

## Operational Readiness Of Nuclear Weapon Systems

Written by John Hallam

Wednesday, 25 March 2009 10:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 25 June 2009 04:51

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### LETTER BY ORGANISATIONS WORLDWIDE TO OBAMA, MEDVEDEV, PUTIN, BIDEN, LAVROV AND CLINTON ON OPERATING STATUS OF NUCLEAR WEAPON SYSTEMS

Dear Presidents Obama and Medvedev, Vice-President Joseph Biden, Prime Minister Putin, Secretary of State Clinton, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, and Congressional and Duma Committees on Foreign Affairs and Defense/Armed Services:

The authors of this letter write also as the joint coordinators of an appeal to lower nuclear weapons operating status/operational readiness that was signed by 44 Nobel Prize - winners and which helped lead to resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly in October 2007 and 2008. (see appendix for UN Resolutions)

This letter is signed by NGOs and distinguished individuals from around the world who believe that nuclear disarmament is a matter of urgency, and that taking nuclear weapons off quick-launch capability is a vital first step toward nuclear disarmament.

We suggest that the current negotiations between the US and Russia over a successor to START be also used as forum in which the US and Russia negotiate an agreement to cease maintaining their large nuclear forces in quick-launch status.

We are very much encouraged by the repeated commitments made by President Obama to negotiate with Russia to lower the operational status of nuclear weapons systems, as well as by the statements to that effect to which Dr. Henry Kissinger has lent his name, as well as by his involvement in a successor to START.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, in a September, 2008 article entitled 'Avoiding Human Extinction', placed the lowering of the operational status of nuclear weapon systems, reductions in warhead numbers, and the complete abolition of nuclear weapons at the top of a list of measures needed to protect humankind, ahead even of climate change mitigation measures and monitoring of large incoming asteroids.

U.S. scientists now predict, with a high level of certainty, that:

(1) the detonation in urban areas of as little as a half of one percent of the explosive power contained in U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals could cause major disruptions in global climate leading to the starvation of hundreds of millions of the already hungry, and;

(2) A war fought with even a few thousand strategic nuclear weapons, such as the U.S.-Russian weapons now maintained at high-alert status, would cause such cataclysmic changes in global climate and environment that growing seasons would be completely eliminated for years, thus dooming most of humanity to perish from famine.

It is unrealistic to assume that nuclear deterrence will work perfectly forever. With the passage of time, the use of nuclear weaponry, due to madness, malice, miscalculation, or malfunction becomes an inevitability. Thus it is imperative that as a first step towards reducing and eliminating the immense danger these weapons pose to all nations and peoples, that the U.S.

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and Russia agree to remove their nuclear weapons from high-alert status.

We urge the US and Russian governments, Presidents Obama and Medvedev, Secretary of State Clinton and Foreign Minister Ivanov, to use the opportunity of the renegotiation/replacement of START to negotiate to immediately lower the operational readiness of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapon systems. This single act will do more than any other immediately available measure to make humanity and civilisation secure in accordance with our shared objective of progress towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Sincerely,

Signed:

Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayors for Peace, Hiroshima, Japan (Representing cities worldwide in over 100 countries)

Prof. Bjorn Hildt MD, Chairman of the Board, IPPNW, Trondheim, Norway, John Loretz, Program Director, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) – (1985 Nobel Peace Prize) Boston, Mass,

Aaron Tovish, Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign, Ypres,

Alyn Ware, Vice-President, International Peace Bureau (IPB) Geneva,

Douglas Mattern, President, Association of World Citizens, San Francisco, USA (Joint Coordinator 2004 Appeal on Operating Status by 44 Nobels)

Johnanne Winchester, Vice-President Communications Coordination Committee for the United Nations, NY, USA,

Pera Wells, Secy-General World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), UN Place, NY, USA,

Alfred L.Marder, President, International Association of Peace Messenger Cities, USA,

Selma Brackman/Kevin Sanders, War and Peace Foundation, New York, NY, USA,

William Rand, President, Mort Gladstone, Chairman, World Federalists, New York, NY, USA,

Dr. Kathleen Sullivan, Education Consultant to the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, New York

Steve Leeper, Chair, Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, Hiroshima, Japan,

Hiroshi Taka, Yayoi Tsuchida, Japan Gensuikyo, Tokyo, Japan,

Terumi Tanaka, Confederation of A and H- Bomb Sufferers Organisations, Tokyo,

Hiro Umabayashi, Peace Depot, Japan,

Hideyuki Ban, Co-Director, Citizens' Nuclear Information Center, Tokyo,

Akira Kawasaki Executive Committee, Peace Boat (Japan)

Nobue, Hyogo Gensuikyo, Kobe, Japan,

Steven Starr, Senior Scientist, Physicians for Social Responsibility, USA,

David Krieger, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Santa Barbara, Calif, USA

Alice Slater, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation New York

Linda Richards, WILPF Disarm! Corvallis Oregon USA,

Bruce K. Gagnon, Coordinator, Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, Brunswick ME.

