



"A timely warning, at a critical moment in world history,
of the horrible consequences of nuclear warfare." —WALTER CRONKITE

DR. HELEN CALDICOTT

WINNER OF THE 2003 LANNAN PRIZE FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM

THE **NEW NUCLEAR** **DANGER**

GEORGE W. BUSH'S MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION ON THE SITUATION IN IRAQ



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*George W. Bush's
Military-Industrial Complex*

HELEN CALDICOTT



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PREFACE

ON SEPTEMBER 11, before much of the world was even aware of what had happened in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania, the Bush administration had raised the country's nuclear alert codes from defcon 6 to defcon 2—the highest state of alert before the launch code is operable.* Russia, the country with the second largest nuclear arsenal in the world, almost certainly responded in kind. As a result, thousands of nuclear weapons stood poised on hair-trigger alert, ready to be launched by the president of either country with a decision time of just three minutes. The intercontinental nuclear-armed ballistic missiles controlled by these codes have a thirty-minute transit time from Russia to America or vice versa. They cannot be recalled. And they pose an ever-present threat of global nuclear holocaust.

In the months since the terrorist attacks, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and others in the administration have also used September 11 to justify everything from pursuit of a missile-defense shield (even though such a shield would be utterly useless against suicidal men armed with boxcutters and plane tickets) and abandonment of long-standing weapon-control treaties, to massive increases in defense spending. While most Americans desire an increased sense of security in a newly destabilized world, many do not realize that the new “security” measures and the “conventional” war the United States has waged against Afghanistan are intimately connected to the enormous nuclear threat posed by the current American posture. Aggressive militarization under the rubric of defense against terrorism threatens to provoke a chain reaction among nuclear nations, big and small, that, once set in motion, may prove impossible to control. No

* It is not known how long this situation was maintained.¹

military confrontation anywhere in the world is free from this ominous and ever-present danger.

The U.S.'s own behavior in Afghanistan has veered frighteningly close to deployment of nuclear weapons, which could easily have engendered a nuclear response. In addition to deploying the most horrific conventional weapons known to man (even though there were very few targets of military significance), the defense department recommended the use of tactical nuclear weapons,² while some members of Congress strongly advised the use of small nuclear "bunker busters."³ Bush advisors, including Stephen Hadley, Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Cambone, and William Schneider, also advocated the use of nuclear weapons.⁴ The founder of the neutron bomb, Samuel Cohen, even postulated that his weapon might be appropriate for Afghanistan.⁵ (The neutron bomb has a relatively small blast effect compared with its radiation, hence it tends to kill large numbers of people with horrendous radiation illness while leaving buildings intact.) Although the U.S. has previously been clear that it would attack only nuclear-armed countries with nuclear weapons, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld consistently refused to rule out the use of nuclear weapons in Afghanistan, which is not nuclear-armed.⁶

Some of the conventional weapons America used to support the Northern Alliance during their advances on the Taliban were so powerful that they are described by the Pentagon as "near nuclear" weapons. They are as follows:

15,000-POUND FUEL AIR EXPLOSIVES (FAEs): In military jargon these are referred to as "Daisy Cutters." The Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth says "A fuel air explosive can have the effect of a tactical nuclear weapon without the radiation."⁷ There are many different varieties of FAEs, but they typically consist of a container of fuel and two separate explosive charges. Dropped by parachute from a huge MC-130 Combat Talon plane, they detonate just above the ground, creating a wide area of destruction.⁸ The first explosion bursts the container at a predetermined height, discharging the fuel, which mixes with atmospheric oxygen. The second charge then detonates this fuel-air cloud, creating a massive blast that kills people and destroys unreinforced buildings. Near the ignition point people

are obliterated, crushed to death with overpressures of 427 pounds per square inch, and incinerated at temperatures of 2500 to 3000 degrees centigrade. Another wave of low pressure—a vacuum effect—then ensues. People in the second zone of destruction are severely burned and suffer massive internal organ injuries before they die. In the third zone, eyes are extruded from their orbits, lungs and ear drums rupture, and severe concussion ensues. The fuel itself—ethylene oxide and propylene oxide—is highly toxic.⁹ Up to 200 civilians died 20 miles away from the cave complex in Afghanistan where Osama bin Laden was thought to be hiding at Tora Bora when U.S. planes attacked. They suffered blast trauma—ruptured lungs, blindness, arms and hands blown off, almost certainly from FAEs.¹⁰

