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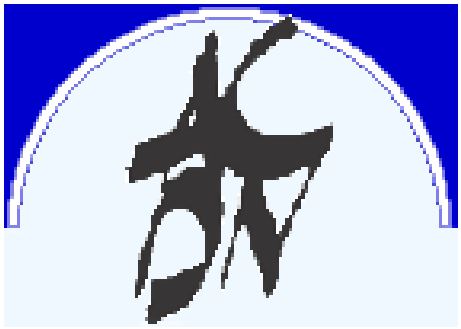

Ten Steps Toward a Nuclear-Free World

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The Federation of American Scientists, along with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), and independent analysts, have issued a report, *Toward True Security*, that calls for immediately declaring that the sole mission for U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear attack, for taking all nuclear weapons off launch-ready alert, and for reducing the U.S. nuclear arsenal to a total of 1000 warheads, including reserves, as an immediately achievable, secure step toward a nuclear-free world.

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According to the report, the greatest nuclear dangers to the United States are an accidental, unauthorized or mistaken Russian nuclear attack, the spread of nuclear weapons to more nations, and the acquisition of nuclear materials by terrorists. U.S. nuclear weapons policy, the report concludes, fails to adequately address these risks and too often exacerbates them.

Toward True Security stresses the need to take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert. "Increasing the amount of time required to launch U.S. weapons would ease Russian concerns about the vulnerability of its nuclear weapons," said Ivan Oelrich, a physicist and vice president for strategic security programs at FAS, and a report co-author. "That would give Russia the incentive to take its weapons off alert, reducing the risk of an accidental or unauthorized Russian launch on the U.S."

The report echoes the sentiments of former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, and former Senate Armed Services Chairman Sam Nunn. They outlined their prescription for embracing a "vision of a world free of nuclear weapons" in two Wall Street Journal op-eds. The first ran in January 2007; the second ran last month.

"The next U.S. president can reduce the dangers that nuclear weapons pose to the United States and to the rest of the world by taking unilateral steps to lessen U.S. dependence on nuclear weapons," said Dr. Lisbeth Gronlund, a physicist and co-director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Global Security Program, and a report co-author. " It has been nearly two decades since the Berlin wall came down, but U.S. policy is still mired in Cold War thinking. It's time for a major change."

Toward True Security goes beyond the former government officials' recommendations by arguing that the United States should not wait for bilateral or multilateral agreements; it should take unilateral steps to begin the process. These steps, the report maintains, would make the United States safer, whether or not the eventual goal of a worldwide ban is ever achieved.

"Our next president should declare that the only purpose for U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter and, as a last resort, respond to the use of nuclear weapons by another country," said Christopher Paine, director of NRDC's Nuclear Program and a report co-author. "Making it clear that we will not use nuclear weapons first would reduce the incentive for other nations to acquire them to deter a potential U.S. first strike."

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Dr. Richard Garwin, a National Medal of Science recipient, developer of the hydrogen bomb, and a report co-author, added that the U.S. stockpile would still provide a credible deterrent with significantly fewer warheads. "The U.S. should unilaterally cut its nuclear arsenal to no more than 1,000 nuclear warheads," he said. "There is no plausible threat that justifies maintaining more than a few hundred survivable nuclear weapons, and no reason to link the size of U.S. nuclear forces to those of any other country."

The report outlines 10 specific, unilateral steps the next president should take to transform U.S. nuclear policy, which would put the world on a path to eventually ban nuclear weapons, and demonstrate global leadership:

1. Declare that the sole purpose of U.S. nuclear weapons is to deter and, if necessary, respond to the use of nuclear weapons by another country.

2. Take nuclear weapons off alert, so they can be launched within days instead of minutes.

3. Eliminate preset targeting plans. Replace them with the capability to promptly develop a response tailored to a specific situation if nuclear weapons are used against the United States or its allies.

4. Promptly reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal to no more than 1,000 warheads.

5. Halt all programs to develop and deploy new nuclear weapons.

6. Retire all U.S. nonstrategic (tactical) nuclear weapons.

7. Commit to making further cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal on a bilateral or multilateral basis.

8. Declare that the United States will not resume nuclear testing, and work with the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

9. Halt further deployment of the ground-based missile defense system and drop any plans for a space-based missile defense system.

10. Reaffirm the U.S. commitment to pursue nuclear disarmament and present a plan to meet that goal.

(Author: FAS, UCS and NRDC)

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