

## Letter Faxed to Obama, US Congress 15/16Nov2012 De-Alerting/Nuke Disarmament

Written by John Hallam

Friday, 16 November 2012 16:03 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 February 2015 22:27

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The letter below has been faxed to President Obama, his advisers, his administration, and to members of US Congress committees on nuclear weapons.

It has gone to the following numbers:

President Obama:1-202-456-2461

Hilary Clinton: 1-202-647-6047, 1-202-647-0122, 1-202-647-6434

Leon Panetta, Defence - 1-703-697-6602

US Ambassador to UN 1-212-415-4443

Ban Ki Moon 1-212-963-1185

Angela Kane 1-212-963-4066

### Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Turner (Chair) 202-225-6754

Trent 202-225-6328

Lamborn 202-226-2638

Brooks 202-225-4392

Rogers 202-226-8485

Fleming 202-225-8039

Rigell 202-225-4218

Scott 202-225-3013

Sutton 202-225-2266

Ruppelsberger 202-225-3094

Garamendi 202-225-5914

Heinrich 202-225-4975

Larsen

202-225-4420

Langevin 202-225-5976

Sanchez 202-225-5859

### Other Key Congresspeople

Kerry 202-228-3612

Levin 202-228-0360

Lugar 202-224-0836

Markey 202-226-0092

Kucinich 202-225-5745

Fienstein 202-228-3954

Lee 202-225-9817

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Boxer 202-224-0454  
Woolsey 202-225-5163  
Skelton 202-225-9077  
De Mint 202-228-5143  
Berman 202-225-3196  
Ros - Lehtinen 202-226-7269

Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs 6273-4112, 6261-2151

Arms Control Association 1-202-463-8273

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

UNITED NATIONS FIRST COMMITTEE

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

OPERATIONAL READINESS OF NUCLEAR WEAPON SYSTEMS

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

CC

VICE-PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

SECY OF DEFENSE LEON PANETTA

SECY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON

UNDERSECY OF STATE FOR DISARMAMENT ROSE GOTTEMUELLER

THOMAS DONILON

HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON DEFENSE

Dear President Obama,

First of all we would like to congratulate you on your election victory. We hope that victory has positive implications for nuclear disarmament agendas worldwide. It was no accident that nuclear disarmament including, quite correctly, the lowering of the operational readiness of US and Russian nuclear weapon systems, was prominent in your original electoral manifesto of 2008. Nuclear disarmament remains a vital, indeed, existential, issue not only for the US but for the entire world. It must not be forgotten. The most recent session of the UN General Assembly and upcoming NPT meetings reinforce the critical significance of nuclear disarmament issues.

Though nuclear disarmament may not have been front-and-centre in the recent US election, it has been, as it has been every year since 1946, the number one priority in the United Nations General Assembly First Committee in New York this October and November.

Yet again, the Governments of all the world, meeting on First Avenue New York, (notwithstanding the hurricane) have made it clear, by a series of overwhelming majority votes, that they want the world to have abolished nuclear weapons 'yesterday', and that they continue quite rightly to regard nuclear weapons as the single most critical short/medium term threat to the continuance of humans as a species. Statement after official statement from the Governments of the world (most recently, the statement of 35 Governments on 'Catastrophic Humanitarian Consequences' of nuclear weapons use) – makes it clear that 'existential' terms are the correct ones in which to speak of nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament issues.

The most overwhelming vote for nuclear disarmament came this year in the First Committee vote on the 'United Action' resolution, of which the US itself is a sponsor. That resolution was adopted by 159 votes, with only the DPRK casting a 'NO' vote.

The New Agenda resolution, (for which the US voted 'NO') was nonetheless adopted by an equally overwhelming 156 votes, with 7 'no' votes and 4 abstentions. Whether or not the US voted for this resolution, with its slightly more urgent language, it represents a massive endorsement of the goal of nuclear disarmament as a matter of urgency. Even with a US 'NO' vote your government cannot ignore it.