CLUSTER BOMBS: These have been used extensively in Afghanistan by the U.S. Terrifying and deadly, each bomb is composed of 202 bomblets, which are packed with razor-sharp shrapnel dispersed at super-high speed over an area of 22 football fields, ripping into human bodies. These weapons are prohibited by the Geneva Protocol.¹¹ Civilians were inevitably killed throughout Afghanistan by these illegal and dreadful weapons. On one documented occasion, the U.S. bombed a mosque in Jalabad during prayer and while neighbors were digging out 17 victims, additional bombs killed more than 120 people.¹²

Historically, between 5 and 30 percent of these bomblets fail to explode initially, lying around the countryside as mines that explode with violent force if touched, tearing their victims to pieces. Tragically, the bomblets are colored yellow and shaped like a can of soft drink, and therefore attractive to children.¹³ The food parcels containing peanut butter, Pop Tarts, rice, and potatoes dropped throughout Afghanistan by the U.S. are also yellow and the same size and shape as the munitions. (Some of these food drops themselves went astray, destroying houses and killing more people.¹⁴) Human Rights Watch estimates that over 5000 unexploded cluster bomblets may be littered across Afghanistan, adding to the hundreds of thousands of mines left after the Russian–American war of 1979 to 1989.¹⁵ Afghanistan is currently the most heavily mined country in the world.

GUN SHIPS: These lumbering C-130 planes built by Lockheed Martin have been converted to airborne gunships, capable of firing a fearsome array of weapons, inflicting the most devastating damage, and leveling an area of several football fields, with up to 2000 rounds per minute. They are armed with 25mm Gattling guns, which fire 1800 rounds per minute; 40mm Bofors cannons, which fire 120 rounds per minute; and 105mm Howitzer cannons, which fire 8 to 10 rounds per minute.¹⁶ Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said Afghanistan is not a “target rich” area, and many analysts felt that these attacks far exceeded their expectations. On October 22, in the village of Chowkar-Karez, scores of civilians were mown down by these gunships. CNN quoted an “unnamed” Pentagon official as saying “The people are dead because we wanted them dead.”¹⁷ Almost certainly, many civilians therefore were wounded and killed.^{18, 19}

BUNKER BUSTERS: Dropped from B-1 or B-2 planes, these 5000-pound behemoths are made from the gun barrels of retired naval ships and are so heavy that they burrow 20 to 100 feet into the ground before their high-explosive materials detonate. Most are laser guided, but some use Global Positioning satellites for guidance.²⁰

CARPET BOMBING: This means dropping tons of bombs from B-52 planes at a 40,000-foot altitude: high enough to protect pilots but too high to protect civilians. This is indiscriminate bombing, and the pilots have no idea on whom their bombs are landing. In 1969 carpet bombing used in Cambodia by Kissinger and Nixon during the Vietnam War induced the total destruction of the ancient irrigation system and water supply and most of the rice-growing areas of the country and, as a secondary effect, caused the absolute disintegration of Cambodia’s culture. The bombing runs were called “breakfast,” “lunch,” and “supper.”²¹

UNMANNED DRONES. These are pilotless planes armed with Hellfire missiles, guided by the Global Positioning System, allowing the military to reduce the time between “identification and destruction of a target.”²² Clearly these planes pose no threats to pilots but terrible threats to civilians on the ground, who may live next to or within a

certain "military target," which could be a factory, an electricity generator, or a railway station.

The U.S. has not announced whether or not it used depleted uranium weapons in Afghanistan (as it has done elsewhere in recent wars), but it is quite possible that it did. We will not know for sure until independent sources can enter the war zones and test for this radioactive element.

During the first four weeks of the war, half a million tons of bombs were dropped on Afghanistan, 20 kilos for every man, woman, and child.²³ During eight and a half weeks of U.S. bombing, a documented 3,763 civilians were killed.²⁴

WHAT ARE THE INTERNATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS OF THIS BEHAVIOR LIKELY TO BE?

Pakistan has been deeply involved in Afghanistan since the 1979–1989 U.S.–Russian war, when America channeled weapons, training, and funding through the Pakistani military and intelligence services to the mujahadeen, the Taliban, and Osama bin Laden to fight the Russians. After September 11, America changed sides, pressuring Pakistan to ally with the U.S. against their previous friends and allies, the Taliban, bin Laden, and al-Qaeda, because the U.S. needed Pakistani airports to fight their war—a move that was anathema to thousands of Pakistani supporters of bin Laden and the Taliban. These supporters include many members of the Pakistani military, who could well rebel and gain control of the army and its 20 to 50 nuclear weapons, passing these on to the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or to their global networks.

