

Nuclear weapons

Trump and McConnell have given us four years of nuclear warmongering and backwards movement on disarmament

The Trump administration has taken a number of steps **backwards** in terms of undoing existing efforts to address the nuclear nightmare.

- One of Donald Trump's first acts as President was to **pull the US out of the Iran nuclear deal**, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, that was negotiated together with the European Union, Russia and China to ensure that Iran would not develop its own nuclear weapons capability.
- In response to ongoing nuclear weapons testing by North Korea, President Trump **threatened that country with "fire and fury like the world has never seen,"** the most direct threat to use nuclear weapons by a President of the United States since President Kennedy threatened Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.
- President Trump then announced his intention to **pull the US out of the INF Treaty**, a cornerstone of Cold War era arms control that removed over 10,000 nuclear warheads from the European continent.
- In his first budget, President Trump insisted on substantial increases for developing new nuclear weapons, including **a new, more "usable" low-yield submarine-launched nuclear weapon**, the W-76-1, which went into production in 2018 and was deployed on US Trident submarines in 2019.
- In January 2020, as a result of these and many other backwards steps being taken by the Trump administration, the **Bulletin of Atomic Scientists moved their Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, the closest it has been to doomsday since 1945.**
- In May, 2020, President Trump announced that the US would **pull out of the Open Skies Treaty** that allows countries to fly unarmed surveillance flights over each other in order to verify compliance with other treaties and reduce tensions.
- In September, 2020, the Trump administration asked the military to **assess how quickly it could pull nuclear weapons out of storage and load them onto bombers and submarines** if an arms control treaty with Russia is allowed to expire in February.

We simply cannot afford four more years of nuclear warmongering and backwards movement on disarmament

We have survived this far without a nuclear war *by luck* and for no other reason. Sooner or later, our luck is going to run out. Four more years of Trump and McConnell are likely to mean:

- **Increasing chance of war with Iran**, which could end up involving the use of nuclear weapons, engulf the whole Middle East region and lead to global repercussions.

- **Increasing chance of war with North Korea**, which would almost certainly involve nuclear weapons, cause huge casualties and destruction not only in North Korea but also in South Korea and Japan.
- **Deployment of formerly banned missiles back in Europe**, which could lead to a huge back-lash in Europe and the break-up of NATO.
- **Nuclear arms race with Russia**, costing trillions more than the trillions already allocated for nuclear weapons development.
- **Increasing risk of nuclear launch by accident or miscalculation**, with the “doomsday clock” moving closer and closer to midnight.
- **Increasing risk of nuclear confrontation with China.**
- **Collapse of the global non-proliferation regime**, leading to more countries deciding to develop their own nuclear weapons.

The fact that we have not had such a war in over 70 years has lulled many people into thinking that nuclear war cannot happen. Indeed, we have been reassured by those in positions of authority that nuclear weapons keep us safe and will never be used. The belief that the world can continue to hold onto nuclear weapons indefinitely without ever using them is as dangerous as the belief that we can go on burning fossil fuels indefinitely without causing a climate catastrophe.

It is not just the possibility of nuclear war that poses an existential threat to human civilisation. Just one detonation in a city, by accident or on purpose, would kill millions. The immediate casualties would overwhelm the response capacity of the entire global Red Cross/Red Crescent and overflow every burn bed in every hospital on the planet. Women, girls and foetuses would suffer the most from ionising radiation. Food and water would be toxic for generations. There is no possible military or political agenda worth such a risk.

And the people who look after them make mistakes, they fall asleep on the job, they take drugs on the job, they forget how to do their tasks. In 2007, 6 US nuclear weapons went “missing” for several hours because they were loaded onto the wrong plane and sent to the wrong air force base in the wrong state. In 2013, 17 officers with the authority to launch nuclear weapons were stripped of their duties because of a “pattern of weapons safety rule violations...” And in 2016, 14 airmen responsible for guarding America’s ICBM nuclear missiles were disciplined for drug offences.

As many as 50 nuclear weapons currently lie at the bottom of the sea. They have sunk with submarines, rolled off ships, or been jettisoned from airplanes. In 1961, two 4-megaton nuclear bombs were dropped on North Carolina after a plane caught fire and broke up in mid-air. One of the bombs was recovered and the other one is still 180 feet underneath a cornfield, cordoned off but still there, more than 50 years later, because it would be too dangerous to try to remove it.

At least 4,000 out of the global stockpile of nearly 14,000 nuclear weapons are standing by, 24 hours a day, on “hair-trigger” alert, ready to be launched at a moment’s notice with an order from a President, Prime Minister or even through the actions of a rogue military officer with access to the launch mechanisms. This is not a distant, far away threat. This is an immediate, life-threatening emergency.

