

Obama's Commitment to Nuclear Weapons Violates the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

We need a president that complies with US-ratified treaties. And a treaty that prohibits possession, threat, and use of nuclear weapons.

By [Howard Friel](#)

Global Research, November 20, 2014

[Common Dreams](#)

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

President Barack Obama speaks during their joint news conference with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte at the conclusion of the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague, Netherlands, Tuesday, March 25, 2014. (Photo: AP/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

There are two major threats to life on Earth—nuclear weapons and climate change. A recent decision by President Obama has heightened both threats.

Two months ago, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that the president had initiated a 30-year, \$1 trillion “revitalization” of the strategic nuclear weapons systems of the United States, including nuclear warheads as well as the intercontinental bombers, submarines, and land-based missiles that are poised day-in and day-out to deliver them throughout the world.

The *Times* reported that the Congressional Budget Office estimates that Obama’s “atomic refurbishment plans” will cost \$355 billion over the next decade. “But that is just the start,” the *Times* continued, “the price tag will soar after 10 years as missiles, bombers and submarines made in the last century reach the end of their useful lives and replacements are built.”

That’s at least \$35 billion per year over the next thirty years that we mustn’t spend on the modernization of nuclear weapons. That money, with a commensurate level of focus and commitment now lacking, needs to go to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including new energy and transportation infrastructure here and abroad. If it doesn’t, nuclear war and climate change – one or the other, sooner or later – will destroy the Earth and humanity with it, including your children and grandchildren. It’s as simple, and terrifying, as that.

Furthermore, Obama’s decision to modernize the nuclear weapons arsenal of the United States was completely undemocratic. He has yet to announce this decision himself. He made it without any public discussion or debate. And his decision to do so contradicts statements he made to the American people to get votes to become president.

For example, in July 2008, in an article titled “Obama Says Time to Rid World of Nuclear Weapons,” [CNN reported](#) that the presidential candidate proclaimed: “It’s time to send a clear message to the world: America seeks a world with no nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons exist, we’ll retain a strong deterrent. But we’ll make the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons a central element in our nuclear policy.”

Upon his election as president, however, in his first opportunity internationally to make an official move toward nuclear disarmament, President Obama voted against a 2009 UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution titled "[Nuclear Disarmament](#)," against a 2009 UNGA resolution titled "[Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World: Accelerating the Implementation of Nuclear Disarmament Commitments](#)," against a 2009 UNGA resolution titled "[Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons](#)," against a 2009 UNGA resolution titled "[Follow-up to Nuclear Disarmament Obligations Agreed to at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#)," and against a 2009 UNGA resolution titled "[Follow-up to the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons](#)." Obama then voted against each of these General Assembly resolutions in each year of his presidency to date.

Also, rather than pledge not to attack with nuclear weapons any of the non-nuclear nations, Obama abstained from a 2009 UNGA resolution titled, "[Conclusion of Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons](#)." Obama also has annually abstained from this same UNGA resolution as well. Thus, officially under President Obama, the United States won't say whether it would use nuclear weapons or not against a non-nuclear country.

A few days after rejecting the 2009 round of General Assembly resolutions, Obama gave his [Nobel Peace Prize speech](#) on December 10 in Oslo. While referring to the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), he said: "In the middle of the last century, nations agreed to be bound by a treaty *whose bargain is clear*: All will have access to peaceful nuclear power; those without nuclear weapons will forsake them; and those with nuclear weapons will work towards disarmament. I am committed to upholding this treaty. It is a centerpiece of my foreign policy." (Emphasis added.)

Indeed, the "bargain" of the NPT was non-proliferation among non-nuclear states and disarmament by the states with nuclear weapons, with the formal obligation to disarm embodied in [Article VI](#) of the NPT:

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Thus, given Obama's clear record of rejecting the General Assembly's efforts toward nuclear disarmament, and his recent decision to initiate a 30-year modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons arsenal, he has clearly violated even the most lax interpretation of the NPT's Article VI obligation on nuclear disarmament.

Incredibly, in its [report](#), the *Times* quoted a "senior official" in the Obama administration who referred to the president's decision to commit the United States to a \$1 trillion nuclear-weapons refurbishment effort as one of Obama's "legacy" achievements as president, noting further that the issue was too politically delicate to go on record by identifying himself or herself by name. The *Times* thus reported, referring specifically to the nuclear weapons issue and the expense:

"This is Obama's legacy budget," said a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the topic's political delicacy.

“It’s his last chance to make the hard choices and prioritize.”

A decision of this magnitude is therefore made without any announcement from the White House or presentation by the president himself to the American people. One should assume, then, that the gift of Obama’s “legacy” was intended not to benefit the American people. Instead, and predictably, it benefits only the national security state apparatus and the military-industrial complex.

In 2007 former U.S. officials George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn published an [op-ed piece](#) in the *Wall Street Journal* titled, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” which called for nuclear disarmament.

In doing so, they quoted from several persons, including Rajiv Gandhi, then prime minister of India, who said in an address to the UN General Assembly: “Nuclear war will not mean the death of a hundred million people. Or even a thousand million. It will mean the extinction of four thousand million: the end of life as we know it on our planet earth. We come to the United Nations to seek your support. We seek your support to put a stop to this madness.”

As president and about nuclear weapons, John Kennedy stated: “The world was not meant to be a prison in which man awaits his execution.”

President Obama should reverse course on nuclear weapons, support the UN General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament that will be issued next month at the United Nations, and announce the start of serious, good-faith negotiations on global nuclear disarmament in compliance with his legal obligations as stated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Howard Friel is author of [Chomsky and Dershowitz: On Endless War and the End of Civil Liberties](#) (Olive Branch Press). He also wrote the [The Lomborg Deception: Setting the Record Straight about Global Warming](#) (Yale University Press, 2010), and is co-author with Richard Falk of [Israel-Palestine on Record: How The New York Times Misreports Conflict in the Middle East](#) (Verso, 2007), and [The Record of the Paper: How The New York Times Misreports U.S. Foreign Policy](#) (Verso, 2004).

The original source of this article is [Common Dreams](#)
Copyright © [Howard Friel](#), [Common Dreams](#), 2014

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Howard Friel](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are

acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca