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Does it mean a change in the US Nuclear Posture?

US Scraps Bunker Buster

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Publication date: Thursday 27 October 2005

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Wednesday, October 26th, 2005

According to the [Associated Press](#), the Bush administration has halted research into controversial "bunker buster"

nuclear weaponry. Republican senator Pete Domenici said a budget request for the weapons research has been dropped.

The idea fueled concerns it would spread nuclear proliferation. Administration officials say they will instead pursue a non-nuclear bunker buster.

A Press Review by [Friends of the Earth - Australia](#)

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1) US Newswire 26 Oct 2005

Congress Cuts Funding for New Nuclear Weapons;
Quaker Lobby Hails Decision to Eliminate Funding for Research on Nuclear Bunker Buster

10/26/2005 10:37:00 AM

US Scraps Bunker Buster

To: National Desk, Congressional Correspondent

Contact: David Culp of Friends Committee on National
Legislation, 202-547-6000, ext. 2517, Web:
<http://www.fcnl.org>

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26 /U.S. Newswire/ â€” The Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers) today praised the decision of Congress to eliminate all funding for new research on the nuclear, bunker-buster weapon from the president's 2006

budget: "This is an important victory for everyone who is working to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," explained David Culp, a lobbyist for FCNL who has been working to block the bunker buster weapon for years.

Funding for \$4 million to research the nuclear bunker buster, also known as the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, had been included in the president's budget request for fiscal year 2006. But Senator Pete Domenici (N.M.), who chairs the Senate appropriations committee that is responsible for approving funds for this weapon, announced yesterday that House and Senate negotiators had cut the money in final budget negotiations.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation led a three-year campaign to eliminate funding for this weapon, working with other national organizations and thousands of concerned citizens around the country to stop funding for this weapon. Congress approved \$15 million in funding for this weapon in FY 2003 and then cut all money for the weapon the following year. "This is the second year in a row that Congress has zeroed out funding for this weapon," said Culp. "We hope the administration gets the message that it's time to end this program for good."

â€” -

The Friends Committee on National Legislation is a non-partisan Quaker lobby in the public interest that represents 26 Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends (called Quakers). FCNL speaks for itself and like-minded individuals. Working with a network of constituents in every congressional district in the United States, FCNL seeks to bring the concerns, experiences and testimonies of Friends to bear on national policy decisions.

<http://www.usnewswire.com/>

2) Reuters 26 Oct 2005

Nuclear bunker-buster funds dropped from US budget

26 Oct 2005 19:59:56 GMT

Source: [Reuters](#)

WASHINGTON, Oct 26 (Reuters) - The Bush administration has abandoned for the upcoming year its bid to research "bunker buster" nuclear weapons, which Congress struck from the budget last year, lawmakers said on Wednesday.

The Pentagon will instead focus on developing a conventional deep-earth penetrating bomb, said Sen. Pete Domenici, a New Mexico Republican who chairs a Senate Appropriations subcommittee overseeing nuclear weapons.

Negotiators from the House of Representatives and the Senate were working this week on a final version of a bill to fund the Energy Department, which houses nuclear weapons programs. The House bill did not include the \$4 million to study nuclear bunker-busters, but the Senate's did.

Domenici said the Senate agreed to drop the funds at the request of the department's National Nuclear Security Administration. "The NNSA indicated the research should evolve around more conventional weapons rather than tactical nuclear devices," he said.

In a number of votes, Congress has rebuffed the administration on its plans to research a nuclear weapon that the Pentagon argues would be effective against targets buried deep in the earth in fortified bunkers.

Critics said researching such weapon would undermine efforts to stem the spread of nuclear arms among other countries, and said it would produce hugely destructive fallout.

Rep. Ellen Tauscher, a California Democrat who has pushed amendments against the nuclear bunker buster, said she was "pleased that the administration has apparently decided to abandon a counterproductive initiative at a time when strong United States leadership is needed to strengthen global norms against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction."

3) Washington Post 25 Oct 2005

Bush Admin. Drops 'Bunker-Buster' