

GREENPEACE Briefing

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty PrepCom, April 2004

THE U.S., ARTICLE VI, AND THE 13 STEPS: CONTINUED DEFIANCE OR RELUCTANT COMPLIANCE?

The US Administration has tried to make the case that it is committed to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its Article VI disarmament obligations. It has also said that it supports some but not all of the 13 steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. However, its actions cast doubt on the truthfulness of these claims and must be subject to thorough scrutiny.

The US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)¹, in particular, makes it quite clear that the US is intent upon pursuing a program, not of disarmament, but of maintaining and qualitatively enhancing its capability to design, develop, test and build new nuclear warheads.

The NPR calls for a "new mix" of nuclear, non-nuclear and defensive capabilities, such as national missile defense, to form a 'New Triad'. It warns that today's US nuclear arsenal is too old fashioned and inflexible for modern military needs. It calls for new capabilities to be developed "to defeat emerging threats such as hard and deeply buried targets, to find and attack mobile and relocatable targets, to defeat chemical or biological agents and to improve accuracy and limit collateral damage". And it calls for the development of nuclear weapons to achieve these capabilities through "extensive research and timely fielding of new systems" claiming that they are "imperative" if the New Triad is to be a "reality".

The NPR envisages that the U.S. will plan nuclear strikes for a range of contingencies that can then be adapted quickly, avoiding the up to two-day delay currently associated with retargeting U.S. operationally deployed nuclear forces. It proposes that an operationally deployed nuclear force, 1,700 to 2,200 nuclear warheads by 2012, will be maintained for use against "immediate and unexpected contingencies." Unexpected contingencies described in the review are "sudden and unexpected security challenges like the Cuban Missile Crisis" or an opponent's surprise unveiling of an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Contingencies for which a nuclear strike may be felt necessary include an Iraqi attack on Israel or its neighbors, a North Korean attack on South Korea, or a military confrontation over the status of Taiwan. Current US plans are that by 2012 these 2,200 operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads will be deliverable by 14 Trident submarines, 500 Minuteman III missiles, 76 B-52 bombers and 21 B2 bombers.

In addition, a "hedge" or "responsive force" of possibly as many as 8,000 nuclear weapons will be kept in storage to respond to potential contingencies, defined as "plausible but not immediate dangers" such as the emergence of a new, hostile military coalition that possesses weapons of mass destruction. Such a reserve stockpile is allowed under the weak terms of The Moscow Treaty, signed by Presidents Bush and Putin in 2002. Countries specifically named in the review, as examples of nations that fall into all three of the above contingency categories are North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya.

¹ US Nuclear Posture Review, submitted to Congress 31 December 2001, classified excerpts available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm>

This position was recently confirmed by the US Undersecretary of Energy Linton Brooks in Congressional budget hearings. He pointed out that “...reductions will not lower the stockpile to 1,700 – 2,200 total warheads” and that “in particular, sufficient warheads will be retained to augment the operationally deployed force in the event that world events require a more robust deterrent force...”²

This commitment to nuclear rearmament is also made quite clear in the US Fiscal Year (FY) 2005 budget request to the Congress for nuclear weapons work³. As a recent Congressional Research Service report points out:

*“The FY2005 budget document... shows funding for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) increasing sharply after FY2005 as the weapon proceeds beyond the study phase...”*⁴ And that the FY 2005-9 projected budget total spend is \$484.7 million over those five years “seems to cast doubt on assertions that RNEP is only a study”.⁵

The FY 2005 budget request also outlines the timeline to production of a RNEP. It states that in FY 2005 there will be a “full system test” of the RNEP design with completion of the design definition and cost study sometime in FY 2006. Through FY 2007/8, if given the go ahead, they will complete the actual design of the new “bunker buster” with actual production beginning in FY 2009.

There are also proposals requesting funding for a Modern Pit Facility (MPF) that will, as a minimum, be able to produce 125 cores (plutonium pits) for nuclear warheads every year from 2020. As an interim measure, in April 2003 the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) produced its first brand new core and aims to establish an interim facility that by 2007 will be able to produce between 10 and 20 plutonium pits every year.

