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The "Peace President" Wants To Keep America's Nukes

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NEW YORK March 08, 2010 - As if President Barack Obama did not have enough on his plate, he will shortly issue a Nuclear Posture Review -which is, in fact, a month overdue.

Each new American president must by law review his nation's nuclear weapons and strategy.

Accordingly, Nobel Peace Laureate Obama will decide what to do with America's 5,500 strategic nuclear weapons - that possess enough destructive power to destroy the planet at least five times over. Some experts say it's 50 times over.

Obama, strongly influenced by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, is expected to decide to spend US \$7 billion modernizing US nuclear weapons and plants. Maintaining US nuclear weapons cost some \$52 billion annually. Nuclear weapons deteriorate over time, so require regular maintenance and refurbishment.

Still, this is a huge amount at a time when the nation is bankrupt and running on borrowed money. President Obama just can't seem to escape the shadow of his bellicose predecessor.

The president is also expected to reject a 'no first use' policy demanded by senior Democrats, led by California senator Diane Feinstein. Such a pledge would reaffirm the sole purpose of the US arsenal is deterring nuclear attack. Offensive use of US nuclear weapons would be banned under a 'no first use' doctrine.

Russia made such a declaration in the 1990's, but today its position is ambiguous. China, Pakistan, India, and North Korea have made no first use declarations. The NATO powers appear to favor a first strike policy. Israel denies having nuclear weapons, but promises not to be the first to introduce them into the Mideast - which it did decades ago.

Deeply disturbing many liberals, President Obama will likely assert the option to use nuclear weapons against other non-nuclear nations or anti-American groups - particularly so if the US is attacked by chemical or biological weapons. He is following the policy of preemption established by President George W. Bush.

The US and Russia are nearing agreement to cut their deployed strategic warheads by a 1,000 units down to 1,500-1,675 each. But much of these reductions would come by storing rather than dismantling active warheads.

Thousands more tactical nuclear warheads will remain, though Washington hints it might remove some from Western Europe and Asia. Tactical nuclear weapons would play a key role in halting a North Korean attack on South Korea.

Nuclear weapons are widely accepted in the West as a legitimate defense against nuclear attack.

But since the Bush administration, the hard right has been pushing for using small nuclear weapons against deeply buried targets - like Iranian nuclear plants - or guerilla groups.

A new, small tactical nuclear warhead, aka 'Muslim-buster'- was evaluated and almost went into production before it was stopped by the US Congress.

Republicans are again beating the war drums over the supposed nuclear threat from North Korea and Iran. They

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accuse Obama of near treason for having even considered scrapping part or all of America's huge nuclear arsenal, as he once promised to do.

These low-IQ Republican scare-mongers don't know, or don't care that North Korea has no long-ranged nuclear capability, or wants nukes for defense against possible US nuclear attack - and as a way of extorting funds from the US, Japan and South Korea. Or that Iran has no nuclear weapons as of now, and poses no threat to the distant US.

Retired US generals and admirals have repeatedly advocated junking all nuclear weapons, calling them ruinously expensive and of no military value.

The 1970 UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty mandated all signatories to quickly dismantle their nuclear weapons. The US, Britain, France, Russia, China are in treaty violation. Israel, Pakistan, North Korea, and India refused to sign and secretly built their own nuclear arsenals.

In the 1980's, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev made sweeping proposals for total nuclear disarmament, but President Ronald Reagan foolishly refused to scrap the US nuclear arsenal or his beloved Star Wars anti-missile system. The Soviet military-industrial complex was no happier than its American counterpart to see nuclear arsenals dismantled.

'Peace president' Barack Obama has the chance to get rid of America's largely useless nukes, or at least reduce them to a dozen or so strategic missiles. But while Obama may slightly narrow nuclear doctrine, it appears America's increasingly potent national security complex and angry Republicans have pushed him into retaining and even expanding the nation's nuclear capability.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is promoting its new 'Prompt Global Response' system: US-based missiles with conventional warheads that can rapidly strike anywhere on the planet.

When one of these missiles is fired at some Muslim malefactors in, say Pakistan or Afghanistan, one hopes Russia or China will not confuse it for a nuclear strike aimed at them.

In 1995, Russian air defenses mistook a Norwegian scientific missile for a US nuclear strike. Russian nuclear missiles came within minutes of being fired at North America. The Cold War was filled with such terrifying nuclear false alarms and close calls.

Global nuclear disarmament means intensive inspections of all nuclear-capable powers, including Brazil, Iran, Israel, India, Pakistan, both Koreas, and Taiwan as well as the nuclear great powers. Even Switzerland and Japan could produce nuclear weapons within 90 days.

President Obama should have led the way by sharply reducing, then scrapping America's nuclear arsenal. What thwarts this sensible policy is not verification, but political willpower and courage.

The only nation to ever use horrific nuclear weapons should take the lead in freeing humanity from their curse and setting an example for others.

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