

VETERANS FOR PEACE NUCLEAR POSTURE REVIEW



January 2022



INTRODUCTION

This January, President Biden is expected to issue a United States Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)ⁱ, prepared by the Department of Defense in a tradition started in 1994 during the Clinton Administration and continued during the Bush, Trump and Obama presidencies.ⁱⁱ Veterans For Peace is concerned that the world is on a downward spiral toward climate catastrophe and our nation increasingly wastes its scarce resources on weapons that are ultimately useless except to line the pockets of the Military-Industrial-Congressional-Intelligence-Media-Academic-Think-Tank Complex (MICIMATT). International security would best be served by committing a World War level of effort to address the climate crisis rather than preparing for every conceivable military threat.

As veterans who have learned the hard way that serving our government is not always serving our country, members of Veterans For Peace may be more likely than most to distrust pronouncements from the so-called “Defense” establishment. We remember the fraudulent use of the Tonkin Gulf incident which victimized so many of us, the WMD hoax preceding the invasion of Iraq, the use of the “bomber gap” of the 1950s and the “missile gap” of the 1960s to advance the influence of the Military Industrial Complex about which President Eisenhower warned us.

What we need now is a “Nuclear Posture” that enables us to reduce the real risk of nuclear confrontation through accidental launch or miscalculated escalation, and to accelerate a global reduction and rapid elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Defense Department’s Nuclear Posture Review is being drafted when international consensus against the existence of such weapons is building, as exemplified in the number of nations which have supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).ⁱⁱⁱ The treaty was passed by the UN General Assembly on July 7, 2017 with 122 nations in favor and one opposed. The US attacked the whole process and organized a boycott of the vote. The Treaty has since been signed by 86 nations and ratified by 57. It entered into force on January 22, 2021.

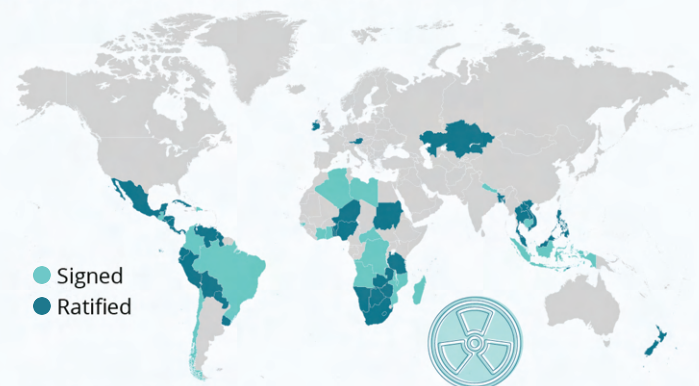
None of the nuclear-armed states have signed the Treaty, but it provides a process for establishing a time-bound framework for negotiations leading to the verifiable and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons. It is toward this goal that a sane nuclear posture must lean.

Image Source:

www.statista.com/chart/23288/status-of-un-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons

The Status Of The UN's Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons

States that have signed/ratified the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*



* As of January 22, 2021
Source: United Nations



statista

THE STATE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN THE WORLD TODAY

There are 14,000 nuclear bombs on the planet today, with 13,000 of them controlled by the US and Russia. The other seven nuclear powers—China, France, UK, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea—have little over 1,000 in all.^{iv} It is clear that if we are actually to abolish nuclear weapons, it is up to the US and Russia to take the lead. With a US proposed budget of nearly two trillion dollars in the next 30 years for two new bomb factories, new missiles, planes, submarines, and redesigned warheads, it is clear that the US is not acting in “good faith” for a “cessation of the arms race at an early date” as required by the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to which it is a signatory.