A resolution that is of extreme interest to the authors of this letter is of course, the resolution on Operational Readiness of nuclear weapon systems. (L28- text appended) This resolution, adopted in First Committee by 145 votes with 4 noes (US, UK, France and Russia), again shows – to put it bluntly – that 145 governments believe the world will be safer if the US and Russia could lower the operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems and would no longer maintain them in a status in which they can be launched in minutes or even seconds. This is also consistent with the final declaration of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Many distinguished voices in the US including at least two persons who have at various times commanded US nuclear forces (Generals Eugene Habiger and Cartwright), as well as former second-in-command at Offut AFB, Dr Bruce Blair, have urged that US strategic forces be removed from high alert. Their voices should be heeded.

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While the recent nuclear posture review did not specifically endorse lowering operational status, it DID, very importantly, concede that Presidential decision-making time is of vital importance. Again, put bluntly, the President of the United States – yourself – needs more than zero to eight minutes to take a decision that might, in the most extreme scenarios, potentially destroy civilisation and much else. We are sure you must be very much conscious of this.

One of the authors of this letter, in discussions at a reception at your UN mission with one of your staff, found a welcome willingness to discuss this whole issue of 'decision-making-time'. We hope that continuing discussions around this issue with the authors and sponsors of Operational Readiness will be possible.

That issue of decision-making time is absolutely central to the entire issue of operating status/operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems. As General Cartwright quite correctly points out, holding nuclear weapons in a 'ready for quick launch' configuration, especially vulnerable land-based ICBMs, actually IMPOSES ultra-short decision-making times on key personnel such as yourself. Far from expanding the range of options open to the President, paradoxically, it constricts them, forcing potentially apocalyptic decisions to be made in too-short time-frames with inadequate and possibly incorrect data. Recent scholarly studies on the issue of operational readiness by the US's foremost nuclear weapons expert Hans Kristensen, and by the East-West Institute, have focussed on decision-making timeframes.

The linked issues of alert levels, and the role of nuclear weapons in strategic decision-making and security strategies, have been prominent in a number of other resolutions adopted this year by UN First Committee including not least, the United Action resolution which the US itself has sponsored, the Non-Aligned Movement ('NAM') resolution, India's 'Reducing Nuclear Dangers' resolution (still supported by some  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the world, with stronger language than Operational Readiness), and New Agenda.

These resolutions all show the strong will of governments and their peoples worldwide both to rid the world of nuclear weapons sooner rather than later, as a matter of urgency, and to 'remove the apocalypse from the agenda' by lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapons.

The United States cannot forever ignore the strongly expressed wishes of the governments that represent in effect, most of the rest of the human race, nor can a 'decent respect for the opinions of Mankind' allow it to place even what it may regard as core national security

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concerns before the interests of all other humans. We are confident that the US would never do this. Rather, a United States that continues to be impelled by the values of its founders will understand, respect, and share the desire of the rest of the world and of its own citizens to be free from the nightmare of potential global destruction and take action accordingly as laid out in your own 2008 manifesto.

Signed

Organisers of the Letter:

John Hallam, People for Nuclear Disarmament/Human Survival Project, Sydney NSW Australia

Professor Peter King, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies/Human Survival Project, Sydney NSW, Australia,

Steven Starr, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Missouri USA,

Alyn Ware, Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Wellington, NZ,

Other

Signatories:

Aaron Tovish, International Director, Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign, Klosterneuburg, Austria,

Pol D'Huyvetter, International Development Director, Mayors for Peace, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,

Rene Wadlow, President, Association of World Citizens,

Alice Slater, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, New York, USA,

David Krieger, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, (NAPF), Santa Barbara, Calif, USA,

Marylia Kelley, Director, Tri-valley CARES, Livermore, Calif, USA,

David Hartsough, Peaceworkers, San Francisco, USA,

Bruce Gagnon, Global Network Against Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, Brunswick ME, USA,

Kathy Sanchez, Tewa Women United, USA,

Tony Robinson, World Without Wars and Violence, USA,

Lynn Rudmin Chong, Director, NH Peace Action Education Fund Board, Sanbornton, NH,

Jill Mackie, WILPF Ashland, Oregon,

Gordon Edwards, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, (CCNR), Ontario, Canada,

Barbara Birkett MD, Past President, Physicians for Global Survival, Canada,

Dr. Cathy Vakil, Canadian Association of Citizens for the Environment, Physicians for Global Survival.

