Plans to Rebuild Our Nuclear Arsenal

SEPT. 24, 2014

To the Editor:

Re “Backsliding on Nuclear Promises” (editorial, Sept. 23):

You are right: The Obama administration’s plans to modernize the United States’ nuclear weapons while cutting funds to secure nuclear material globally betray President Obama’s 2009 pledge in Prague to work for a world free of nuclear weapons and his Nobel Peace Prize.

How can the United States tell Iran it cannot have even the capacity to build a nuclear weapon while winking at Israel’s arsenal and violating its own obligation under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to work for nuclear disarmament?

In a turbulent, warming world, an American nuclear buildup makes much more likely the “unparalleled catastrophe” of which Albert Einstein warned at the beginning of the nuclear age.

DAVID KEPPEL
Bloomington, Ind., Sept. 23, 2014

To the Editor:

Re “U.S. Ramping Up Major Renewal in Nuclear Arms” (front page, Sept. 22):

Under the Obama administration’s risky and unnecessary strategy to maintain the United States’ nuclear arsenal, it is planning to develop and deploy what are essentially new nuclear weapons, using components from various warheads in combinations that have never been tested in an underground explosion.
Given that such tests are no longer an option under the current international moratorium, this needlessly complicated approach could raise serious questions about the reliability of America’s stockpile. Furthermore, the administration’s plan runs counter to the spirit, if not the letter, of President Obama’s pledge not to deploy new nuclear weapons.

A more straightforward, sensible approach would be to refurbish existing weapons — limiting technical changes as much as possible — and to reduce their numbers and their role in national security policy.

For the United States, nuclear weapons are no longer a security asset. They are an increasingly expensive liability.

STEPHEN YOUNG
Washington, Sept. 22, 2014

The writer is a senior analyst with the global security program of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

To the Editor:

The administration’s spending plans for nuclear weapons are based on the false notion that maintaining large nuclear arsenals enhances our security. Recent studies have shown that the use of a tiny fraction of the current American arsenal would cause catastrophic global climate change and famine that would have disastrous effects here in the United States as well as the rest of the world. Do we see ourselves as a nation of suicide bombers?

The banning and elimination of nuclear weapons must be seen as our highest national security priority; spending up to a trillion dollars to maintain nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future is not consistent with seeking or achieving a world free of these weapons.

IRA HELFAND

The writer is co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which received the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize.

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