



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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March 2, 2012

Thomas E. Donilon, National Security Advisor
White House
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. Donilon:

The current review of nuclear weapons policy by the Administration presents a once-in-a-decade opportunity to make significant strides towards a safer, more secure future for our nation and world. For decades, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Holy See have supported nuclear nonproliferation and verifiable efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons.

As you advise the President, I urge you to recommend further reductions in U.S. nuclear forces. The horribly destructive capacity of nuclear arms makes them disproportionate and indiscriminate weapons that profoundly endanger human life.

At a time of fiscal restraints, tens of billions of dollars currently allocated to maintaining Cold War-based nuclear force structures could be redirected to other critical needs, especially to programs that serve poor and vulnerable people at home and abroad. As the Second Vatican Council taught, “[T]he arms race is an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which ensnares the poor to an intolerable degree.”

Our Conference urges our nation to work with the international community to replace nuclear deterrence with concrete measures of disarmament based on dialogue and multilateral negotiations. Pope Benedict XVI stated in his 2010 World Day of Peace Message, “I firmly hope that ... concrete decisions will be made towards progressive disarmament, with a view to freeing our planet from nuclear arms.”

Consistent with Catholic teaching, the Holy See and the U.S. bishops have long supported reducing the number of nuclear armaments, preventing their spread to other nations, and securing nuclear materials from terrorists. For decades they have promoted the twin and interrelated policy goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. USCCB understands this is an ideal that will take years to reach, but it is a task which our nation must take up with renewed energy.

The President has an opportunity to honor his commitment to “put an end to Cold War thinking” by pursuing further steps that will make our nation safer from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Sincerely yours,

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The Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
Chairman