

TEN FACTS ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1. There are still some 26,000 nuclear warheads in the world, enough to destroy civilization many times over and destroy most life on earth. Nuclear weapons make humans an endangered species.
2. More than 95% of all nuclear weapons are in the arsenals of the US and Russia.
3. The average nuclear weapon in the US arsenal is approximately eight times more powerful than the nuclear bomb that destroyed Hiroshima, immediately killing some 90,000 people.
4. There are currently nine countries with nuclear weapons (US, Russia, UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea).
5. The 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty, ratified by nearly every country in the world, requires the nuclear weapons states to engage in good faith negotiations for nuclear disarmament.
6. The United States unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 in order to pursue missile defenses and space weaponization. US withdrawal from the treaty has caused both Russia and China to improve their offensive nuclear capabilities.
7. There are up to 2,000,000 kilograms of Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) in global stockpiles, and it takes just 15-24 kilograms for a nuclear weapon. There are 28 countries with at least one bomb's worth of HEU and 12 countries with at least 20 bombs' worth.
8. Plutonium created in nuclear power reactors is another source of bomb material. It takes as little as three to five kilograms of plutonium to create a nuclear weapon. There are now some 500,000 kilograms of separated plutonium in global stockpiles. Plutonium stocks continue to increase due to civilian 'spent' fuel reprocessing.
9. The 2001 US Nuclear Posture Review provides for developing contingency plans for nuclear weapons use against seven countries: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, North Korea, Russia and China.
10. The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) between the US and Russia expires on December 5, 2009. A replacement treaty will need to address the number of nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles each side can possess as well as procedures to verify the dismantlement of nuclear warheads. The new treaty will need to be ratified by two-thirds of the US Senate.

(see other side for 10 myths about nuclear weapons)

TEN MYTHS ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1. Nuclear weapons were needed to defeat Japan in World War II. This is not the opinion of many leading US military figures in the war. General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during World War II and later US president, wrote, “I thought that our country should avoid shocking world opinion by the use of a weapon whose employment was, I thought, no longer mandatory as a measure to save American lives. It was my belief that Japan was, at that very moment, seeking some way to surrender with a minimum loss of ‘face’”

2. Nuclear weapons prevented a war between the United States and the Soviet Union. There were many deadly conflicts and “proxy” wars carried out by the superpowers in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Vietnam War, which took several million lives, is a prominent example. These wars made the supposed nuclear peace very bloody and deadly.

3. Nuclear threats have gone away since the end of the Cold War. In the aftermath of the Cold War, a variety of new nuclear threats have emerged. Among these are the following dangers:

- Increased chances of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists willing to use them;
- Policies of the US government to make nuclear weapons smaller and more usable;
- Use of nuclear weapons by accident, particularly because of decaying Russian infrastructure; and
- Spread of nuclear weapons to other states that may perceive them to be an “equalizer” against a more powerful state.

4. The United States needs nuclear weapons for its national security. US national security would be far improved if the US took a leadership role in seeking to eliminate nuclear weapons throughout the world. Nuclear weapons are the only weapons that could actually destroy the United States, and their continued existence threatens US security.

5. Nuclear weapons make a country safer. By threatening massive retaliation, the argument goes, nuclear weapons prevent an attacker from starting a war. There are many ways, though, in which deterrence could fail, including misunderstandings, faulty communications, irrational leaders, miscalculations and accidents.

6. No leader would be crazy enough to actually use nuclear weapons. US leaders, considered by some to be highly rational, have used nuclear weapons in war, against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Threats of nuclear attack by India and Pakistan are an example of nuclear brinkmanship that could turn into a nuclear war. Globally and historically, leaders have done their best to prove that they would use nuclear weapons.

7. Nuclear weapons are a cost-effective method of national defense. The cost of US nuclear weapons research, development, testing, deployment and maintenance has exceeded \$7.5 trillion.

8. Nuclear weapons are well protected and there is little chance that terrorists could get their hands on one. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the ability of the Russians to protect their nuclear forces has declined precipitously. In addition, a coup in a country with nuclear weapons, such as Pakistan, could lead to a government coming to power that was willing to provide nuclear weapons to terrorists.

9. The United States has worked to fulfill its nuclear disarmament obligations. The United States failed for nearly four decades to fulfill its obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, requiring good faith negotiations to achieve nuclear disarmament. Ways that President Obama can show leadership for nuclear disarmament include negotiating a strong replacement for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, pushing for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, taking nuclear weapons off of high alert status and adopting a “No First Use” policy.

10. Nuclear weapons are needed to combat threats from terrorists and “rogue states.” The threat of nuclear force cannot act as a deterrent against terrorists because they do not have a territory to retaliate against. If the leaders of a rogue state do not use a rational calculus regarding their losses from retaliation, deterrence can fail.