Luis Gutierrez Esparza, Latin-American Circle of International Studies, Mexico City, Mexico,

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Dominique Lalanne, Chair, Abolition2000 Europe, Chair, Armes Nuclaires STOP, France,  
Jean-Marie Matagne, President, Action des Citoyens pour le desarmement Nucleaire (ACDN) France,

Maria Arvaniti Sotiropoulou, President, IPPNW Greece,  
Olga Athaniti, Vice-President, Mediterranean Anti-nuclear Watch, No Nuclear Neighbourhood Network,

Jenny Maxwell, Hereford Peace Council, UK,  
Dave Webb, Chair, CND, London, UK,  
George Farebrother, INLAP/World Court Project, UK,  
Frank Jackson, Uniting for Peace, UK,  
Stuart Stephenson, Abolition2000, UK,  
Kevin Lister, Chair, NUCLI Project, UK,

Dr Herman Spanjaard, Chair, IPPNW Netherlands,

Regina Hagen, Darmstaedter Friedensforum, Germany,

Jana Jedlickova, World Without Wars and Violence, Czech Republic,

Agneta Norberg, Vice-Chair, Swedish Peace Council,

Birgitta Jonsdottir, MP, Iceland, (Althing),

Hallgeir H. Langeland MP, Norway,  
Prof. Kirsten Osen (emeritus) IPPNW Norway, Oslo, Norway,  
Prof. Bjorn Hildt, Trondhiem, Norway,

Dr/Professor Andreas Nidecker, President, IPPNW Switzerland, Professor of Radiology, Basel, Switzerland,

Hillel Schenker, Co-Editor, Palestine-Israel Journal, Tel Aviv  
Gideon Spiro, Israeli Committee for a Middle East free of ABC Weapons  
Brigadier Vijai K. Nair, Magoo Strategic Infotech, Noida, New Delhi, India,  
A.H. Nayyar, Prof. Of Physics, Lahore, Pakistan,  
S.P. Udayakumar, National Alliance of Antinuclear Movements, Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, S. India,  
Sukla Sen, EKTA, (Committee for Communal Amity), Mumbai, India,  
Gopal Krishna, Convenor, Toxics Watch Alliance, New Delhi, India,

Ranjith  
Jayasekhara, Sri-Lankan Doctors for Peace and Development,

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Kazuhiko Tamaki, Takako Takahara, Peace Depot, Yokohama, Japan,

Commander Robert Green, Royal Navy (retd), Disarmament and Security Centre,  
Christchurch, NZ,  
Barney Richards, New Zealand Peace Council, NZ,

Dr. Jenny Grounds, President, Medical Association for Prevention of War, Australia,  
Jo Vallentine, Anti Nuclear Alliance of W.A., (ANAWA), Perth, W.A.,  
Markus Atkinson, Footprints for Peace, Perth, W.A.,  
Richard Broinowski, Professor Emeritus, Former Ambassador, Sydney NSW,  
Jan de Vogt, Quaker Peace and Justice NSW,

Eileen Fleming, Founder, We Are Wide Awake,

Text of Operational Readiness of Nuclear Weapon Systems (L28):

United Nations General Assembly  
Sixty-seventh session First Committee Agenda  
item 94 General and complete disarmament  
A/C.1/67/L.28

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Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria and Switzerland: draft resolution Decreasing  
the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems

The General Assembly, Recalling its  
resolutions 62/36 of 5 December 2007, 63/41 of 2 December  
2008

and 65/71 of 8 December 2010,

Recalling also that

the maintenance of nuclear weapons on high alert was a feature of  
cold war nuclear postures, and welcoming the increased confidence and  
transparency since the cessation of the cold war,

Concerned that, notwithstanding the end of the cold war, several thousand nuclear  
weapons remain on high alert, ready to be launched within minutes,

