



Nuclear Weapons: Dangerous, Expensive and Immoral

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On August 6, 1945 the Japanese city of Hiroshima was annihilated in a flash by a single uranium bomb. It razed and burnt 70 percent of all buildings, killed an estimated 140,000 Japanese civilians and Korean laborers, irradiated the soil and plants, and brought increased rates of cancer and chronic disease among the survivors. A slightly larger plutonium bomb exploded over Nagasaki three days later, levelling the city and killing another 74,000.

Today, as we observe the 74th anniversary of the use of nuclear weapons, the United States is still pouring billions of dollars into its nuclear arsenal and rekindling a nuclear arms race. It is past time for the United States to renounce nuclear weapons as a strategy of foreign policy and join other nations in working for their elimination.

Nuclear Weapons Today

This is a discouraging time for nuclear nonproliferation. Tensions with Iran are increasing after the United States' unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal. North Korea is test-firing rockets with the ability to hit Seoul. The Administration has unilaterally [withdrawn](#) from a 1987 treaty with Russia that eliminated short- and intermediate-range missiles in Europe, and announced its intention to test a new ground-launched cruise missile later this year.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation seeks a "world free of war and the threat of war." We have been working to abolish nuclear weapons for more than 70 years. Here are some of the reasons that we are committed to working for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons are dangerous.

One nuclear bomb can destroy an entire city. The U.S. arsenal contains approximately 1,750 nuclear weapons deployed on land, under the sea, and in the air around the world, according to the Federation of American Scientists. Each one of those weapons have destructive capacities greater than the Hiroshima bomb. One mistake, miscalculation, or irrational Presidential act could destroy human civilization.

The United States is currently fueling a new arms race: expanding the justifications, capacities, accuracy, and range of our nuclear weapons, and pulling out of treaties that have made the world safer.

These weapons aren't making us safer, they are making the world less stable.

Nuclear weapons are costly.

The Congress will authorize roughly \$25 billion this year for nuclear weapons programs, with costs over the next 30 years to “modernize” these weapons estimated to be more than \$1.5 trillion. This money is needed instead for diplomacy, renewable energy, health care, poverty reduction, infrastructure, education, and other programs that provide the US with real national security.

Nuclear weapons are immoral.

What do words like “victory” or “defeat” mean in a nuclear war? If a nuclear bomb eradicated an American city, what would be gained by retaliation? How does killing each other's children bring peace?

Wars can never be won; they can only be prevented. Peacemaking takes commitment and patience and courage.

What Can Be Done?

In 1982, when the U.S. had nearly 25,000 nuclear weapons and the USSR 30,000, a million people demonstrated at the United Nations in support of disarmament. Since then major treaties have reduced the number of nuclear weapons worldwide, robust inspection protocols were developed, and seventy nations have signed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Today, 80 percent of Americans favor arms control treaties, yet a majority express support for nuclear retaliation. We need to shift the narrative that nuclear weapons are worth their cost and that they are necessary to keep us safe. We must remind our family, friends, neighbors, and politicians that it is only by eliminating nuclear weapons that the risk of annihilation can be prevented.

FCNL is educating Congress about this issue. We are working to stop deployment of so-called [“low yield warheads](#), sea-launched cruise missiles, and intermediate-range nuclear missiles that were banned by treaty until recently. We are calling for extension of the New START Treaty that has successfully reduced the world's stockpile and instituted robust verification and notification protocols. We continue to support diplomacy with Iran and North Korea.

Reducing the threat of nuclear war is not impossible, it is only difficult. But it is also imperative.

Learn more: fcnl.org/nuclear