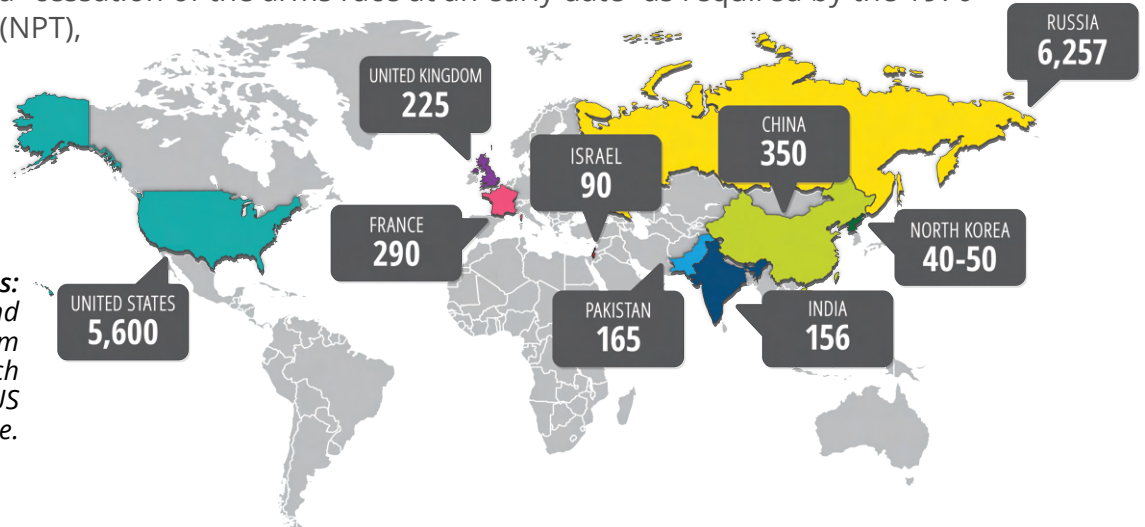


Image Sources:
Shannon N. Kile and
Hans M. Kristensen, Stockholm
International Peace Research
Institute (SIPRI) and US
Department of State.

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes that the US immediately cease the “nuclear modernization” program and redirect the funds to implement non-carbon, non-nuclear energy systems, reduce the impact of climate change and provide for societal needs. These are called for in the Nuclear Weapons Abolition and Economic and Energy Conversion Act, HR2850.^v

NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON HAIR-TRIGGER ALERT POISED AND READY TO FIRE

The US and Russia each maintain about 900 weapons on hair-trigger alert, mounted on missiles, poised and ready to fire.^{vi} Since the 1950s there have been countless accidents, near misses, airplane crashes carrying nuclear bombs, missing airplanes with nuclear weapons, and nuclear weapons sent to the wrong location - a whole parade of horrible near disasters.^{vii} For example, in the documentary film, *The Man Who Saved the World*,^{viii} Soviet Colonel Stanislav Petrov had been stationed in his Moscow bunker in 1983, monitoring for incoming attacks. He saw some blips on his computer screen that indicated US missiles were coming in for a nuclear attack on Russia. His orders were to fire all the Soviet missiles against major American cities, but he waited. It turned out to be a computer error! In 2007, six US cruise missiles carrying nuclear warheads were mistakenly loaded onto a B-52 bomber in North Dakota and flown to a base in Louisiana. No one realized the bombs were missing for 36 hours!^{ix} We have been surviving on sheer luck.

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes that the US immediately separate all the warheads from their delivery systems, as China already does, and make the world safer from unintended nuclear catastrophe.

THE US NUCLEAR UMBRELLA

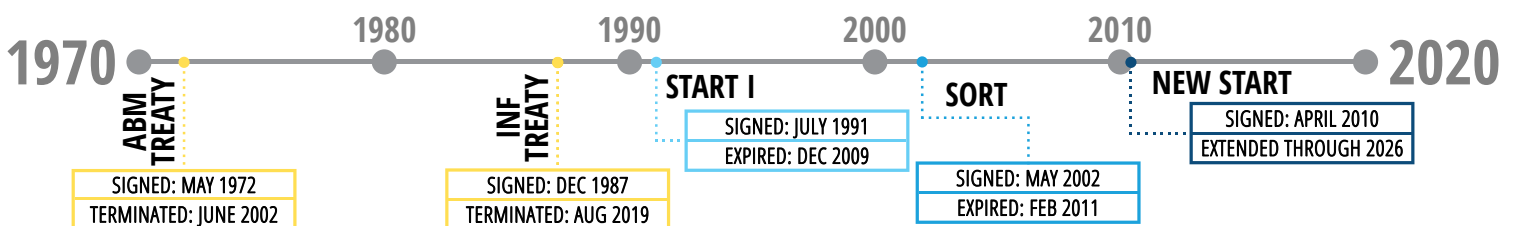
The US offers extended nuclear deterrence to all of its NATO allies, as well as to its Pacific allies Japan, Australia, and South Korea. The US maintains nuclear weapons at bases in five NATO states - Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey. These countries all opposed the establishment of the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Given that Turkey and the US are not as friendly as in the past, one must wonder if it is wise to station nuclear weapons there - or anywhere else. Having nuclear weapons in your country makes you a target - less safe, so it would be better for the host countries to insist that the US remove its nuclear weapons. In fact, in Germany's recent election campaign, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party platforms proposed the removal of the US nuclear bombs from German soil.^x