The use of Pakistani nuclear weapons could trigger a chain reaction. Nuclear-armed India, an ancient enemy, could respond in kind. China, India's hated foe, could react if India used her nuclear weapons, triggering a nuclear holocaust on the subcontinent. If any of either Russia or America's 2,250 strategic weapons on hair-trigger alert were launched either accidentally or purposefully in response, nuclear winter would ensue, meaning the end of most life on earth.

OTHER NUCLEAR THREATS

TERRORIST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Up to 100 small suitcase Russian nuclear weapons have been lost over some years. Al-Qaeda network may now possess several of these, which could well be smuggled into America on a small boat or overland, from Canada or Mexico, in a truck. Nuclear Oklahoma Cities are not beyond question. Immediate deaths would number in the tens of thousands, while tens of thousands of cancers would incubate quietly among the survivors over decades. Britain, Europe, and Australia, among other places, will not remain immune.

DIRTY NUCLEAR DEVICES

Hundreds of tons of highly carcinogenic plutonium and enriched uranium stand unguarded in Russia. From 1993 to 2000, the UN International Atomic Energy Agency—which monitors nuclear security—documented 153 confirmed cases of theft of nuclear materials.²⁵ Some of this material could be obtained by terrorists to make primitive nuclear weapons, or “dirty” bombs. There would be no nuclear explosion, but conventional explosives would be used to scatter plutonium or uranium across a wide area, contaminating all in the pathway with these carcinogenic elements. Other radioactive elements from reprocessed nuclear fuel, such as cesium-137, strontium-90, and cobalt-60, could also be deployed.²⁶

Terrorists could, with some difficulty, manufacture their own nuclear devices from stolen plutonium or uranium. The design for a primitive weapon can be found on the internet. The possibilities for nuclear terrorism seem endless.

NUCLEAR MELTDOWNS

Terrorists do not actually need nuclear weapons. They have been conveniently supplied with 103 nuclear power plants scattered throughout the United States (438 of these deadly facilities exist throughout the world).²⁷ A planned meltdown at one of these facilities would make the World Trade Center attacks seem like child’s play. The massive concrete containers protecting the reactors are not strong enough to withstand the impact of a jumbo jet.

Alternatively, an infiltrator working as an operator could engineer a meltdown by taking over the control room, as the hijackers on September 11 took over the planes. They could also disrupt the water supply (one million gallons a minute is needed to cool a reactor core) or the external electricity supply. Either event would induce a meltdown within hours. The spent-fuel cooling pools adjacent to the reactor contain 20 to 30 times more long-lived radiation than the actual reactor core.²⁸ (A 1000 megawatt nuclear reactor contains as much long-lived radiation as that released by the explosion of 1000 Hiroshima-sized bombs).

Here is the medical description of the meltdown of a 1000-megawatt nuclear power plant near New York City (there are two reactors at Indian Point, 35 miles north of Manhattan):

With ten million people at risk, 3300 people would die from severe radiation damage within several days; 10,000 to 100,000 would develop lethal acute radiation sickness within 2 to 6 weeks of exposure; 45,000 would become short of breath from lung damage caused by inhalation of intensely radioactive gases; 240,000 would become hypothyroid, with accompanying symptoms of weight gain, lassitude, slow mental functions, loss of appetite, constipation, and absent menstruation; 350,000 males would be rendered temporarily sterile, while the remaining sperm would be genetically mutated; 40,000 to 100,000 women would stop menstruating, many permanently. Up to 100,000 babies would be born as cretins, mentally retarded, as radioactive iodine destroys their thyroid glands (imperative for neurological development), and there would be 3000 deaths in utero. Five to sixty years later, 270,000 people would develop cancers of various organs, and there would be an estimated 28,800 cases of thyroid malignancy.²⁹

Apart from the nuclear power plants, there are many military-related nuclear facilities in the United States with massive quantities of nuclear waste, all vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

Since September 11, the FAA banned all aircraft flying within 12 miles of any nuclear facility. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) advised all reactors to go on the highest state of alert,³⁰ and for the first time, the NRC is investing 800,000 dollars to stockpile massive quantities of potassium iodide tablets to be made available to the public in case of a meltdown. Specific states will need to request the

tablets, and this medicine must be taken within hours of a meltdown to block the uptake of radio-iodine by the thyroid gland. (This measure may not be adequate, however, because over one hundred different deadly radioactive elements are also released during a meltdown, and these concentrate in other bodily organs.³¹)

