

nuclear weapons

Nuclear weapons have been with us for a short time and yet have an incredible hold over international relations and the security of humanity.

In the midst of World War Two, scientists involved in the Manhattan Project discovered that enriched uranium and plutonium were the key to developing nuclear weapons. This was ‘tested’ to terrible effect on August 6, 1945, when a uranium bomb nicknamed *Little Boy* was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, the USA dropped another bomb, this time made from plutonium and nicknamed *Fat Man* on the city of Nagasaki, also in Japan. These two bomb attacks killed at least 100,000 people immediately, with a further 100-150,000 people dying from radiation illnesses in the subsequent years.

The average destructive force of today’s nuclear weapons is equal to between 8 — 40 times the power of the weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

It is estimated that it would require only some 400 nuclear weapons to create a nuclear winter. Yet even just an ‘average’ sized nuclear weapon would kill everything within a radius of several square miles, with radiation exposure continuing to kill people and the environment over a much greater area and longer time.

WHO HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

There are only a small handful of nations who possess nuclear weapons, though there is much speculation about other countries who are trying to develop them.

The countries which are known to have nuclear weapons are:

- The United States of America
- Russia
- The United Kingdom
- France
- China
- Israel
- India
- Pakistan

The USA and Russia maintain the biggest arsenals of nuclear weapons (between them they have around 34,570 of the world’s estimated 35,984 weapons).

In addition, both Russia and the USA have over 2,000 nuclear weapons on constant hair-trigger alert — this means they are able to launch a nuclear attack within a matter of minutes.

Both countries also maintain policies of launch-on-warning, which means that they are prepared to launch their nuclear-armed missiles before the missiles from the other side land on their territory. Keeping nuclear weapons on high alert and using launch-on-warning strategies increase the risks of accidental nuclear war.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT — REQUIRED UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW.

Nuclear disarmament is required by the terms of the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty. This obligation was confirmed by the World Court decision in 1996 which stated:

“There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”

At the 2000 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the nuclear weapons states agreed to an “unequivocal undertaking...to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”. The individual policies of the nuclear weapons states, however, do not yet conform to this obligation. See the factsheet “*What is the NPT*” for more information).



Information sources:

- ★ The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation: NUCLEAR DANGERS AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT (Frequently Asked Questions): www.nuclearfiles.org.
- ★ Coalition to Reduce Nuclear Dangers: www.crnld.org

“Slavery was accepted in much the same way as nuclear weapons now are – by the establishments of a small group of predominantly Western/Northern nations and their allies.”

Rob Green
British Royal Navy Commander R’td
from his book *The Naked Nuclear Emperor*