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes that all US nuclear weapons be removed from other countries.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS RUSSIA

The world has gone from 70,000 nuclear warheads during the height of the Cold War to the 14,000 on the planet today.^{xi} So we do know how to reduce the arsenals by disabling the bombs under strict inspection and verification processes, long established. However, the US has missed numerous opportunities to cooperate with Russia over the years, starting at the end of World War II, when President Truman rejected pleas to turn the bomb over to the United Nations under international supervision.^{xii} Subsequent US actions that either missed opportunities to reduce risk or actually increased risk of nuclear confrontation with Russia include the following examples:

- President Reagan rejected President Gorbachev's offer to give up deployment of a "Star Wars" missile defense system in space as a condition for both countries to eliminate all their nuclear weapons.
- President Clinton refused President Putin's offer to cut our massive nuclear arsenals to 1,500 bombs each,^{xiii} and to call on all of the other nuclear-armed states to negotiate the elimination of all nuclear weapons, in exchange for the US not placing missile sites in Romania.^{xiv}
- President George W. Bush walked out of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty^{xv} and put a missile base in Romania. President Trump placed another missile base in Poland.
- President Bush in 2008 and President Obama in 2014 blocked any discussion of Russian and Chinese proposals for a space weapons ban in the consensus-bound UN Committee for Disarmament in Geneva.
- President Obama rejected President Putin's offer to negotiate a treaty to ban cyber war.^{xvi,xvii}
- President Trump pulled the US out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.^{xviii}
- From President Clinton through President Biden, the US has never ratified the 1992 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, while Russia has ratified it.



US-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at a Glance

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review recommends reversing these missed opportunities:

Re-implement the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
& eliminate all missile “defense” systems.

Re-implement the Intermediate-Range
Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Ratify the Comprehensive
Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Negotiate with Russia to reduce our nuclear arsenals to
1,000 nuclear weapons each & call all the other parties to the
table to negotiate for a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS CHINA

China keeps its approximately 300 nuclear warheads separated from their missiles, a true No First Use posture! Absent serious provocations, China presents no threat of nuclear attack against the US or its allies. However, the US has encircled China with hundreds of military bases and has signaled a commitment to defend Taiwan’s independence, counter to previous agreements with China made during the Nixon administration. The US and its corporate media are generating a constant stream of anti-China propaganda, apparently preparing the US public for a possible war with nuclear-armed China.

The current relationship between China and the US is extremely dangerous. Provocative military initiatives and “strategic ambiguity” regarding Taiwan constitute a potentially explosive situation.

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes an immediate halt to US military exercises in the South China Sea. It recommends rescinding the nuclear submarine sales to Australia and other AUKUS military threats to China.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS NORTH KOREA (DPRK)

