



Never again to nuclear weapons

GUEST VIEW

By Michael Carrigan and Peter Bergel

Seventy-five years ago, atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and Aug. 9. Two hundred and twenty thousand men, women and children died in those two cities by the end of 1945 as a result of these horrific bombings.

Together with communities around the world, the Eugene community gathered Aug. 6 to commemorate the dropping of atomic bombs by the U.S. on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We gathered with one thought in mind: "Never Again!"

Never again should nuclear weapons be used on planet earth.

The United States has approximately 5,800 nuclear weapons that are much more powerful than the ones dropped on Japan. The United States' delivery vehicle and missile technology brings nearly every point on Earth within range of our nuclear arsenal.

The U.S. nuclear arsenal costs billions of dollars that are desperately needed elsewhere to mitigate climate change, challenge racism, improve education and health care and much more. Since 1945, supposedly motivated by national security, the U.S. has spent trillions of dollars to research, develop, maintain and clean up after its nuclear arsenal.

If the U.S. carries out its plans for modernizing and maintaining the nuclear arsenal, it will spend almost half a trillion over the next decade, an average of about \$50 billion per year, a new government estimate reveals.

Thirty years after the end of the Cold War, the world's combined stockpiles of nuclear weapons remain at unacceptably high levels. There are nine countries that possess an estimated total of 13,355 nuclear warheads.

The U.S.'s and Russia's arsenals comprise over 90% of these, 1,800 are on high alert, meaning they are ready for launch in a matter of minutes. Military reliance on nuclear arsenals by any country encourages the spread of such weapons and increases the possibility of an accidental launch or intentional nuclear attack.

Though the nuclear threat has dropped off the list of top causes of national and international dread since the collapse of the USSR in 1989, it has not gone away completely. In fact, with the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock now standing at 100 minutes to midnight, this is the most dangerous time since the clock was invented.

This is because of the threat posed by the NATO nukes on the Russian border combined with our steadily worsening relations with Russia and the rebirth of strong anti-Russian feelings based on a variety of causes, most of them greatly exaggerated. Our leaders appear to want an external enemy to distract from domestic troubles.

Relations with China are likewise worsening and driving the Chinese and Russians into each other's arms. This is unnecessary and dangerous to world security.

The many small steps being proposed by the peace movement are fine as baby steps, but they are inadequate solutions to the threat of nuclear annihilation. Only nuclear abolition, as difficult as that seems in the current climate, has the power to guarantee the world's safety from intentional or accidental nuclear war, something that even Ronald Reagan said could not be won and should never be fought.

In the 1950s and again in the 1980s, Americans built large, powerful movements opposing nuclear weapons. The first of those movements resulted in the Partial Test Ban Treaty of 1963. The second birthed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Although the U.S. never signed the latter, it has observed its provisions since 1992.

A third movement is ripe for launch now. It must carry the work of the previous movements to its final, necessary conclusion: verifiable abolition of all nuclear weapons through international agreement, as was done with chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction and landmines.

We ask readers to contact their representative and senators demanding:

- Cancellation of planned nuclear weapons upgrades;
- Withdrawal of NATO nuclear weapons from Russia's borders;
- Reinstatement of the nuclear treaties trashed by presidents Bush and Trump;
- Ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prevention of Nuclear War, and;
- Eventual abolition of nuclear weapons via verifiable agreements with the nuclear powers.

A nuclear weapons-free world is possible and would benefit everyone in the world except those who profit from manufacturing the weapons. Let us act while we still can.

Michael Carrigan, longtime peace activist, recently retired from CALC. Email him at MichaelCarrigan@protonmail.com. Peter Bergel, of The PeaceWorker news magazine, can be emailed at pbergel@igc.org.

