

Absolutely Unacceptable: if US may Resume Nuclear Explosive Testing

Posted by Joan Russow

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Absolutely Unacceptable: Resumed Nuclear Explosive Testing

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons on May 23 unanimously adopted a statement condemning recent reports of White House discussions to resume nuclear weapons testing. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic Abolition 2000 had to take the unprecedented step of holding its AGM online, allowing participants from some 40 countries to join.

The statement (full text below) warns that resumed US testing of nuclear weapons would

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inevitably lead to resumption of testing by other nations. Such testing would, in any case, be in contravention of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, signed by the United States in 1996, yet pending entry-into-force.

John Burroughs, Executive Director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, and one of the statement's drafters said, "Testing of nuclear weapons evokes nuclear apocalypse, as in the days of US-Soviet brinkmanship. It must not be resumed. At the same time, we must recognize that the capabilities for apocalypse remain in place, and are being maintained and improved in the absence of nuclear explosive testing. This too must be brought to an end."

Daniel Ellsberg, former US nuclear war planner, and famed whistleblower of the Pentagon Papers, said, "Renewed nuclear testing initiated by the US would enable India, Pakistan and North Korea to test and develop 'H-bomb' thermonuclear warheads, which the existing moratorium on testing has prevented them from deploying. They could then join the US and Russia in threatening the world with the capability to cause nuclear winter, global famine, and near-extinction of humanity. Obviously, no nation on earth should possess this power. Rather than inviting its spread, the US and Russia should neither maintain nor 'modernize' but *dismantle* their own Doomsday Machines."

Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director of Western States Legal Foundation, and a founding mother of Abolition 2000 said, "25 years ago, we launched the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons with an 11-point statement which includes a call to abolish all forms of nuclear testing. For more than a quarter of a century the moratorium on full-scale explosive nuclear testing has been largely adhered to. US resumption of such tests at this time would rock the foundations of an increasingly fragile world order and would set back efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons by decades. It must not be allowed."

About Abolition 2000

The Abolition 2000 network was formed in April 1995, during the first weeks of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference, when activists from around the world recognized that the issue of nuclear abolition was not on the agenda. An international network of organizations and individuals working for a global treaty to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons, Abolition 2000 is open to all organizations endorsing the Abolition 2000 Founding Statement* .

About the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

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The CTBT opened for signing in 1996 obliges states:

1. Not to carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, and to prohibit and prevent any such nuclear explosion at any place under its jurisdiction or control.
2. To refrain from causing, encouraging, or in any way participating in the carrying out of any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion.

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Full statement follows ...

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Statement of the Annual Meeting of the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons

Resumption of nuclear explosive testing is absolutely unacceptable. Even discussing nuclear testing again is dangerously destabilizing. Yet according to news reports** such discussions have recently been held in the Trump White House. US resumption of nuclear testing would lead to testing by other states - possibly China, Russia, India, Pakistan, and DPRK. It would accelerate the emerging nuclear arms race, and damage prospects for nuclear arms control negotiations. A nuclear explosive test is itself a kind of threat. Testing would generate fear and mistrust and would entrench reliance on nuclear arms. It would move the world away from rather than towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Nuclear explosive testing must not happen, and there must not even be signals of its possibility. Instead the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should be brought into legal force.

This episode comes in the context of ongoing upgrading of nuclear forces by the world's nuclear-armed states. It is supported by extensive laboratory research and experimentation which in part serves as a substitute for functions once served by nuclear explosive testing. So, even as we demand that such testing not be resumed, we must recognize the dangers inherent in the ongoing nuclear weapons enterprise. Those dangers are now mostly out of sight of the public and subject to little media scrutiny, but they are real. They too must be addressed, which in the end will require the global abolition of nuclear arms.

Drafted on behalf of the AGM by:

John Burroughs, Executive Director, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy

Daniel Ellsberg, author of *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*
Andrew Lichterman, Senior Research Analyst, Western States Legal Foundation

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* <http://www.abolition2000.org/en/about/founding-statement/>

** https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/trump-administration-discussed-conducting-first-us-nuclear-test-in-decades/2020/05/22/a805c904-9c5b-11ea-b60c-3be060a4f8e1_story.html