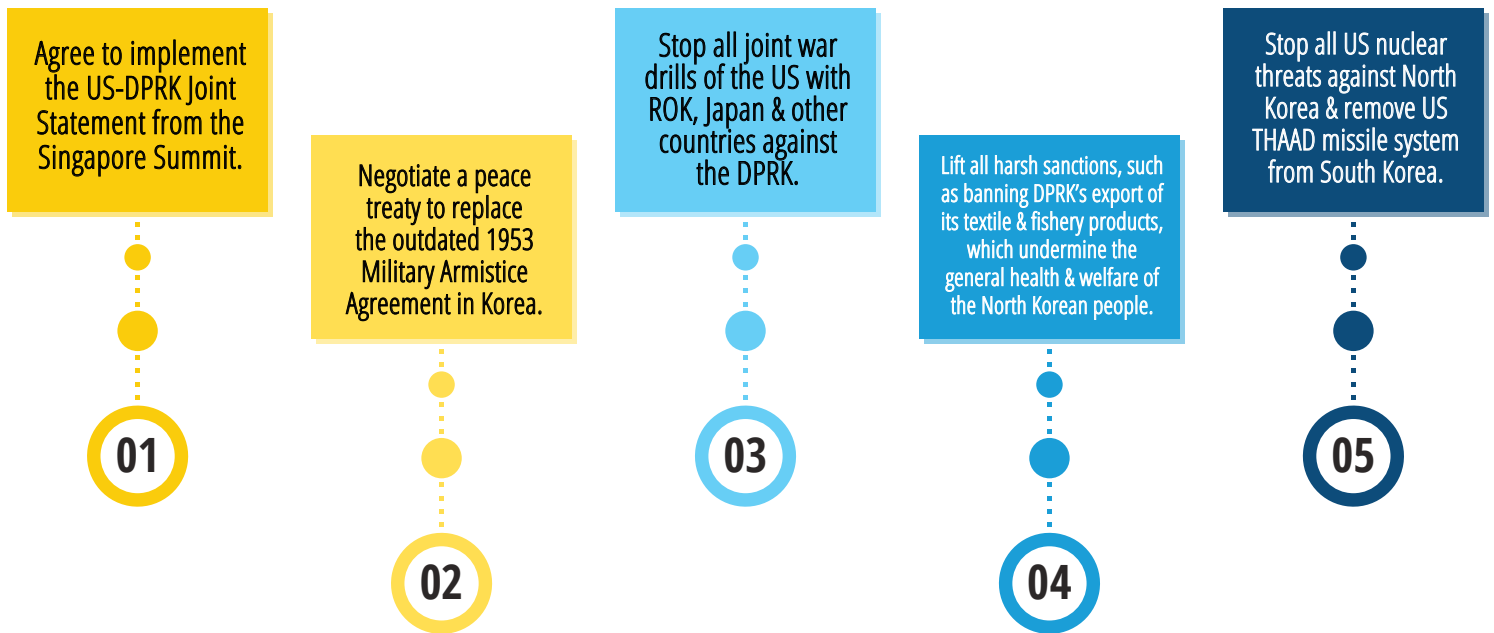
The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has 40 to 50 nuclear warheads.^{xix} On Oct. 14, 2016, the DPRK was the only nuclear-armed country to vote in favor of a resolution of the 1st Committee of the UN General Assembly that proposed a UN conference to negotiate a new treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

In 1994 the US and the DPRK signed an “Agreed Framework” - the DPRK would freeze one nuclear research reactor and two nuclear power plants under construction, and re-join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In return, the US would provide formal assurances to the DPRK against the threat or use of nuclear weapons, build two nuclear power plants, and provide heavy oil. Both sides promised to “move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.” However, the US delayed or refused to implement most of the agreement. The deal failed in 2002 when the US stopped oil shipments and listed the DPRK as a “Rogue Regime” against whom the US might use nuclear weapons.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS NORTH KOREA (DPRK) CONT.

At the US-DPRK Summit in 2018, President Trump and Chairman Kim signed a Joint Statement, which committed to establish new US-DPRK relations, build a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and work toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The DPRK destroyed its underground nuclear test site, suspended its nuclear and ICBM missile tests, and started to dismantle the missile site at Dongchangri. But the US merely reduced its US-South Korea joint war drills. At the US-DPRK Summit at Hanoi in 2019, the meeting ended when the US rejected the DPRK's offer to dismantle its nuclear complex at Yongbyon under the watch of American experts, in return for the lifting of 5 of 11 UN sanctions.^{xx}

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes the following confidence-building measures be taken first by the Biden administration to revive the US-DPRK talks with the objectives of ending the costly, "forever" US war against the DPRK and achieving nuclear disarmament on the Korean Peninsula in a step-by-step process:



NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS IRAN

President Trump withdrew the United States from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) under which Iran promised to forego enrichment of uranium beyond the level where the material could be used for a bomb, in return for a lifting of US sanctions. Harsh sanctions were then restored on Iran. President Biden has not yet lifted the sanctions, although he says he wants to reinstate the deal, which Iran will not agree to unless sanctions are lifted. Iran voted for the new Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and participated fully in all the UN negotiations. Iran has no nuclear weapons.

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes that President Biden lift the sanctions against Iran and that the US should re-enter the JCPOA.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS INDIA AND PAKISTAN

The United States needs to understand that no matter what we are doing the rest of the world is watching, wondering how they will be affected, and responding in their own interests. That includes India and Pakistan, two nuclear powers which share a border and have been in conflict over the territory of Kashmir since the 1947 partition of India. Thus any type of intervention by the United States which involves Pakistan or any of the other countries in that region must be considered in the light of its potential to disrupt the fragile peace between India and Pakistan.

