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## Information and Advocacy for Nuclear Disarmament

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**Newsletter no. 30**

**April - May 2021**

Welcome all Lovers of Peace and Justice,

We begin a series of newsletters, in which we focus on particular pieces of the nuclear weapons puzzle we are working to solve. This issue will focus almost entirely on one aspect of the nuclear weapons problem: the proposal to replace the currently deployed 400 Minute Man III **Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles** with as many as 600 brand new ones, called the **Ground Based Strategic Deterrent**, which is just another name for **ICBMs**. I am attempting to summarize the explanations of some experts who have recently published some very important papers, because of the current military budgets being created by the Biden administration for consideration by Congress in the coming months. **These warplans will set the course for the next 4 years and beyond, for the Departments of Defense and Energy, and determine whether the US can make any meaningful changes to the reckless nuclear strategy it is now pursuing.**

But first, we are eagerly looking forward to our next No More Bombs zoom meeting, Tuesday May 18, at 7 PM. Trsiha Pritikin, author of [Hanford Downwinders](#), will be our guest speaker. We will learn about the radioactive contamination of people, animals, and the environment by the plutonium production facility at Hanford, over the last 75 + years. Trisha is a downwinder herself, and has been working on behalf of all the others to get some recognition and help from the US government. It is a fascinating and enlightening story. Please join us. We will send an email with the zoom link during the week prior, and it will also be on our [website](#).

We have another outlet now, <https://www.facebook.com/NoMoreBombsSkagitCounty> . Please check in there too, if facebook is one of your things. We welcome your contributions to the conversation.

For Peace and Love, tracy

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I want to be clear, what follows are just my own conclusions, but they are based on serious studying of several years, and especially some recent reports by experts I trust.

One paper is by Matt Korda, of the [Federation of American Scientists](#). Titled **Siloed Thinking: a Closer look at the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent**, it is 120 pages of well researched analysis. The other is **Rethinking Land-Based Nuclear Missiles: Sensible Risk-Reduction Practices for US ICBMs**, by David Wright, William D. Hartung, and Lisbeth Gronlund, June 2020, [Union of Concerned Scientists](#). Both of these are available [on our website](#). Many others have written about this issue. [Here is a recent article from William J Perry and Tom Collina](#).

What is proposed, and beginning to happen, is the replacement of all 400 Minuteman III ICBMs with brand new GBSDs, for a possible initial cost of \$96 billion, and estimated lifetime operational cost of \$264 billion. The DOD has already contracted \$13 billion with Northrop-Grumman to start the process, so this is the last opportunity for the new administration to pull the plug on this unnecessary and wasteful project. Let's try to understand what's going on here.

The Triad. This is the whole collection of nuclear weapons, Trident submarines, Bombers, and ICBMs, and supposedly we need all three legs. The 2020 Nuclear Posture Review said we do, but many experts doubt that the ICBM leg is doing us any good at all. It consists of 400 Minute Man III missiles, each in its own silo, ready to launch within minutes. "hair trigger" status. All carry nuclear warheads, all are aimed north, to fly over the pole to Russia, or if aimed at China or North Korea, to fly over Russia in transit to those targets. Once launched, they cannot be recalled. Because they can be launched so quickly, these missiles are supposed to deter an adversary from launching a first nuclear strike against us, but what they would actually do is draw a first strike against themselves. This concept is the "nuclear sponge" that would soak up at least 400 nuclear missiles from Russia. And destroy the 400 bases, in Montana, North Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, and Nebraska. And the people who live and work in the bases and their supporting towns. This prospect in itself would seem to mean that they are already doing the decoy job they were intended for, and could easily be maintained as is. That is actually true: During the latest upgrade program in the mid 2000s, the Air Force spent \$7 billion to improve and extend the life of the entire ICBM fleet, with the readiness required to last until 2040.

What has changed is the recognition by the Senate ICBM Coalition, senators from Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming and Utah, that the New START negotiations of 2009 had raised the idea that ICBMs may not really be necessary components of future US nuclear weapons strategy. They foresaw a threat to continued government investment in their constituent communities, and they proposed the full scale "modernization" of ICBMs, by replacement with GBSD, and such an enormous commitment to new spending that would guarantee a prosperous future for their states. It was not the Pentagon's plan, but then the DOD has never turned down new money, so it signed on.

