

U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
Reducing the World's Nuclear Arsenals
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I was 12 when atomic bombs flattened Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Hiroshima bomb, now estimated at 21 kilotons, killed roughly 70,000 people immediately.

The Nagasaki bomb, at 15 kilotons, killed at least 40,000 people immediately.

Another 100,000 or so who survived the initial blasts would die of injuries and radiation sickness.

By the end of 1945, an estimated 220,000 people had lost their lives because of these bombs.

And the horrible images of disfigured bodies and devastating ruins have stayed with me all of my life.

That's what a 15- or 21-kiloton bomb does. But today, most weapons are at 100 kilotons or far above.

And there are approximately 23,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The United States and Russia possess nearly 96 percent of them.

Under the terms of the Moscow Treaty, the United States and Russia are each limited to 1,700 to 2,200 deployed nuclear weapons.

And these weapons are reportedly targeted at cities, and they remain on high alert.

In all, the United States has approximately 9,400 nuclear weapons in its arsenal. And Russia has roughly 13,000.

Clearly, planet Earth can be destroyed hundreds of times over by these weapons.

During the period of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States, weapons were allowed to build up in the belief that mutually assured destruction would provide mutually assured deterrence.

Now, to some extent, that was true – as long as the Cold War existed and it was just between two nations.

But the Cold War is long over.

Today, we see other nations developing fissile material – both plutonium and uranium – as well as warheads and delivery systems.

We see North Korea and Iran becoming nuclear powers -- shaking their fists at the rest of the world from their positions of isolation.

Increasingly, as this kind of proliferation continues, we face the very real possibility of a rogue nation, or a terrorist group, coming into possession of either a dirty bomb or a full nuclear warhead.

So, the urgency of preventing proliferation – as well as the elimination of all nuclear weapons – becomes a goal of necessity and survival. I strongly believe we should embrace it.

There is some good news, and it's happening fast:

- In April at the G-20 summit in London, President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev committed to achieving a nuclear-free world. A few days later in Prague, President Obama delivered an historic speech that underscores his commitment to this goal. I salute him and I support him.
- As the first step, both Presidents instructed negotiators to draft a follow-on new treaty to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, known as START, which expires on December 5th of this year.
- Negotiators met in Moscow in May, and again in Geneva earlier this month. A Kremlin spokesman said a draft treaty may be ready by the time President Obama meets with President Medvedev in Moscow in July.
- And last Wednesday, wire services carried the news of an important statement by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who said he favored a world free of nuclear weapons. At a news conference with the German Foreign Minister in Moscow, Putin said this: *“Why do we need nuclear weapons? If other nuclear states are ready for (a nuclear-weapons-free world), we are too.”*

This presents our President with a major opportunity for progress, since negotiations toward a new START treaty have begun, and he is set to meet with President Medvedev again in Moscow next month.

So a new chapter in nuclear-weapons policy, which can expedite the phasing out of the enormous nuclear arsenals of our two countries, can really have the possibility of beginning.

Here at home, the United States Senate is faced with the need to ratify a treaty – the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, or CTBT – which was signed by President Clinton on September 24, 1996, but never ratified by the Senate.

One hundred eighty countries have signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. And it has been ratified by 148 countries.

For this treaty to come into effect, it must specifically be ratified by 44 nations that possess nuclear reactors. So far, 35 of these nations have ratified the treaty.

Nations in this category that have not ratified include: China; North Korea; Egypt; India; Indonesia; Iran; Israel; Pakistan; and the United States.

Candidly, I do not understand the 12-year delay.

I believe very strongly that we must work to see that verification is as good as it can possibly be – and then step up to the plate and ratify this treaty.

In addition, I strongly believe that our country should:

- Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including more robust and comprehensive inspections;
- Ensure the highest security standard for nuclear weapons, highly enriched uranium, and weapons-grade plutonium; and
- Remove deployed nuclear weapons from high-alert status, to reduce the risk of accidental or unapproved launch.

Also this year, President Obama and the Administration will put forward a new Nuclear Posture Review.

Now this review comes in two forms -- one is classified, and one is a white paper -- and it essentially states what the nuclear policies of the administration will be.

The last administration did not state that there would be a no-first-use policy. As a matter of fact, it stated that we would countenance a first use of nuclear weapons should we come under biological or chemical attack.

I very much hope that this new Nuclear Posture Review will clearly state a no-first-use policy.

The commitments of Presidents Obama and Medvedev – and the remarks of Prime Minister Putin, which I consider to be consequential – give me a renewed sense of hope.

Hope that we can make significant cuts in our arsenals.

Hope that the United States and Russia will display a constructive leadership that will inspire all nations.

Hope that we may really be able to close the door to new nuclear weapons once and for all, and rid the world of these weapons.

I have no illusions that it will be easy. But it can and should be accomplished.

We have a chance to wind down and expedite the removal of 96 percent of the world's nuclear weapons.

What an achievement it would be, if at the end of the next administration, we could say that the nuclear arsenals of both Russia and the United States had been reduced to the barest minimums.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I think this is a totally worthy goal.

I worry every day about weapons deployed. Weapons on high alert. Weapons targeted to large population centers. And what might set something off.

So I just want to thank this organization for the work they have done in this direction.

And I will continue to work to rid the world of these weapons.

Thank you.