Caroline Bridgeman-Rees, New Haven Peace Council/UNA-Ct, USA,

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Kevin Martin, Executive Director, Peace Action, /Peace Action Education Fund, MD, USA,  
Marylia Kelley, Executive Director, Tri-Valley CARES, Livermore, CA, USA  
Joseph Wasserman, Miriam Kurland, Nonukes/NoWar, Hartford, CT,  
Henry S.Lowendorf, US Peace Council, New Haven CT, USA,  
Eileen Fleming, Founder, 'Wearewideawake.org'  
Jill Mackie, Ashland, Oregon Branch of WILPF  
Prof. Martin J. Sherwin, (2006 Pulitzer Prize), George Mason Univ, Virginia,  
David Hartsough, Executive Director, PEACEWORKERS, San Francisco, CA USA  
Stacey Fritz Coordinator, No Nukes North, Fairbanks Alaska, USA,

Alexey Yablokov, Chairman, Programme for Nuclear and Radioactive Safety, International  
Socio-Ecological Union, Moscow, Russia

Prof. Sergei Kolesnikov, Duma Member, IPPNW Co-President, Moscow, Russia,

Kate Hudson, Chair, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), London, UK,  
Jenny Maxwell, Chair, West Midlands Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, UK  
Paul Ingram, Director, British-American Security Council (BASIC), Lond, UK,  
George Farebrother, World Court Project, Hailsham, Sussex, UK,  
George Farebrother, Sussex Peace Alliance, Sussex, UK,  
Peter Nicholls, Chair, Abolition2000 UK, Colchester, Essex UK,  
Dr Ian Davies, Director, NATO- Watch, Gairloch, UK,  
George Paxton, Editor, The Gandhi Way, UK,  
Colin Bax Founder, Global Justice, UK,  
Di McDonald Nuclear Information Service, Southampton, UK  
Russell Barford, Oxford CND, Oxford, UK,  
Ken Gorman, Secy, Blackpool & Fylde CND (Lancashire, UK)  
Janet Fenton, Co-ordinator, Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland,

Teemu Matinpuro, Exec. director Finnish Peace Committee, Helsinki, Finland,

Ole Kopreitan, General Secretary 'No to Nuclear Weapons' – Norway  
Björn Røe, professor, NTA-'No to Nuclear weapon', Trondheim, Norway

Xanthe Hall, Disarmament expert, IPPNW Germany,  
Wolfgang Schlupp-Hauck, Friedenswerkstatt – Pressehütte Mutlangen, Chairman, Germany  
Ak Malten, director, Pro Peaceful Energy Use, Netherlands,  
Herman Spanjaard, MD, Occupational Health Physician, Chair International Council IPPNW,  
Chair IPPNW Netherlands, The Netherlands Europe

Tobias Huber, The Gandhi Tour, Switzerland,

Dominique Lalanne, Chair Abolition of Nuclear Weapons/Stop Essais, France,  
Jean-Marie Matagne, Dr in Philosophy, President of ACDN (Action des Citoyens  
pour le Désarmement Nucléaire), France  
Pierre Villard, co-président du Mouvement de la Paix coordinateur of ICAN (International  
campaign to abolish nuclear weapons) France

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Lisa Clark, Vice- President, Beati i costruttori di pace, (Italian Network for Disarmament), Italy;

Derman Boztok, IPPNW Turkey, Ankara, Turkey,

Gordon Edwards, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility (CCNR) Montreal,  
Barbara Seifred, Raging Grannies Canada, Vancouver BC,  
Phyllis Creighton, Prof. Emeritus John P. Valleau, Judith Deutsch, President, Science for  
Peace, Toronto, Canada,

Denise Dufault, Community Action Coalition of Burnaby, BC, Canada,  
Nancy Covington, President, Barbara Birkett Canadian Physicians for Global Survival  
(PGS), Toronto, Canada,  
Ray Cunnington, Secretary, Hamilton Culture of Peace Network, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada,  
Patricia Willis, Denman Island Peace Group, CANADA,

Abraham Weizefeld, Alliance of Concerned Jewish Citizens, Montreal, Quebec, Canada,  
Amir M. Maasoumi, President, Centre de ressources sur la non-violence ( Canadian  
resources center on non-violence),

Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C., Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament

Paul Saoke, Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Nairobi, Kenya.

