

The Joint Understanding: Disappointing Progress on Nuclear Disarmament

By David Krieger

President Obama raised expectations for achieving a world without nuclear weapons when he said in Prague on April 5, 2009, "I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." But he only succeeded in moving the world a very small fraction of the way toward this goal when he met with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow on July 6, 2009 to announce the outcome thus far of US-Russian negotiations on nuclear disarmament. A Joint Understanding signed in Moscow by the two presidents gave little cause for celebration for those who share President Obama's vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

Until now, the two presidents had not revealed the numbers they had in mind for nuclear arms reductions. The Joint Understanding, however, provided these numbers for the first time. "Within seven years after this treaty comes into force, and in future, the limits for strategic delivery systems should be within the range of 500-1,100 units and for warheads linked to them within the range of 1,500 to 1,675 units," the statement said. These numbers cut the size of the strategic delivery systems by about a third and the deployed strategic warheads to just slightly below levels set by Presidents Bush and Putin in 2002.

The agreement deals only with strategic offensive weapons, making no provisions for non-strategic or tactical weapons, which are left outside the count. These may prove to be the most worrisome and uncontrollable of the weapons. The agreement also makes no provisions for warheads held in storage. The two presidents dealt separately with missile defense forces in Europe, which the Russians have vehemently opposed, agreeing to carry out a joint threat assessment and make recommendations.

It is expected that the new arms agreement will be finalized before the end of 2009 and will replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I), which expires December 5, 2009. This means that the new numbers set forth in the Joint Understanding will not need to be achieved before 2016, which would coincide with the end of a potential second Obama administration.

Joint Agreement, continued on page 3

HIROSHIMA DAY--AUGUST 6

NAGASAKI DAY--AUGUST 9

August 6th marks 64 years since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan, which immediately killed over 100,000 civilians and was followed on August 9th by the bombing of Nagasaki, killing more than 70,000 civilians. Since then, nuclear terror has held us hostage—by the threat of nuclear war and exposure to deadly nuclear materials created by our weapons production programs, including fallout from nuclear testing and exposure to depleted uranium weapons.

While President Obama has made some positive comments about a seeking a world without nuclear weapons, as we begin to see more of how he sees this taking shape and becoming a reality there is cause for concern.

Writing in a January 2009 article in *Foreign Policy in Focus*, D. Graham and W. Parrish explain that the Obama Administration "...is likely to continue a policy that we call 'anti-nuclear nuclearism.' Anti-nuclear nuclearism is a foreign and military policy that relies upon overwhelming U.S. power, including the nuclear arsenal, but makes rhetorical and even some substantive commitments to disarmament, however vaguely defined." As the article to the left outlines, there has been some movement on nuclear issues but not enough and not fast enough.

Traditionally, the Peace Resource Center has held a vigil each year commemorating the only use of atomic weapons and showing our dedication to working for a nuclear-free future. This year instead of a vigil, we are asking you all to take ONE important action:

Please write or call President Obama and ask that he make deeper commitments and take more timely and substantive actions for a nuclear-free world. On page 3 of this newsletter are five points, including a no first use commitment and dealerting nuclear weapons, that you can use for your letters. Let's use the opportunity on the anniversaries of the only use of nuclear weapons to re-dedicate ourselves and work harder for a nuclear-free future.

Write to: President Obama, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C., 20500; Comment Line: 202-456-6213; Web comments: www.whitehouse.gov/contact

In addition to the slow progress in reductions of warheads, the Joint Understanding also fails to deal with other important issues, such as the dangers of the weapons remaining on high alert status, pledges of No First Use of the weapons, or a commitment to achieving a Nuclear Weapons Convention for the phased, verifiable, irreversible and transparent elimination of the weapons.