The next five years will also see a significant increase in the work of US nuclear weapons plants as they move into the production of new components for the refurbishment of components for at least four nuclear warheads in the existing US arsenal. In order to “rebuild War Reserve weapons” the US is intending to “recycle” 350 nuclear warheads a year for the foreseeable future and to create, in addition, at least twenty new nuclear warheads per annum. They are also hoping to be producing several kilograms of tritium per annum by 2007, which will be produced in commercial nuclear power reactors in violation of international nuclear non-proliferation norms.

Readiness to resume nuclear testing is also a focus, with the time it takes to return to a nuclear test being reduced from the current 2-3 years to 18 months by September 2005.

None of the above can be seen to be the actions of a government committed to its disarmament obligation the NPT.

More recently, the new US National Security Strategy revealed that the US is intent on striking pre-emptively against nations or individuals with every means at their disposal, including nuclear weapons.

Phraseology that is hard to ignore includes: “The greater the threat, the greatest is the risk of inaction - ...the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively...”⁶ and “America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed”⁷

These are hardly the words of a nation committed to multilateralism, peace and disarmament nor concerned with setting an example for others to follow.

² “US not to reduce nuclear arsenal to Moscow Treaty levels”, Agence France Press, March 25, 2004

³ US Department of Energy’s (DOE) FY 2005 can be found at <http://www.cfo.doe.gov/budget/05budget/index.htm>

⁴ “Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator Budget Request and Plan, FY2005-FY2009, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, RS21762, March 8, 2004

⁵ *ibid.*, p.2

⁶ The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, September 2002

⁷ *ibid.*, p.4

In addition, the highly influential Defense Science Board (DSB) recommended in a recent report⁸, that:

- Work be shifted away from the current "Stockpile Stewardship Program" (the maintaining of the existing nuclear arsenal) "toward a new vision; a stockpile to provide weapons more relevant to the future threat environment...";
- "research be initiated" on new nuclear weapons designs that "produce low collateral damage" and that "produce special effects" such as the neutron bomb;

In conclusion, it is clear that the current US nuclear posture reinforces the role of nuclear weapons and the infrastructure supporting the development and production of nuclear weapons, in spite of the Bush Administration's rhetoric that it wants to be rid of the Cold War and cut nuclear arsenals.

The aggressive stance of US nuclear policy combined with the weaknesses of the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime will help to further undermine the basic commitments made under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to nuclear disarmament.

Rather than contemplating incremental nuclear disarmament the US and many of the other states that possess a nuclear arsenal are contemplating incremental and qualitative nuclear rearmament. While there are many stages that have to be gone through prior to the physical construction and deployment of new nuclear weapons, it must be recognised that the U.S. is leading the way down the slippery slope to new, first-strike weapons. And, like a snowball rolling down a hill, the threat of such threatening weapons gets bigger and bigger and soon becomes very hard to stop.

As Senator Dianne Feinstein of California so aptly summarized:

"...for much of the past three years, the Administration's policy on nuclear weapons has:

- Engaged in unnecessarily belligerent unilateralist rhetoric and action;
- Dismissed arms control and nonproliferation as ineffective;
- Emphasized the role of pre-emptive military action; and,
- Pursued new nuclear weapons capabilities."⁹

The only way the US government and others can convince the international community that it is not intent on expanding and improving its nuclear weapons arsenals and infrastructure is by the complete, irreversible, and verifiable dismantlement of nuclear testing, design, development and production facilities.

For further information contact the Greenpeace 2004 NPT Delegation: William Peden +1 646 247 4017 or Nicky Davies +1 646 247 1849. Or contact Greenpeace International: +31 20 514 8150

⁸ Report of the Defense Science Board on Future Strategic Strike Forces, February 2004, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, Washington, DC

⁹ Statement of Senator Dianne Feinstein at Appropriations Hearing on Funding of Next Generation of Nuclear Weapons, March 23, 2004