The United States must realize that even a limited nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would create a cloud of dust that would block the sun and could possibly result in a global nuclear winter. A nuclear posture clearly pointed toward the elimination of US nuclear weapons would provide an example to the rest of the world, including India and Pakistan.

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes that the US not engage in alliances such as the “Quad” (Australia, India, Japan and the United States), as they are likely to be perceived as a threat by Pakistan and increase the possibility of a nuclear exchange.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS ISRAEL

Nuclear-armed Israel’s belligerent actions and rhetoric toward Iran have only increased during the Biden administration. Israel, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and the US recently completed a five-day ‘joint naval exercise’ in the Red Sea. The uncertain future of the 2015 ‘Iran nuclear deal’ is another source of tension increasing the risk of an Israeli military attack against Iran. In this environment, the US could find itself drawn into a military confrontation with Iran, with no control over Israel’s possible use of nuclear weapons.

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review proposes that President Biden prioritize re-joining the Iran Nuclear Deal, the JCPOA. The US should also actively participate and support the ongoing UN negotiations for a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East, using all available leverage to effect Israel’s participation.

NUCLEAR POSTURE CONSIDERATIONS VIS-A-VIS THE UNITED KINGDOM AND FRANCE

United Kingdom

In 1952, the United Kingdom was the third country to develop and test nuclear weapons^{xxi} and is one of the five nuclear-weapon states^{xxii} in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.^{xxiii}

The United Kingdom recently announced that it was increasing the cap on its nuclear stockpile from 225 to 260 warheads. The move largely took nuclear policy experts by surprise. The government explained that the decision to increase its nuclear stockpile for the first time in decades was due to a worsening strategic landscape and technological threats, particularly Russian advances in missile defense and hypersonic weapons. Source: *War on the Rocks*^{xxiv}

United Kingdom Cont.

The decision to boost the number of warheads in its arsenal was not the UK's only major nuclear policy change. The UK stated it would no longer provide specifics about its nuclear stockpile or the conditions under which it would consider nuclear weapons use. In other words, the United Kingdom has now fully committed to a doctrine of strategic ambiguity.

France

France was the fourth country to test an independently developed nuclear weapon, doing so in 1960 under the government of Charles de Gaulle.^{xxv} France currently possesses the world's fourth largest stockpile of operational nuclear weapons. The weapons are part of the national Force de frappe^{xxvi}, developed in the late 1950s and 1960s to give France the ability to distance itself from NATO and exercise its own nuclear deterrence.

On July 10, 1985, two French intelligence operatives sank the flagship of the Greenpeace^{xxvii} fleet, Rainbow Warrior, at the Port of Auckland in New Zealand, on her way to a protest against a planned French nuclear test in Mururoa. Fernando Pereira, a photographer, drowned on the sinking ship.

An appropriate US Nuclear Posture would create conditions under which the UK and France would be more likely to reduce or eliminate their nuclear weapons, whether unilaterally, or in concert with other nuclear-armed nations.

WEAPONIZING SPACE

As the US expands its space operations—the fourth dimension of warfare—the race towards “full spectrum dominance” quickens. Space has long been militarized in the sense that the US uses satellites to guide missiles and aircraft. But the new US doctrine seeks to weaponize space. Today's space power will be harnessed by the US to ensure dominance over the satellite infrastructure that allows for the modern world of internet, e-commerce, GPS, telecommunications, surveillance, and war-fighting.

Since the 1950s, the United Nations has introduced various treaties to prohibit the militarization and weaponization of space—the most famous being the Outer Space Treaty (1967). These treaties aim to preserve space as a commons for all humanity. The creation of the US Space Force is a blatant violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of those treaties. In more recent decades, successive US governments have unilaterally rejected treaties to reinforce and expand the existing space-for-peace agreements.

Source: <https://www.alainet.org/en/articulo/200608>

The VFP Nuclear Posture Review Proposes negotiating an international treaty to plug the gaps of the Outer Space Treaty, such as the Proposed Prevention of an Arms Race in Space (PAROS) Treaty. This would require the prohibition of both weapons in outer space and anti-satellite weapons on Earth.^{xxviii, xvi}

CORRECTING OUR NUCLEAR POSTURE

Unilateral, immediate posture changes to reduce the danger of an unintended nuclear exchange:

1. Announce and implement a No First Use and No Launch on Warning (“Hair Trigger Alert”) policy by separating warheads from delivery vehicles. The No First Use Policy should state clearly that the US renounces the use of nuclear weapons, including in response to a cyber attack, biological weapons, chemical weapons, cluster bombs, land mines, or any other non-nuclear act of aggression from another nation against the US or its allies.
2. Decommission ICBM weapons and silos. Since they are well-known, vulnerable targets they can only be used as a first strike weapon.
3. Replace the President’s sole authority to launch a nuclear attack with a safer, more collective process less likely to lead to a rash decision.
4. Eliminate THAAD and other anti-ballistic missile systems.

