

## Is economic self interest an insurmountable obstacle to nuclear disarmament:?

Written by  
Sunday, 04 April 2010 12:15 -

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In Amarilla Texas, is the plant Pantex, the only nuclear weapons assembly and disassembly facility in the country, and it is a major employer. In the 1980s there was a film made about a pastor in one of the churches in Amarillo Texas; After he had urged his parishioners to end their contribution to the assembling of the most dangerous weapons in the world, his church was empty. In the enclosed press report, "Nuke Treaty bad for business", Matt Volz describes the narrow vision of those who benefit economically from military spending. and from the intercontinental ballistic missiles around Malmstrom, F.E. Warren Air Force Base.

#### Nuke Treaty Bad for Business

Albuquerque Journal, front section. 4/4/10

Cities near missile bases count on military spending  
By Matt Volz The Associated Press

JUDITH GAP, Mont. — Here in America's nuclear heartland, where underground missile silos dot the landscape, a proposed U.S.-Russia treaty to reduce nuclear weapons is nothing short of alarming. The military workers who maintain those missiles support cities as large as Great Falls, where 40 percent of the economy depends upon Malmstrom Air Force Base, and businesses as small as the Judith Gap Mercantile, where passing airmen buy milkshakes by the dozen. If they follow the missiles out of town, the economies here could be crippled.

The fate of the 450 intercontinental ballistic missiles around Malmstrom, F.E. Warren Air Force Base near Cheyenne, Wyo., and Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota is not yet clear, but politicians and community leaders are ready to fight to keep them. Even if it means not cutting nuclear weapons.

"I would keep Malmstrom at full strength, regardless," Great Falls Mayor Michael Winters said. "Each and every facet of our economy has something to do with Malmstrom."

Montana, North Dakota and Wyoming business leaders over the past year have lobbied their congressional delegations, all the while avoiding arguments about whose base is more important, said Dale Steenbergen, president and CEO of the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce.

Instead, they are trying to persuade Congress to keep the ICBM silos at full strength, arguing that they are relatively cheap to maintain and are more secure compared to bombers and submarines that also carry nuclear weapons. "You can sink a sub or shoot down a plane. That's very different from attacking American soil, and that's what you'd have to do (to get to the ICBM silos)," Steenbergen said. The proposed treaty would require the U.S. and Russia to reduce their nuclear warheads over the next seven years by 30 percent, to 1,550 from a previous maximum of 2,200. But it doesn't say where those cuts would come.

That's expected to be detailed in the Defense Department's Nuclear Posture Review, a comprehensive strategic review of the U.S. nuclear force. The review could be released as early as this week, Pentagon spokesman Cmdr. Bob Mehal said.

Officials at the Air Force Global Strike Command, which oversees the nation's nuclear

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equipped bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles, declined to comment.

Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev are expected to sign the treaty April 8 in Prague. It must then be ratified by two-thirds of the Senate, where opponents are directing their lobbying. Sen. Max Baucus, a Montana Democrat, said he is inclined to support ratification and that the reduction of nuclear warheads is an admirable goal. ICBMs like those at Malmstrom are likely to be spared deep cuts because they are cost-effective and could eventually be converted to carry conventional warheads, he said. "I see no change in American force structure in the foreseeable future," Baucus said.

Malmstrom's 341st Missile Wing employs about 4,000 military personnel and civilians to manage its 150 ICBMs. One maintenance duty is to extend the life of aging Minuteman III missiles — the last of which were produced in 1978 — and the Air Force has committed nearly \$6.2 billion to such lifeextension programs, according to Malmstrom's Web site. Quantifying the economic contribution of the three bases on their surrounding communities is difficult, but their importance to those cities and towns is clear. The bases employ thousands, provide contract work for local businesses and base personnel spend money and pay taxes to the towns. There also is the fierce pride of each community being at the center of the nation's defense. Airmen who service and maintain the missiles pass daily through Judith Gap, a town of about 150 in the center of Montana. Residents are used to regular emergency drills that involve lines of Humvees, helicopters overhead and soldiers crouched on hillsides, rifles at the ready.

The Judith Gap Mercantile, which boasts that its milkshakes are famous worldwide, takes pride in serving the military men and women who make up an estimated 70 percent of its business. A shrine is dedicated to them. Models of missiles, plaques of appreciation and shoulder patches from various military units cover a wall. "They like to play a little game with us," said Jancy Kowalski, who makes the milkshakes. "They'll come in and say, 'We need 15 milkshakes,' and we've got like 10 minutes to close. They love to do that to us."