises since the Nagasaki A-bombing, nuclear weapons remain the ultimate enforcer of US global dominance.

President Obama's priority has been preventing nuclear weapons proliferation, not the creation of a nuclear weapons free world in our lifetimes.

The administration kowtowed to the Pentagon when it signed on to continuing the US first-strike doctrine, and it gave away the store to buy votes for Senate ratification of the New START Treaty with Russia. The price? It's \$185 billion "to revitalize" what will be the nation's 1,550 deployed strategic nuclear warheads and its massive arsenal of stockpiled nuclear weapons. While it is unclear whether the plan will be targeted for any of the cuts called for in the new debt deal, the fact remains that our government has been willing to pay to expand the nuclear weapons production infrastructure, train a new generation of nuclear weapons designers and technicians, extend the murderous "life" of aging nuclear warheads and replace "old delivery systems."

Again, why? The answer can be found in a recent Foreign Affairs article by Keir Lieber and Daryl Press. In the tradition of the film "Dr. Strangelove," we are told that we need to make US nuclear threats more credible - thus, increase the likelihood that future presidents will push the nuclear button.

While retaining more than enough hydrogen bombs to completely eliminate China or Russia and to bring on nuclear winter (the average strategic warhead is roughly 14 times more powerful than the Hiroshima A-bomb), the plan is to build more low-yield nuclear weapons - anything from a nuclear bunker buster to a Hiroshima-size A-bomb - so they can be delivered by the new nuclear-capable F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and cruise missiles. The Trident submarine fleet is to be replaced with more modern nuclear war-fighting ships, and designs for nuclear-capable drones are on the drawing boards.

The idea is that as the US fights more conventional wars with nuclear-armed countries like Pakistan, the US "must possess nuclear weapons *that a president might actually use.*" This is thinking and planning for the "unthinkable" at the expense of what people really need.

The powerful Congressional committee the new debt deal would create would be charged with recommending changes not only in spending, but also, possibly, in

tax policy. A note to the committee and the rest of our government: We'd be much more secure if we didn't spend these billions to continue preparations for nuclear annihilation, if instead we honored UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's call to fulfill its NPT commitments, and if instead we made the national commitment to provide our children first-class teachers, to prevent foreclosures, to keep the promises of Social Security and Medicare and to invest in the job-creating research and infrastructure building needed for a 21st century economy that can compete peacefully with any nation.



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