Negotiations for Nuclear Disarmament

5. Sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
6. Actively initiate and pursue negotiations to reduce international tensions, promote strategic stability, and prepare the ground for major reduction in nuclear arms.
7. Call all the nuclear states to the table to negotiate a path to nuclear disarmament as required by the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
8. Join with Russia and China in negotiating for space ban and cyber-ban treaties.
9. Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
10. Re-implement the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and eliminate all missile “defense” systems.
11. Re-implement the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Implementation of Treaty Obligations

12. Work with our allies to remove US nuclear weapons stationed in the NATO countries—Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Turkey.
13. Bring home the submarines carrying nuclear weapons, ground the nuclear bombers, and dismantle the missile sites.
14. Terminate the “nuclear modernization program”, including all new nuclear weapons research, design, refurbishment, expansion, laboratory testing and sub-critical testing. Pass the Nuclear Weapons Abolition and Economic and Energy Conversion Act, HR2850^{xxix}.
15. Create adequate funding to clean up uranium mines and mills, nuclear production and testing facilities, and nuclear waste sites in the US and the Pacific nuclear test areas. Develop technologies and facilities for handling radioactive materials.
16. Develop economic conversion plans to help nuclear industry workers make a transition to constructive employment.

CONCLUSION

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, NON-INTERVENTION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE GO HAND-IN-HAND

The world is a much more dangerous place with nuclear weapons, particularly given the current confrontations among nuclear-armed nations. The United States military seeks “Full Spectrum Dominance” and the government appears determined to be the preeminent global power, even in the face of diminishing economic power relative to a rising China. It is hard to imagine the US taking serious steps toward nuclear disarmament without a sea change in the thinking among its political elites and real change in its posture toward the rest of the world.

Activist efforts to restrain US militarism and intervention around the globe, to cut the military budget, and to encourage mutual respect and diplomacy among nations must therefore go hand-in-hand with efforts to reduce and eliminate all nuclear weapons.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which went into effect January 22, 2021, is an historic and extremely important event. It expresses the clear desire of the peoples of the world to be free from nuclear weapons and the threat of a nuclear war that could end human civilization.

The Nuclear Ban Treaty is a valuable tool for education and organizing. Even though the US and other nuclear-armed states have yet to sign on to the TPNW, many cities in the US^{xxx} have passed resolutions in support of signing. New York City is the latest to sign on to the ICAN Cities Appeal. The US states of California, Oregon, New Jersey and Maine have also passed resolutions in support of the TPNW. Veterans For Peace encourages all of our chapters, members, friends and allies to pursue similar support for the TPNW in their cities.

It is important to build an *intersectional* movement for peace at home and peace abroad. We are engaged in struggles for racial justice, for non-intervention in the affairs of other nations, and for redirecting funds from the military – and nuclear weapons – to healthcare, education and other human rights. We are making common cause with the burgeoning Climate Justice Movement, proclaiming that climate catastrophe and nuclear war are the twin threats to all life on earth.

Our *VFP Nuclear Posture Review* provides a stark contrast to the Nuclear Posture Review being prepared for President Biden by the Pentagon, which will continue to justify the discredited idea of nuclear deterrence, while feeding billions more dollars to nuclear weapons manufacturers. We are providing a well-researched and credible alternative that reflects the global desire for nuclear disarmament and peace. We hope that the *VFP Nuclear Posture Review* will be a guide, a useful tool and an inspiration for all who wish a peaceful future for our children, our grandchildren and generations to come.



Veterans For Peace is a global organization of Military Veterans and allies whose collective efforts are to build a culture of peace by using our experiences and lifting our voices. We inform the public of the true causes of war and the enormous costs of wars, with an obligation to heal the wounds of wars. Our network is comprised of over 140 chapters worldwide whose work includes: educating the public, advocating for a dismantling of the war economy, providing services that assist veterans and victims of war, and most significantly, working to end all wars.

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