Noting the continuing engagement in multilateral disarmament forums in support  
of further reductions to the operational status of nuclear weapons  
systems,

Recognizing that the maintenance of nuclear weapons systems at a high level of  
readiness increases the risk of the unintentional or accidental use  
of such weapons, which would have catastrophic humanitarian  
consequences,

Recognizing also that reductions in deployments and the lowering of operational status contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as to the process of nuclear disarmament, through the enhancement of confidence-building and transparency measures and a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies, Welcoming the steps taken by some States in nuclear disarmament, including detargeting initiatives, increasing the amount of preparation time required for deployment and other measures to diminish further the possibility of nuclear launches resulting from accidents, unauthorized actions or misperceptions,

Welcoming also the adoption by consensus of the conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions by the 2010 Review Conference of the

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Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,<sup>1</sup> including the commitments of the nuclear-weapon States to promptly engage with a view to, inter alia, considering the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security,

Acknowledging, in this regard, the continued dialogue among the nuclear- weapon States to advance their nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament commitments under the Action Plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the potential of this process for leading to deeper engagement on nuclear disarmament and greater mutual confidence,

1. Welcomes the opportunities provided by meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to address the further reduction of the operational status of nuclear weapons systems as a step leading to nuclear disarmament, and looks forward to the reporting of the nuclear-weapon States on their undertakings in this regard to the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference at its third session in 2014;

2. Calls for further practical steps to be taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert status;

3. Urges States to update the General Assembly on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution;

4. Decides to



remain seized of the matter.

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1 See 2010

Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Final Document, vols. I-III (NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vols. I-III)), vol. I, part I.

PRESS RELEASE MONDAY 19 NOV  
PEOPLE  
FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

OBAMA MUST PRIORITISE NUKE DISARMAMENT AS A HUMAN SURVIVAL ISSUE SAY  
DISARMAMENT GROUPS

Nuclear disarmament and abolition groups worldwide, in the wake of the Obama election victory and the most recent meeting of the United Nations First Committee, have urged President Obama, in his second term, to prioritise nuclear disarmament as an 'existential issue', and a matter of human survival.

53 disarmament and abolition groups, representing millions, have written to President Obama, his advisers, key policy people, and to Congressional committees on strategic defence, pointing to the overwhelming votes in favour of nuclear disarmament and abolition of nuclear weapons taken in the United Nations General Assembly First Committee in the previous month.

According to People for Nuclear Disarmament Human Survival Project spokesperson John Hallam who coordinated the letter,

“People in the United States and especially in Congress, need to understand that just over the road in First Ave, New York, the world has voted overwhelmingly (and wisely) for the complete abolition of all nuclear weapons, not once, but over and over again every year since about 1946, and does so by utterly crushing votes of up to 180 to 1.

A number of resolutions went through First Committee this year that urge the complete abolition of nuclear weapons and that point to the fact that there is a growing consensus that their use could be absolutely terminal both for civilisation and possibly even for humans as a species. 35 Governments signed on to a major statement on the catastrophic humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons use,

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including devastating global 'nuclear winter' that could last decades. Statement after statement referred to nuclear weapons as an immediate threat to survival.

President Obama and even more so the strategic defence committees of the US Congress needs to recognise that nuclear disarmament is not just some idealistic idea whose time will 'realistically' never come. Nuclear disarmament is a pressing and urgent human survival imperative whose time should have been decades ago, that we were legally obliged under the NPT to have achieved also decades ago, and which if not achieved yesterday is likely to lead to human extinction or at least the end of what we call civilisation.

Nuclear disarmament and abolition must be treated as a national and global security priority that absolutely trumps all other possible security priorities.

The Administration and Congress also need to understand that this is indeed the way that the overwhelming majority of the world sees it, and this is the way the world actually votes by a completely crushing vote count, in the big green building in First Ave New York.

The administration and Congress should take their lead from the rest of the world, who rightly see nuclear weapons in anyones hands as an existential threat that must be eliminated yesterday.”

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