

CND Webinar: Nuclear Disarmament, Not Nuclear Hypocrisy
An NPT Review Conference side event – 4/28/26

Remarks by Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation, USA

I was asked to comment on two areas:

The growing global and domestic opposition to Trump and how this creates greater opportunities to challenge nuclear war drive.

What are the prospects for a new START treaty and its impact on the global disarmament infrastructure.

I will address them after providing some context.

“Make no mistake. Donald Trump is a dangerous unhinged megalomaniac, unfit for office, who is taking a wrecking ball to the domestic and international orders – to the detriment of millions of ordinary people.” That was the opening of something I wrote in July 2018. In November 2024, I added: “That’s what we knew then. And it could be worse – much worse, this time around. Amidst ominous promises and alarming cabinet nominations, no one knows exactly what to expect from the second Trump regime, but we can be sure of one thing: **CHAOS**. How this will manifest and how it will affect our work remains to be seen.”

In March 2025, I wrote: “Finding real information about Trump’s nuclear weapons intensions has been like looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack. Only in this case the haystack is more like a tumbleweed on fire that’s being blown across the desert at high speed.” Every day since his coronation, Trump and his sycophantic minions have assaulted us with a tsunami of confusing, frightening, and often contradictory rhetoric on their social media platforms, accompanied by a blizzard of legally questionable (to be polite) executive orders. Very few of the rants or executive orders mention nuclear weapons.”

Let’s look at the nuclear weapons portfolio that the second Trump administration inherited from the Biden administration.

In March, 2024 President Biden approved a highly classified “Nuclear Employment Guidance” plan that seeks to prepare the United States for possible coordinated nuclear challenges from China, Russia and North Korea. This came as the Pentagon believes China’s nuclear arsenal will rival the size and diversity of the U.S.’ and Russia’s over the next decade.

This plan was hinted at by Vipin Narang, a top Department of Defense nuclear policy official, who on August 1, 2024 stated that, while current modernization plans — estimated to cost at least \$350 billion over the next two decades — are “necessary,” they “may well be insufficient” to meet current and future threats. According to Narang, in the face of growing threats from Russia, China and North Korea, “We have begun exploring options to increase future launcher

capacity or additional deployed warheads on the land, sea and air legs that could offer national leadership increased flexibility, if desired, and executed.”

According to the then-head of the National Nuclear Security Administration, Jill Hruby, the U.S. is launching a new nuclear arms race to catch up with and outsmart Russia and China. “We now have seven systems that should be developed and put into production by the mid-2030s. This program is not only a major modernization of all three components of the nuclear triad, but also adds new deterrence capabilities that do not currently exist.”

Project 2025, the playbook for the second Trump administration, proposes that a second Trump administration prioritize nuclear weapons programs over other security programs, accelerate the development and production of all nuclear weapons programs, increase funding for the development and production of new and modernized nuclear warheads, and prepare to test new nuclear weapons.

“Mad King” Trump’s proposed 2027 budget requests a 42 percent increase in military spending, bringing the total U.S. war budget to an unprecedented \$1.5 Trillion. And this does not include the administration’s emergency request of \$200 Billion to support the senseless U.S.-Israeli war with Iran – a war officially being waged, in part, to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile Trump wants to raise spending on U.S. nuclear weapons by 12 percent to maintain and modernize its nuclear triad, building on existing plans to develop new ballistic missile submarines, new silo-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, a new nuclear cruise missile, a modified gravity bomb, a new stealthy long-range strike bomber, and accompanying warheads for each delivery system, with modified or newly manufactured plutonium cores.

The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, released by the White House in November 2025, just five months ago, states, “[T]he days in which the Middle East dominated American foreign policy in both long-term planning and day-to-day execution are thankfully over—not because the Middle East no longer matters, but because it is no longer the constant irritant, and potential source of imminent catastrophe, that it once was. It is rather emerging as a place of partnership, friendship, and investment—a trend that should be welcomed and encouraged.”ⁱ ***And yet, here we are.***

Donald Trump’s shocking April 7 threat to Iran, “A whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again,” was interpreted by some as a nuclear threat, a reasonable concern given this unhinged U.S. President’s sole authority to launch nuclear weapons.

My main point is that predicting what the Trump administration is going to do from one day to another is *impossible*. **CHAOS** is the word of the day.

Now, to answer the questions.

On the domestic side, while there is indeed growing public opposition to the Trump regime in the U.S., as manifested by the huge No Kings demonstrations, there is still very little public discussion or seeming public awareness in the U.S. about the role the U.S. is playing in increasing the dangers of nuclear war. When Trump makes one of his wild social media posts, such as his threat to “destroy a whole civilization,” there is a kind of unconscious discomfort among the general public, but no conscious awareness linking U.S. allegations of an undocumented Iranian nuclear weapons program to the overwhelming threat posed by U.S. nuclear weapons. I call this a “consciousness gap.”

On the international level, the Trump administration’s volatility and the growing lack of trust among NATO members and other traditional U.S. allies that the U.S. will shield them with its “nuclear umbrella,” is leading to discussions about the potential proliferation of nuclear weapons in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East – *a far cry from greater opportunities to challenge the nuclear war drive.*

Regarding prospects for a follow-on to the START treaty, I can see no prospects for the foreseeable future. There is no appetite for treaties (or international law for that matter) in the Trump administration or Congress. And, given the reckless and wholly unpredictable nature of the administration – which in the last year has twice bombed Iran in the midst of negotiations - why would Russia or any other country trust the U.S.?

U.S. nuclear weapons policy has been remarkably consistent since 1945, regardless of which party has been in power. Under the best-case scenario, if the Democrats regain control of the House and the Senate in the midterm elections in 2026 and reclaim the Presidency in 2028, there is no guarantee that there will be a fundamental change in U.S. nuclear weapons policy. And it will take years for the United States to regain international trust.

In the meantime, perhaps the growing opposition to the Trump regime provides an opportunity to awaken public consciousness, internationally and in the U.S., to the growing dangers of nuclear war. **It’s up to us to take advantage of this opportunity to stimulate a massive new grassroots, intersectional anti-nuclear peace and justice movement, from the bottom up.**

Let me close with the most inspiring quote I’ve heard in a long time. During the Mayors for Peace Youth Forum here at the NPT Review Conference this morning, a Hiroshima high school student – a young woman - passionately declared: *“We are young, but we are not powerless. We can’t change the past, but we can change the future!”*

ⁱ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>, p. 29