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The scope of U.S. retaliation for September 11 may be as important a factor in international response as the nature of the weapons the U.S. employs. In Washington, the Bush administration is experiencing its own internecine warfare around this topic. On the one hand, Secretary of State Colin Powell and the state department put together a harmonious if tenuous international coalition with Europe, Russia, China, and the Arab nations to "battle" terrorism in Afghanistan only. But the defense department has been taken over by unreconstructed, Reagan-era cold war warriors, intent on moving the war from Afghanistan to other states.³²

This policy is extremely dangerous. Vice President Cheney has listed fifty states or countries that could be targeted by the U.S. for military, financial, or diplomatic action, including North Korea, Somalia, Yemen, Iran, the Sudan, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Indonesia, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, and countries in South America. Victoria Clarke, a Pentagon spokeswoman, warned, "The war on terrorism neither begins nor ends with Afghanistan. The president will decide the next target."³³

Iraq tops the list. Ever since the U.S.–Iraqi war in 1991, when America "failed to eliminate Hussein," a right-wing putsch has been eager to finish the job. The excuse: Iraq will not allow weapons inspectors to enter the country, barring them since December 1998 from checking for nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons activities. (However, Iraq's foreign minister, Naji Sabri, said in late November 2001, "We will consider a return of monitoring [of weapons] after the lifting of sanctions."³⁴) Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz is spearheading the Iraqi attack movement along with his close colleague Richard Perle, who was Reagan's undersecretary of defense.

Perle chairs an unofficial bipartisan group called the Defense Pol-

icy Board, which is vigorously promoting the overthrow of Hussein, even though there is no evidence linking him to the September 11 attacks.^{35,36} (The Defense Policy Board meets in a room adjacent to the secretary of defense's office, and includes such luminaries as Henry Kissinger, former secretary of state; Harold Brown, former secretary of defense; Newt Gingrich, former house majority leader; and R. James Woolsey, former director of the CIA. The group has assumed a quasi-official status with the imprimatur of Secretary Rumsfeld.) This attitude seems to be prevailing within the administration, and Powell appears to be losing his authority, although the international community is outraged by these proposals.

An attack on Iraq would infuriate Arab populations, the U.S.-led alliance against al-Qaeda³⁷ would dissolve, and the world would descend into a terrorist-ruled chaos. A veteran of the CIA's Directorate of Operations said "The agency as an institution would never offer up a view of these people [Perle, et al.], but if you ask individuals, they think these guys are more than a little nuts." Another longtime case officer at the CIA said, "Attack these places and there will be consequences that we simply will not be able to deal with. But Perle and Wolfowitz are absolutists, and they're stupid."³⁸

Meanwhile, other destabilizing plans are afoot in the Bush administration:

- The administration will aggressively pursue testing of its missile defense system, a.k.a. Star Wars, even though Russia and China are adamantly opposed. After the cordial Bush-Putin meeting at Crawford Ranch in Texas in November 2001, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said, "The timeline has not really changed. The president continues to believe that he has got to move forward with the testing program in a robust way, so that we can really begin to evaluate the potential for missile defenses." What she means is that the U.S. will withdraw from the seminal Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) with six months notice.³⁹ Such a move will destabilize global arms control and the associated treaties, and induce a massive new nuclear arms race.
- The Bush administration boycotted the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty Conference (CTBT) at the United Nations in November

2001 and had the audacity to remove its nameplate from its seat in the conference room. A week before, at a General Assembly meeting, the U.S. was the only country to vote against placing the CTBT on the General Assembly's agenda for 2002. Washington has signed, but the Senate has not ratified the treaty, which would ban all above- and below-ground nuclear testing. As a group of non-government organizations said, "Failure to act may lead to a cascade of proliferation events that will enable future terrorists to use nuclear weapons."⁴⁰

