

The Issue at a Glance

There are more than 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world, 96 percent of which belong to the United States and Russia. Over 10,000 U.S. and Russian weapons are deployed, and more than 2,000 are on alert—ready for use in minutes. Most nuclear weapons deployed today would explode with a force roughly 8 to 100 times larger than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

“There is a great opportunity now to move toward a world in which nuclear weapons are marginalized.”

“There is a great opportunity now to move toward a world in which nuclear weapons are marginalized,” says Dr. Frank von Hippel, professor and co-director of the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University. “The ‘Doomsday Machine’ created by the United States and the Soviet Union is antiquated and has to be dismantled. UCS can play an important role in helping explain technically how that can be done.”



The Challenge

Nuclear weapons remain a grave and immediate threat to human civilization and our planet. Current U.S. nuclear weapons policy is outdated, dangerous, and misguided. The United States maintains over a thousand warheads on high alert. Since 2001, the U.S. has asserted that it has the right to use nuclear weapons preemptively against nations that do not possess them. Furthermore, the weapons laboratories are pushing for an ambitious plan to replace the entire U.S. arsenal with a new generation of nuclear weapons and to revitalize the U.S. nuclear weapons production complex. The risk that terrorists could acquire these weapons grows daily. Additionally, our nuclear weapons policies are undermining the U.S. goal of constraining the spread of nuclear weapons to more countries.

To learn more about nuclear weapons and nuclear terrorism, visit the Nuclear Weapons and Global Security section of the UCS website at www.ucsusa.org.

UCS Solutions

- » Prevent the development of both new U.S. nuclear weapons and a resumption of nuclear testing, and ensure ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).
- » Secure an agreement between the United States and Russia to verifiably dismantle and destroy the warheads that are being taken off deployment under the Moscow Treaty, and to remove the remaining weapons from high alert.
- » Promptly and unilaterally reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal to no more than 1,000 warheads, including deployed and reserve warheads. Use this action to leverage negotiations with Russia to achieve similar reductions.
- » Ensure the U.S. government reinstates a policy of prohibiting reprocessing of U.S. spent fuel and presses for an end to reprocessing globally, to prevent the production of more weapon-usable plutonium.
- » Prevent advanced development and deployment of space-based and anti-satellite weapons by the United States.



UCS Leadership

- » UCS's national security program is one of a few independent voices in the country with the scientific expertise required to analyze nuclear weapons issues.
- » UCS provided evidence that the “bunker buster” nuclear weapon the Bush administration was pushing to develop would be ineffective and would produce a large amount of radioactive fallout. As a direct result, Congress denied funding for this new program.
- » UCS challenged the technical rationale for producing new warheads to replace the entire U.S. arsenal, which helped diminish congressional support for the program.
- » UCS studies have framed the debate on a wide range of issues—from Star Wars and the current missile defense system to space-based weapons and the nuclear proliferation risks of reprocessing.

