

STOP FUNDING FOR NEW NUCLEAR WEAPONS RESEARCH

May 9, 2005

ISSUE:

The Administration has renewed its request for funding of research on new, earth penetrating nuclear weapons that Congress denied last year. This funding totals \$8.5 million for 2006 and even more for 2007. The Department of Energy's budget proposal includes \$4 million for research on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) in fiscal year 2006 and projects \$14 million for it in 2007. The Department of Defense's budget request includes \$4.5 million for the RNEP project in fiscal year 2006 and forecasts spending \$3.5 million in 2007.

This funding is currently limited to research, but, it is part of a nuclear strategy that envisions the use of nuclear weapons against chemical and biological weapons or to destroy deeply buried bunkers. In order to prepare for developing new nuclear weapons, the Administration is also seeking to make it easier to resume nuclear testing.

USCCB POSITION:

In *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace* (1993), the U.S. Bishops articulate two principles of just war teaching that have profound implications for nuclear weapons:

Noncombatant Immunity: Civilians may not be the object of direct attack, and military personnel must take due care to avoid and minimize indirect harm to civilians.

Proportionality: In the conduct of hostilities, efforts must be made to attain military objectives with no more force than is militarily necessary and to avoid disproportionate collateral damage to civilian life and property.

In light of this teaching the USCCB position is as follows:

- The new weapons would erode the fragile barrier against nuclear use because they are part of a strategy that contemplates first use of nuclear weapons and their use against non-nuclear threats. Smaller, more "usable" nuclear weapons would not be discriminate or proportionate in any meaningful sense. A recent study on the "Effects of Nuclear Earth Penetrator and Other Weapons" by the National Research Council concluded that "the weapons cannot penetrate to depths required for total containment" and would result in "casualties" that range from "hundreds" to "more than a million" people.
- The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a serious problem; research on new, "more usable" nuclear weapons will only undermine the credibility of U.S. efforts to address it. Mutual restraint, international cooperation, and leadership by example are called for, not the proliferation of our own weapons of mass destruction.
- The United States retains a nuclear arsenal that far exceeds anything necessary to deter existing or foreseeable nuclear threats. The moral task today is to proceed with deeper cuts and ultimately to ban nuclear weapons entirely, not to begin research on new ones.
- Funding for research on new nuclear weapons and efforts to make it easier to rapidly resume nuclear testing would move the United States further from the urgent task of ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban, an essential step in stopping nuclear proliferation and moving toward progressive nuclear disarmament.

For more information on the USCCB's positions on nuclear weapons, visit this website:

<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/nwgeneral.htm>.

ACTION REQUESTED:

- 1) If your Senator or Representative IS NOT a member of the House or Senate Armed Services committees or the appropriations subcommittees (listed below), ask him/her to contact members of these committees/subcommittees and voice their opposition to the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. The appropriations subcommittees are:

House Energy and Water; Senate Energy and Water; House Defense; and the Senate Defense

- 2) If your Senator or Representative IS a member of the committees/subcommittees (see list below), call and urge him/her not to fund the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator program.

Senators and Representatives can be reached by dialing the Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121.

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