The Joint Understanding is a step in the right direction, but it is a step far smaller than might have been hoped. It is a step that is unlikely to indicate to the non-nuclear weapons states parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty that the nuclear weapons states are fulfilling their obligations for good faith negotiations for a world free of nuclear weapons. Now that the numbers are revealed, it appears that the US and Russia are not making major strides, but rather creeping very slowly, even reluctantly, toward President Obama's vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons that could destroy US or Russian cities and threaten the future existence of the two countries. Since neither US nor Russian nuclear weapons can deter non-state extremists, there is zero tolerance for these weapons getting into the hands of such extremist groups. It is highly unlikely that the level of reductions that they now envision can assure that these weapons will not end up in the hands of extremists committed to doing harm to either country or to other countries.

While surely this is only a first step in nuclear disarmament efforts by the two leaders, President Obama needs to press harder for more serious reductions in nuclear arms, reductions that will be sufficient to bring the other nuclear weapons states to the table to collectively seek a world without nuclear weapons. On the positive side, the two presidents are discussing having a global nuclear summit in 2010. Such a summit would allow for additional perspectives, those from nuclear as well as non-nuclear weapons states, to be placed on the table for a larger discussion of nuclear threats and security.

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**SAVE THE DATE FOR
OUR ANNUAL DINNER!**

This year's annual dinner, a "Souper Supper," will be held in the evening on Sunday, November 22. Details are pending, but mark your calendars and don't miss this annual event!

**HOLD OBAMA ACCOUNTABLE FOR
NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT!**

**Five Proposals for Advancing President Obama's
Nuclear Disarmament Agenda**

*"I state clearly and with conviction America's
commitment to seek the peace
and security of a world without nuclear weapons."
-- Barack Obama*

1. A No First Use commitment will de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons in US security policy. This should be reflected in the new US Nuclear Posture Review, which is currently in progress. More than any other step the US could take, this will demonstrate to the world the US commitment to Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
2. De-alert nuclear arsenals, which remain on high alert status as a relic of the worst threats of the Cold War era. Negotiate in the current arms talks with Russia to take all nuclear weapons off high alert status. Understanding human fallibility, put the gift of increased time between the possibility of misperception or miscalculation and nuclear war.
3. Expand the concept of nuclear security for the Global Summit on Nuclear Security. We applaud President Obama for taking the initiative to convene this summit in March 2010. It provides an opportunity for states to go to the heart of nuclear security issues. All states are endangered by any state's nuclear arsenal. It is not sufficient to focus only on nuclear terrorism. It is necessary to focus also on existing nuclear arsenals and potential proliferation. The bottom line is that nuclear security will require nuclear weapons abolition. We propose that each participating state come to the table with its own Roadmap to Abolition and open a dialogue on achieving a Nuclear Weapons Convention for the phased, verifiable, irreversible and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons.
4. Support a Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone (MENWFZ) to prevent a regional nuclear arms race. The pursuit of a MENWFZ was promised when the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was indefinitely extended in 1995. Now, nearly 15 years later, there has been no progress. At the same time, nearly every country in the region seeks nuclear power programs, moving them closer to weapons programs. If double standards are not ended, Israel not challenged on its nuclear arsenal, and a MENWFZ not achieved, the region may see substantial nuclear proliferation, dramatically diminishing the prospects for achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.
5. Repeat the themes of the President Obama's Prague speech in the United States. Bring home to all Americans, and particularly our national security establishment, that a world free of nuclear weapons is not a fantasy and that the US is committed to pursuing this goal with a sense of urgency. Continue to make the case to Americans that nuclear weapons do not and cannot provide for our security and we will be far safer and more secure in a world free of nuclear weapons.

SPAGHETTI DINNER AT THE BIG KITCHEN!

Wednesday, September 9, 2009

**Support the Peace Resource Center by joining us
for a SPAGHETTI DINNER at the Big Kitchen!**

3003 Grape Street, San Diego, 92101; Includes meat or veggie
sauce, garlic bread, salad, tea, coffee lemonade and a brownie.

6-8 p.m.; Suggested minimum donation \$10--? sliding scale.

Music by whoever brings an instrument: This could be your big chance!

Please buy tickets in advance or RSVP
so we will know how much food to prepare by calling Allen 619-282-4358

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