The Trident submarine fleet had already been scheduled for replacement, and that work has begun. Submarines are still the most effective deterrent vehicles, because they can be anywhere in the world, ready to strike any target, and are invisible. Military planners have grown more confident in submarines, as they have begun to doubt the value of silo based missiles. Who does see value in ICBMs are the politicians representing those states and the military bases within them, and of course the corporations that build the missiles and warheads. These companies are primed to reap huge profits from the GBSD program, if it goes ahead. They are the usual suspects we have always recognized, and I refer you to <https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/nwproducers/> and <https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/2019-hos/> for their names, and how they are involved. Boeing is a big one in our state, and is actively working to get some of these new Pentagon contracts. Money doesn't just talk, it swears!

So, this is the core problem with ICBMs. We don't need them, because submarine launched nuclear missiles are more reliable, more effective, undetectable before launch, and as such are better deterrence, which is what our government claims is the sole purpose of having nuclear weapons. We would be better off without them. The politicians in the states that host the current 400 missile silos fear losing them and the revenue they bring in, so they have advocated for wholesale replacements with newer and better missiles and silos, which will financially and politically benefit not only them, but also places like Los Alamos NM and Savannah River SC, where new plutonium pits are already being manufactured to fit new warheads for the new missiles.

Who are the Senate ICBM Coalition? This chart, taken from a recent story by William D Hartung “Inside the ICBM Lobby: Special Interests or the National Interest?”, in the May 2021 issue of Arms Control Today, show the core group and their financial involvement. And of course they have counterparts in the House of Representatives, and lots of friends in other states.

**Table 1. Campaign Contributions From ICBM Contractors to Members of the Senate ICBM Coalition, 2012 to 2020**

Member	Contributions from ICBM contractors
Mitt Romney (R-Utah)	\$645,545 <sup>a</sup>
Jon Tester (D-Mont.)	\$102,360
John Barasso (R-Wyo.)	\$89,000
Steve Daines (R-Mont.)	\$85,948 <sup>b</sup>
John Hoeven (R-N.D.)	\$81,145
Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.)	\$68,500 <sup>c</sup>
Kevin Cramer (R-N.D.)	\$49,593
Mike Lee (R-Utah)	\$49,050
Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.)	\$25,000 <sup>d</sup>
<b>TOTAL TO COALITION</b>	<b>\$1,196,141</b>

<sup>a</sup>The bulk of the contractor-related contributions to Romney came during his 2012 run for president.

<sup>b</sup>Includes contributions when Daines was in the House of Representatives.

<sup>c</sup>Retired in 2020, replaced by Lummis.

<sup>d</sup>Includes contributions when Lummis was in the House of Representatives.

Source: Center for Responsive Politics, “Open Secrets.”

Notes: Calculations as of December 2020. This table covers contributions from Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, L3Harris, Collins Aerospace (United Technologies), Textron, Aerojet Rocketdyne, Honeywell, Parsons, BRPH, Clark Construction, Bechtel, and Kratos. Data include contributions from company political action committees and from employees of the contractors and their families.

And now some good news: decisions about how to spend the \$50+ billion in DOD and \$30 billion in DOE, specifically for nuclear weapons, are being worked out now in congressional budget negotiations. There is still time to influence them. There is a new advocate for us in Congress: the Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Working Group, chaired by [Senators Jeff Merkley](#) (D-OR) and [Ed Markey](#) (D-MA), and Representatives [Don Beyer](#) (D-VA) and [John Garamendi](#) (D-CA). Currently 33 members of congress are engaged, including our own [Rick Larsen](#). They have entered the discussions with President Biden concerning US-Russia negotiations about New START, which includes the ICBM issue, among others. Their April 20 letter is here, [on our website](#).

I strongly encourage all of us to lobby this group to push for shutting down all US ICBMS, or at very least, cancel the planned "modernization" of GBSD. We should also be encouraging our WA senators, [Patty Murray](#) and [Maria Cantwell](#) to do the same. Time is running out, and the profiteers and their politicians have a big head start. And of course this is just one piece of the puzzle, which is **how do we get rid of all nuclear weapons?** That is our challenge, our mission.

Thank you for reading, I welcome your comments, and hope we can stay engaged on this and other issues. The fate of life on this planet is at stake. Each of us can do some little thing. We won't know if our efforts have any effect until.....

for peace and love,

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**Former Secretary of Defense William J Perry stated in 2016**

**"During the Cold War, the United States relied on ICBMs because they provided accuracy that was not then achievable by submarine-launched missiles or bombers. They also provided an insurance policy in case America's nuclear submarine force was disabled. That's not necessary anymore. Today, the United States' submarine and bomber forces are highly accurate, and we have enough confidence in their security that we do not need an additional insurance policy — especially one that is so expensive and open to error."**