- There is a strong move by Bush's people to resume nuclear testing at the Nevada Test site because, as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said, "we may need to develop new nuclear weapons." This could stimulate Russia, China, India, and Pakistan, among others, to resume nuclear testing, leading to a new nuclear arms race.⁴¹
- In July 2001, the U.S. prevented the UN conference on curbing small-arms exports from convening by insisting that it was a threat to the Second Amendment.
- Also in July 2001, after ten years of negotiations, the U.S. refused to endorse a protocol on a compliance to ban biological weapons, saying it would put at risk national security and confidential business information.
- In February 2001, the U.S. delegate at a UN debate to combat terrorism said such a conference would have no practical benefits.⁴²
- In November 2001, Congress cut 69 million dollars from a program designed to safeguard Russian nuclear materials in order to prevent terrorists stealing plutonium and enriched uranium to build their own nuclear bombs. Bush wanted to reduce the program still further by 29 million dollars.⁴³
- Simultaneously, Congress increased the funding for U.S. nuclear weapons by 300 million dollars and granted 8.3 billion dollars for missile defense.⁴⁴ As Joseph Cirincione of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said, "Tragically some are using the terrible tragedy [September 11] to justify their existing programs, slapping an 'anti-terrorist' label on missile defense and military budget increases."⁴⁵
- The terrorist attack has provided a great fillip for the military-industrial complex. The military budget is expected to reach 375 billion dollars in 2001, a 66 billion dollar increase from 2001, and

Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said that these appropriations will “just be a down-payment” toward the major long-term increases the Pentagon will need to fight its new kind of war⁴⁶ which Vice President Cheney says “may not end in our lifetimes.”⁴⁷

- The war in Afghanistan is costing 1 billion dollars a month,⁴⁸ while two-thirds of the world’s children are malnourished and starving.

Loren Thompson, defense analyst from the Lexington Institute said, “The whole mindset of military spending changed on September 11. The most fundamental thing about defense spending is that threats drive defense spending. It’s now going to be easier to fund almost anything.” Indeed, Lockheed Martin stocks rose from \$39.39 on September 11 to \$48.11 by November 12, 2001. The Pentagon is to receive 20 billion dollars of the 40 billion dollars allocated by congress for antiterrorist activities, an amount to be added to 343.2 billion dollars for fiscal 2001, already the largest military budget since Reagan’s at the height of the cold war—greater than 50 percent of all discretionary funding for domestic needs. Among the firms already benefiting from this extraordinarily extravagant and unnecessary largesse are Lockheed Martin, Grumman, Raytheon, and Boeing. Most of this money will not be used for the war in Afghanistan, but for new fighter planes like the F/A-18E/F, the F-22, and the Joint Strike fighter, for a new Virginia class submarine designed to trail now-extinct Soviet subs around the globe, and for 12 more Trident D5 submarine ballistic missiles. In this context it is interesting to note that the Afghanis had very few planes to speak of, and that these were destroyed by massive U.S. bombing within the first few days of the war. Paul Nisbet, another defense analyst said, “With the [Bush] administration, we will see a rebuilding of the military to bring it back to where it was eight years ago. We will see a considerable appreciation in defense stocks as we saw in the Reagan years.”^{49, 50}

RECENT INTERNATIONAL WEAPONS DEVELOPMENTS

People may feel reassured that President Bush, meeting in Texas in November 2001 with President Putin, offered to reduce America’s stockpile of strategic weapons from some 7000 down to 2220–1700

over the next ten years. But this offer was made without the guarantee of any formal written treaty and can therefore be abandoned or reversed at any time. Without verification, it will be impossible to confirm that cuts are actually carried out, while the ten-year duration gives much latitude for reversal and change.

In fact, although the cuts look good on paper, they mean nothing. The U.S. will still have plenty of weapons to maintain its first-strike winnable nuclear war policy, and none of the weapons will be dismantled, but will be stored, awaiting possible future use. The reductions do not include the removal of multiple warheads on missiles required by the START II Treaty (the Russians have a monstrous ten-warheaded SS-18 missile, code named "Satan"). And the U.S. Trident submarine fleet, with their invulnerable first-strike arsenal, will be exempt, as will weapons on long-distance bombers being overhauled, and all tactical nuclear weapons.⁵¹

In truth, if Russia comes to the party, such bilateral reductions will make it easier for the U.S. to win a nuclear war against Russia, because there will be fewer targets, and the missile-defense system now under construction will mop up any Russian missiles that escape the initial surprise attack. U.S. antisatellite weapons under construction will also be necessary to destroy the "eyes and ears" of the Russian early-warning system. This is a terrifying but realistic scenario, a logical extension of the Pentagon's current policy to "fight and win" a nuclear war.

So Bush's unilateral reductions proposal is a ploy to divert the world's attention away from his Star Wars project, which Simon Tisdall of the London *Guardian* called "a reckless act of weapons proliferation," which will provoke an international arms race, entangle third parties such as Britain and Australia, and, as this book makes clear, lead directly to the militarization of space if it does not cause nuclear winter first.

Tisdall warns that "the highly contentious military and geostrategic foundations of the 21st century are being laid—and hardly anybody is watching."⁵²

That is why I wrote this book.