

## WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

### **NPT Review Conference bombs**

The May 2005 NPT Review Conference, at which 188 countries gathered in Manhattan to consider the future of the 1970 Non-proliferation Treaty, closed in failure. No progress towards disarmament was achieved, which means that the more than 30,000 nuclear weapons remain for the foreseeable future, most belonging to the five original nuclear weapon states.

The Bush administration's approach was one of the key stumbling blocks as it has refused to take any of the 13 steps agreed in 2000 which, it was hoped, would result eventually in a nuclear-free world. In fact it appeared that all the decisions had been taken beforehand.

Full accounts of the NPT conference and the implications of failure can be found on the website [www.reachingcriticalwill.org](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org) and: [www.acronym.org.uk](http://www.acronym.org.uk) and [/www.basicint.org/npt/index.htm](http://www.basicint.org/npt/index.htm).

### **US operates Global Strike alert – with nuclear option**

According to military analyst William Arkin (*Washington Post*, May 15) by summer 2004 the US had officially adopted a policy of pre-emptive action to prevent future attacks, better known as a 'global strike'. CONPLAN 8022-02, completed in November 2003, put in place for the first time a pre-emptive and offensive strike capability against Iran and North Korea. Global strike has now become one of the core missions for the Omaha-based Strategic Command, or Stratcom.

CONPLAN 8022 is considered to have the advantage of positing a small-scale operation with 'no boots on the ground'. 'Though CONPLAN 8022 suggests a clean, short-duration strike intended to protect American security, a pre-emptive surprise attack (let alone one involving a nuclear weapons option) would unleash a multitude of additional and unanticipated consequences. So ... why aren't we talking about it?'

Referring to this article, Jonathan Schell (writing in forthcoming issue of *The Nation Magazine*) observes that 'In a shocking innovation in American nuclear policy ... the administration has created and placed on continuous high alert a force whereby the President can launch a pinpoint strike, including a nuclear strike, anywhere on earth with a few hours notice.... The incorporation of nuclear weapons into the global strike option, casting a new shadow of nuclear danger over the entire planet, raises fundamental questions. Perhaps the most important is why the United States, which now possesses the strongest conventional military forces in the world, feels the need to add to them a new global nuclear threat ... nothing could be more calculated to goad other nations into nuclear proliferation.... Bush's policy of preventive war is inherently activist and aggressive: the global strike option is not only for deterrence; it is for use.'

### **Robert McNamara boosts WMD Awareness Programme**

Following the launch of the Programme by former President Gorbachev last November, the WMD Awareness Programme achieved a major success by arranging for former US Secretary of State Robert McNamara to visit the UK in June to support the aims of the Programme in creating a wider public debate on the very real threat from the possession and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr McNamara's visit was launched at a Press Conference in London chaired by Medact Deputy Director Gill Reeve. Together with General Sir Hugh Beach, and in the wake of the disastrous NPT Review Conference which he had attended, Mr McNamara warned of imminent nuclear dangers, and stressed that empathy – the ability to understand an opponent's point of view – was key in solving difficult international situations.

## **Nuclear proliferation greatest threat**

Mr McNamara said that the greatest threat to humankind is nuclear proliferation, that Britain should not develop a new nuclear weapons capability and that the development of new nuclear weapons is insane and a waste of money.

He also said that 'Despite the end of the Cold War 15 years ago, the US nuclear weapons policies are today essentially what they were when I was Secretary of Defense 40 years ago. If I were to characterise US and NATO nuclear policies in one sentence, I would say they are: immoral; illegal; militarily unnecessary; very, very dangerous in terms of the risk of inadvertent or accidental launch; and destructive of the non-proliferation regime that has served us so well over the 40 years.'

To prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, Mr McNamara urged the current nuclear weapons states to take action to provide confidence building measures. He said, 'The US and Russia should be directed to remove their nuclear forces from hair-trigger alert and from preparation for launch on warning. The five declared nuclear weapons states should follow a policy of No-First-Use, reinstate and make explicit their Negative Security Assurances pledges and accelerate reductions in their level of their nuclear forces.'

After extensive media interviews, Mr McNamara together with Professor Robert Hinde, chair of the British Pugwash Group, took part in a session at the Guardian Hay Festival on Sunday 5 June chaired by Jon Snow and attended by 1200 people. Back in London he spoke at a packed meeting in Parliament attended by MPs and Peers.

For more information on Mr McNamara's visit and for a copy of his recent speech at the UN, where he set out further steps to reduce the dangers of nuclear proliferation, see [www.comeclean.org.uk](http://www.comeclean.org.uk)

## **UK Trident to be replaced?**

The Ministry of Defence is already looking at the options for either extending the life of Trident or procuring a new delivery system and nuclear payload at a cost of tens of billions of pounds. Trident D5 missiles are to be withdrawn from service by 2019, and given the time needed to develop a successor system – and because UK missiles are drawn from the US stockpile - a decision needs to be taken during this Parliament.

Submarine, surface-vessel and air-launched weapons are all apparently being considered, causing rivalry between air force and navy. The Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) is already advertising for new weapons engineers with expertise in weapons design.

Unless there is major protest, it is likely that this decision, like the one to allow the upgrade of radar and satellite facilities in Yorkshire for US Missile Defense, will be taken on the nod and notified after the event.

There is a useful discussion of the issue in the report of a symposium at Charney Manor organised by the Oxford Research Group on [www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk](http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk).

## **ACTION**

Raise with your MP

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has already suggested in a High Level Panel Report that the issue of Millennium Security Goals should be considered alongside Millennium Development Goals. The UK Ministry of Defence and Foreign Office are said to be interested. Nuclear disarmament goals need to be included in this.

The possibility of Trident replacement must have a democratic debate in Parliament. A realistic appraisal of our broad security needs would show that we don't need Trident at all.

## **Medact joins DOH advice team on health effects of radiation emissions**

Five Medact members have been co-opted on an Expert Working Group convened by the Department of Health to work on an update of the DOH website *Planning for Major Incidents – the NHS Guidance* [www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/fs/en).

This website currently has detailed clinical advice for health practitioners in the event of the release of biological or chemical agents but very little clinical advice on radioactive emissions.

Dr Ian Fairlie (consultant on radiation in the environment), Dr Lesley Morrison (GP, Peebles) Drs Carol Cheal and Brian Fine (GPs, London) and Dr Liz Waterston (retired GP, Newcastle on Tyne) are advising on a user friendly resource of clinical advice for primary practitioners in the event of a release of radioactivity into the environment which should now be on the updated DOH website.

### **ACTION**

A brief survey of local GPs revealed that knowledge on the topic of clinical response to radioactive emissions is very limited. Medact primary health care personnel could help raise the profile of this topic in the health worker community by making it part of their Personal Development Plan for this year. There is currently a self directed learning module 'Radiation Exposure and Contamination' on Doctors.net.uk.

### **Dialogue with decision-makers**

In the lead-up to the NPT Review Conference, a Medact delegation comprising Douglas Holdstock and Liz Waterston visited the Chinese Embassy in London in April 2005 to discuss Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs). In the same month Liz Waterston joined an IPPNW delegation to the Federal Foreign Office in Germany to discuss Middle East CSBMs.

**In 2004 the global total spent on munitions rose above \$1 trillion for the first time since the height of the Cold War. In contrast, the amount spent on aid over the same period was \$78.6 billion. (*Observer*, 12.6.05)**