

# INTERNATIONAL Herald Tribune

THE WORLD'S DAILY NEWSPAPER  
PUBLISHED WITH

THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE WASHINGTON POST

EDITED IN PARIS  
PRINTED IN NEW YORK

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2002

The 'Posture Review' ■ By Robert S. McNamara and Thomas Graham Jr.

## Nuclear weapons for all?

**T**he Bush administration has made much of its belief that the international arms control treaty regime is irrelevant. As the recently leaked Nuclear Posture Review reportedly states, "that old process is incompatible with the flexibility U.S. planning and forces now require."

The United States has decided to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and put aside improvements in the Biological Weapons Convention. It has refused to continue the formal strategic arms reduction process. It now seems that the administration is prepared to add the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to its list of scrapped treaties.

Should this happen, and should this administration's practice continue, nuclear weapons can be expected to spread around the world. We will then live in a far, far more dangerous world, and the United States will be much, much less secure. Given the stakes, America may be approaching some of the most important decisions in decades.

During the Cold War, peace was supported by the doctrine of "mutual assured destruction," which simply meant that each side maintained forces and observed the conditions required to retain a devastating second strike capability, thereby deterring nuclear war. The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the treaties limiting strategic offensive nuclear forces were the underpinning of this doctrine and the basis for ending the nuclear arms race and enhancing strategic stability.

While the United States and Russia continue to maintain thousands of nuclear weapons, with many remaining on hair-trigger alert, the Bush administration has unilaterally declared mutual assured destruction to be outdated, and it has decided to withdraw from the ABM Treaty to underscore this point.

Now, according to reports describing the Nuclear Posture Review, the administration has moved to a new nuclear doctrine described by one commentator as "unilateral assured destruction." Russia is still targeted, but potentially by offensive forces rather than by second-strike nuclear forces. China is also targeted, with a "military confrontation over the status of Taiwan" set forth as a possible rationale for a nuclear strike.

The Nuclear Posture Review goes even further. It explicitly lists Libya, Syria, Iraq, Iran and North Korea as potential targets for United States nuclear forces, putting aside the ambiguity employed in previous reports.

One thing — perhaps the only thing — that these five states have in common, however, is that all are non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the Nonproliferation Treaty. For 30 years, this treaty has kept nuclear weapons from spreading all over the world.

The problem is, however, that in 1978, in order to bolster

the Nonproliferation Treaty, the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union formally pledged never to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states that are parties to the treaty except in the case of an attack by any such a state in alliance with a nuclear-weapon state. (No exception was made for responding to chemical or biological weapon attacks.)

And in 1995 the three states, with Russia replacing the former Soviet Union, joined by France and China, reiterated this pledge as a central element of the effort to make the Nonproliferation Treaty (which by its terms had a 25-year duration) a permanent treaty.

In what could be the most reasonable request in the history of international relations, in exchange for permanently agreeing never to acquire nuclear weapons, 182 non-nuclear nations asked that the five nuclear-weapon states promise never to attack them with such weapons.

This was done in April 1995 in connection with a UN Security Council resolution. But the Pentagon plan undermines the credibility of that pledge, which underpins the Nonproliferation Treaty. To strike directly at this pledge of nonuse is to strike at the treaty itself.

Further, the basic implication of the Nuclear Posture Review that the United States reserves the right to target any nation with nuclear weapons whenever it chooses to do so is likely to increase the risk of proliferation.

If a country believes that it is falling out of favor in Washington, what is it likely to do? It is always difficult to predict the actions of nations, but perhaps a quote attributed to the Indian defense minister, George Fernandez, provides some insight: "Before one challenges the United States, one must first acquire nuclear weapons."

The Nuclear Posture Review also appears to set forth a 40-year plan for developing and acquiring new nuclear weapons. It reportedly calls for new launch platforms (air, sea and land) to be developed and deployed in 2020, 2030 and 2040, and it calls for new low-yield and variable-yield warheads that very likely would require nuclear testing.

Maintaining a permanent rationale for a robust U.S. nuclear arsenal and a resumption of nuclear testing would both fly in the face of vital U.S. nonproliferation commitments.

These matters are far too important for the administration to decide on its own. There must be a full public debate on the future of America's nuclear deterrent and the nuclear nonproliferation regime. It is time for Congress to schedule full and public hearings on this matter.

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