J. Sri Raman, Movement Against Nuclear Weapons (MANW). Chennai, India

Sukla Sen, EKTA (Committee for Communal Amity), Mumbai India

S.P. Udayakumar, People's Movement Against Nuclear Energy, Nagercoil S. India,

Harsh Kapoor,(France) South Asians Against Nukes,

Farooq Tariq, Spokesperson, Labour Party Pakistan, Lahore Pakistan,

A. H. Nayyar, President, Pakistan Peace Coalition, Islamabad, Pakistan

Dr.Ranjith S.Jayasekera, Vice Pres. Sri-Lankan Doctors for Peace and Development

Kandy, Sri-Lanka.

Anna Allan, Web Tinker, [www.nuclearfreenz.co.nz](http://www.nuclearfreenz.co.nz)

Dr John Hinchcliff, former president of AUT University and former City Councillor in Auckland,  
New Zealand.

Bob Rigg, Former Chair, National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament  
(NCCPD), Wellington, NZ,

Sue Wareham, Chair, MAPW, Australia,

Prof. John Langmore, National President, United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA),

Helen Caldicott, President Emeritus, PSR,

Don Jarrett, President, Australian Peace Committee, (APC) Adelaide,

Judy Blyth, Convener, Raging Grannies for a Nuclear-free Future Perth, Western Australia,  
AUSTRALIA

Jo Vallentine, People for Nuclear Disarmament W.A., Maylands, Perth, WA.

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Richard and Maria Maguire, Directors, Unfolding Futures, Wentworthville, NSW,

Richard Broinowski, Former Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, Republic of Korea, Mexico, the Central American Republics and Cuba, Paddington, NSW,

Rev. Harry Kerr , Pax Christi Australia,

Brenda Conochie, Environment House, Maylands, W.A.,

Frederick Mendelsohn AO MD PhD FRACP FAA Past Director Howard Florey Institute and RD Wright Professor of Experimental Physiology and Medicine University of Melbourne

Luisa Morgantini MEP(Italy) , Vice President, European Parliament, Brussels,

Angelika Beer, MEP (Germany)

Dr Caroline Lucas MEP,(UK)

David Chaytor MP, Bury North UK,

Frank Cook MP, UK,

Langeland Hallgeir, MP, Storting, Norway,

Philippe Mahoux, President of Socialist group, Belgian Senate,

Prof. Sergei Kolesnikov MP, Duma Member, Co-President IPPNW, Moscow,

Lee Rhiannon, Greens NSW MLC, NSW, Aust,

(Letter Coordinator) John Hallam, People for Nuclear Disarmament Nuclear Flashpoints, Australia (Joint Coordinator with Doug Mattern, 2004/5 Appeal on Operating Status by 44 Nobels)

### APPENDIX - INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY URGES LOWERING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS OPERATIONAL READINESS

Lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapon system systems has been urged by the original (1996) Canberra Commission, and by the 2006 Blix Commission. It has been a key component of all pathways to a nuclear - weapons - free future.

It is also incorporated in a number of resolutions that pass the United Nations General Assembly each year. It is part of the Australia-Japan Renewed Determination resolution, which gathers the widest support of any UN resolution on nuclear disarmament, and is the sole subject of Reducing Nuclear Danger and of the resolution sponsored by Chile, Malaysia, Nigeria, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland which passed 141-3 last December in the General Assembly. (Text appended) That resolution is in part an outcome of the appeal by the 44 nobels coordinated by two of the authors and signatories of this letter. These UN General Assembly resolutions both reflect the will of governments and people around the world that nuclear weapons be abolished and that the possibility of an accidental nuclear exchange be diminished by lowering the state of operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems.

Text of United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Nuclear Weapons Operational

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Readiness adopted 141-3

Sixty-third session  
First Committee  
Agenda item 89

General and complete disarmament

Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sweden and Switzerland: draft resolution

Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 62/36 of 5 December 2007,

Recalling 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 increased 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 use of such weapons, including the unintentional or accidental use, which would have catastrophic consequences,

Also recognizing 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 bilateral initiatives, such as the proposed United States/Russian Federation Joint Centre for the Exchange of Data from Early Warning Systems and Notification of Missile Launches, which can play a central role in operational status reduction processes,

Also welcoming the steps taken by some States to reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapons systems, including de-targeting initiatives and increasing the amount of preparation time required for deployment,

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1. 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;
2. Urges States to update the General Assembly on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution;
3. Decides to remain seized of the matter.