

9/29/91

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**LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND PEACE GROUPS
RESPOND TO PRESIDENT BUSH'S SPEECH ON NUCLEAR ARMS**

President Bush announced this past Friday a number of changes in nuclear weapons policy that reduce the danger of accidental nuclear war. These included:

- elimination of all ground-launched short-range nuclear weapons,
- moving all short-range nuclear weapons off ships and destroying "many,"
- taking the strategic bomber forces off alert, and
- taking off alert those ICBMs slated for destruction under START.

In addition, the President eliminated his continuing futile attempt to convince Congress to fund the mobile MX and Midgetman missiles. He didn't mention in his Friday speech that he had fought hard for funding mobile missiles until a decisive negative vote in the Senate just the day before his speech.

Our response to these steps is one of joy. All these actions are very well worth taking, and improve the overall security posture of the United States, even without Soviet response. Should the Soviet Union respond in kind, the danger of nuclear war between the superpowers will be still further decreased. President Bush deserves praise for his actions.

Yet even though President Bush's speech grabbed headlines across the country, it was neither sweeping nor bold. It retired obsolete tactical weapons, changing the places where other weapons were deployed, took a small and obsolete fraction of our strategic weapons off alert, and abandoned some policy struggles with Congress that he had already lost. At the same time, Bush called for:

- continued full funding of the needless and destabilizing SDI program,
- for the continued acquisition of the B-2 bomber--a weapon system which is strategically unnecessary and probably,

as it now appears, not very effective as a nuclear deterrent, and

--full funding for the new Midgetman ICBM.

Ominously, the President's announcement also included a call to the Soviets to "join us" in deploying anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs)--that is, apparently, join us in abrogating the ABM treaty, ratified in 1972. This treaty stands in the way of SDI deployment, and hawks in the Reagan and Bush administrations have argued against adherence to it. The ABM treaty has served both nations well and its demise would allow the superpowers to develop dangerous new and expensive kinds of weapons.

The President made no mention of limiting or slowing deployment of the Trident submarines and missiles. Procurement of the Trident warheads is far behind schedule, and is a major force driving the rush to re-open the Rocky Flats plant, where accumulating wastes are in turn driving the rush to open WIPP. According to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, our country already has some 4,912 strategic warheads at sea.

The President's message raises some serious questions:

--Why, if we are going to be dismantling so many weapons, must we rebuild the entire nuclear weapons complex--at a cost of more than \$100 billion or more?

--Why do we need a new production reactor for plutonium and tritium when the weapons we retire will furnish these materials for the stockpile?

--Why do we need WIPP, where some 70% of the planned capacity is being prepared to receive the waste from making yet more nuclear weapons?

--Most of all, why didn't Bush include a testing moratorium in his proposal? Currently, only the United States and our client Great Britain are stonewalling a world-wide groundswell to conclude a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, and the fragile structure of non-proliferation agreements is threatened by our intransigence. The Soviet Union has already agreed to such a ban, and has conducted two unilateral testing moratoria hoping for a positive U.S. response. Gorbachev, in his response to Bush, emphasized most of all the long-standing Soviet desire for a test ban.

While taking some important steps to decrease the likelihood of accidental war, Bush continued his call to build new generations of strategic and tactical weapons, some of which violate existing treaties. Bush steered clear of any substantive actions that would decrease defense spending or which could help us re-invest in our own country--in our own families, in our deteriorating cities, or in reversing the devastating wave of poverty that is sweeping across America. Our joy today is real, but must be tempered because, rhetoric aside, the United States is continuing the arms race alone. It is a race we are running against ourselves, against our children, and against the planet.