



WATCHING BRIEF: NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Facts and Figures

The current state of the nuclear weapons stockpiles is as follows:

USA	7,700 warheads
Russia	8,500 warheads
U.K.	225 warheads
France	300 warheads
China	250 warheads
India	110 warheads
Pakistan	120 warheads
Israel	80 warheads
Nth Korea	10 warheads

The total comes to around 17,300 for the nine nuclear weapons states.
(Source: ICAN website)

New START

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between USA and Russia. It was signed in April 2010 in Prague and entered into force in February 2011 after ratification. It is intended to last for ten years. Under the terms of the treaty, the number of strategic nuclear missile launchers will be reduced by half. A new inspection and verification regime was established. It does not limit the number of warheads stockpiled. The limits set are

Deployed missiles and bombers	700
Deployed warheads	1,550
Missile tubes and bombers	800

Humanitarian Disarmament Initiatives

Humanitarian arguments have long been part of the debate about disarmament, and have been mentioned in many of the treaties/agreements, such as the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, and the 1997 Mine Ban Convention. In relation to nuclear weapons, the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty, the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – all acknowledge the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use and testing.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference reflected deep concern at the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. In 2013, 125 states signed a joint statement on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons at a meeting of the UN General Assembly First Committee.

International conferences on this concern have now been held in Norway and Mexico, and a further conference is planned for Austria later this year, at which it is hoped all the nuclear weapons states will be active participants.

Ban on Nuclear Weapons

There is momentum for a complete ban on nuclear weapons, given the failure of existing treaties to lead in that direction. Several years ago, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War set up the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). ICAN reports that at present 151 nations support (incl. China), 22 are on the fence (incl. Australia), 22 are against (incl. France, UYK, USA and Russia).

The International Trade Union Conference held in Berlin in May 2014 issued a statement calling for “a treaty to ban the use, manufacture, stockpiling and possession of nuclear weapons as a first step towards their complete eradication”.

Mayors for Peace, begun by the mayor of Hiroshima in Japan, has succeeded in linking over 2000 cities around the world in a move to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020.

Australia's Official Position

In 2008 the Australian and Japanese Governments established the International Commission on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND). Its report in 2009 strongly supported moves for a nuclear-weapons free world via a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and identified a series of steps that would assist that goal – including caps on the number of warheads, nuclear weapons free zones, non-proliferation regimes, and non-use guarantees by nuclear weapons states.

The Australian Government has given general support to moves for nuclear disarmament. For example, in 2012 a bi-partisan motion was passed in Parliament in support of a world free of nuclear weapons. In 2013, Julia Gillard as Prime Minister said “Australia supports the exploration of legal frameworks for the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons, including the possibility of a nuclear weapons convention. She said that nuclear disarmament was one of the priorities for Australia's term on the UN Security Council.

Australia has supported (along with over 100 other countries) moves for disarmament such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) which seeks to prevent illicit trafficking in weapons of mass destruction. It also supports the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, the Nuclear Terrorism Convention, the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (which is still being negotiated). In relation to radioactive material, Australia is party to the Waigani Convention which prohibits the importation of radioactive wastes into the Pacific.

At the same time, Australia has been less consistent in its response to international moves to curb nuclear weapons. At the NPT Review meeting in 2013, it refused to support an 80-nation statement declaring that use of nuclear weapons would have devastating humanitarian consequences.

Comment

Gareth Evans, former Australian Foreign Minister and Director of the International Crisis Group, currently Chancellor of the ANU, wrote a paper for the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament in June 2013. In it he made the following points:

- The arguments against nuclear weapons need constant restating.
- Nuclear weapons are morally and environmentally indefensible challenges to our common humanity.
- The reliance on nuclear weapons to deter attack is misplaced because of the huge risks associated with their retention, and represents a costly misallocation of resources.
- It is essential for policy-makers to become committed to achieving nuclear disarmament in order for the psychological and geopolitical obstacles to be removed.

Ramesh Thakur, Director of the ANU Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, wrote in early 2014 that:

“The sad reality is that while nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humanity, progress on their abolition, and on strengthening barriers to their proliferation, remains worryingly slow. The existence of nuclear weapons is a sufficient guarantee of their proliferation and, some day again, use. Nuclear weapons could not proliferate if they did not exist. Nuclear disarmament is a necessary condition of nuclear non-proliferation. We must make the transition from a world in which the role of nuclear weapons is seen as central to maintaining national and international security, to one where they become progressively marginal and eventually unnecessary.

“What we need is a multi-phased roadmap to abolition that prioritises concrete immediate steps in the first few years, like introducing more robust firewalls to separate possession from use of nuclear weapons; further significant cuts in existing nuclear arsenals and a freeze on production of fissile materials in the medium term; further constraints on the deployment of nuclear weapons on the territories of other states, for example by means of regional NWFZ; and an enforceable new international nuclear weapons convention that requires credible, total and verified destruction of all nuclear stockpiles within our lifetime”.

Alfred de Zayas, Independent UN Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, addressed an international consultation in Brussels on 15 May 2014 drew attention to the lack of transparency in relation to military budgets. He called for states to engage in good faith negotiations on disarmament. He said states should report regularly to the UN Human Rights Council on military expenditures including nuclear stockpiles and research.

The WILPF website Reaching Critical Will includes an article appraising the current situation. It makes the following points:

- The nuclear weapons states continue to rely on such weapons in their security doctrines and to modernize their arsenals.
- A different approach is ‘delegitimisation’ whereby a state diminishes the prestige or authority accorded to nuclear weapons. Examples are Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine which have removed nuclear weapons from their soil, and South Africa and Libya which have ended their nuclear weapons programs.
- The humanitarian factor may prove to have the greatest potential to persuade nuclear weapons states to disarm.
- Some steps that can be taken by the nuclear weapons states include – no first use policies, support for nuclear weapons free zones, negative security guarantees (not to attack non-nuclear state).

What Can Friends Do?

- Work with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to promote wider public awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons and to urge policy-makers to adopt policies that move towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.
- Provide opportunities for Friends to meet and share knowledge and concern about nuclear weapons and disarmament.
- Place relevant posters and charts (eg from ICAN website) on noticeboards at Meeting Houses.

Canberra
June 2014

References

ICAN website – www.icanw.org

Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW) website – www.mapw.org.au

Mayors for Peace website – www.mayorsforpeace.org

WILPF website Reaching Critical Will – www.reachingcriticalwill.org

Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade website – www.dfat.gov.au