

Faxed Just Now - Letter to Senator Sessions, Senate Subcttee on Strategic Forces

Written by John Hallam

Thursday, 11 June 2015 18:05 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 June 2015 12:21

The letter below was just now faxed to the following numbers of the Senate Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

John Hallam

Senator Sessions 0011-1-202-224-3149

Inhofe 202-228-0380

Fischer 202-228-1325

Cruz 202-228-2862

Donnelly 202-224-5011

Nelson 202-228-2183

Mancin 202-228-0002

Heinrich 202-228-2841

Reed 202-224-4680

HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

GOING TO ZERO:

AN URGENT HUMAN SURVIVAL PRIORITY

Senator Jeff Sessions,

Chair, Senate Select Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Members of Senate Select Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Re: Remarks on 'Going to Zero'

Dear Senator Sessions,

You may be wondering why organizations from outside the US, albeit ones with global concerns, have bothered to contact you.

The decisions made by the Senate Select Subcommittee on Strategic Forces potentially affect the fate of the world, as indeed do all decisions made by the US and Russia on strategic nuclear weapons systems.

We are writing in connection with the following remarks made by yourself:

“....I would just say personally that I think it is time for us, in this dangerous world, to quit talking about nuclear zero—people who doubt our resolve sometimes doubt that we are willing to follow through. I wish zero would happen. It is not going to happen anytime soon, that is for sure, so we are going to have to maintain a nuclear arsenal. We need to talk about maintaining it, modernizing it, making it safer, and making it more reliable and more accurate. Maybe we can reduce the numbers some more, but we need to be talking less about reducing numbers and more about assuring the world that we have the best nuclear capabilities anywhere on the planet and that they are ready to be deployed and can be deployed, Heaven forbid that would be necessary. That is just why we have these forces....”

We would be as or more appalled at similar remarks made by any counterpart of yours in, say, the Russian Duma. Russia is following policies of nuclear modernization that are in fact very similar to those of the US, and are at least equally misguided and dangerous. A copy of this letter will be sent also to the Russian Government.

You are going to hear much much more about nuclear zero. We urge you to listen most carefully.

Allow us to point out the following:

1) The United States (like Russia) is has ratified the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), whose 2015 Review Conference took place at the United Nations in New York from 28April-22May. A final declaration was blocked by the US, the UK, and Canada.

Article VI of the NPT clearly commits Nuclear–Weapons-State signatories (such as the US and Russia) to achieve the cessation of the nuclear arms race 'by an early date'. It reads:

'Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.'

Subsequent review conferences (2000, 2010) have committed to the total and unequivocal elimination of nuclear weapons. While a specific date was not specified, the NPT came into operation in 1970, over 45 years ago, and an 'early date' is long-since past.

In urging the retention and improvement of its nuclear forces, are you suggesting that the US should defy the requirements of an international treaty it has signed and that it urges others to abide by?

Are you perhaps suggesting that the US should say to the world that the NPT is for other countries, but not for the US to be bound by?

2) A series of conferences has taken place over the last three years in Oslo, Nayarit (Mexico) and in Vienna, in which the catastrophic consequences and risks of nuclear weapons use were discussed. A consensus view, which we emphasize is truly a consensus view and not the view of a few 'extremists' - a view signed on to by as many as 159 Governments and which is taken for granted amongst NGOs - has emerged, to the effect that the large-scale use of nuclear weapons would destroy what we call 'civilization' and would put at least a question-mark over human survival itself.

In addition, the risk of nuclear weapons use (including of the use of the core arsenals of the US and Russia) is at any time nonzero, and has over the last three years or so grown dramatically.

As you may be aware, the Chicago-based Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (founded by Albert Einstein and members of the Manhattan Project) recently moved the hands of its 'Doomsday Clock' from 5 minutes to 'midnight' (the apocalypse) to 3 minutes to 'midnight'. The decision to move the hands of the 'Doomsday Clock' is taken by a board containing some 18 Nobel prizewinners. It is not taken lightly and is not lightly to be set aside.

If the risks and consequences of nuclear weapons use are as 159 governments (as well as the entire NGO community) take them to be, then the elimination of global nuclear arsenals as well as the pursuit of risk-reduction strategies such as lowering the alert levels of nuclear arsenals become matters of the utmost urgency.

Going to Zero is not something that might in some utopian, never-to-be-achieved future, be 'nice' to do – some century maybe. Going to Zero is a survival priority of the utmost urgency that should be achieved 'yesterday'. 'Going to Zero' is indeed, not pie-in-the-sky, but an urgent existential priority that trumps all other possible priorities.

The subcommittee on strategic forces must take these matters up itself, also as a most urgent priority.

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Judy Blyth, People for Nuclear Disarmament W.A., Perth, W.A.,

Irene Gale, (Fmr) Australian Peace Committee, Adelaide, S.A.,

Bob Rigg, fmr chair, NZ National Consultative Committee on Disarmament (NCCD)

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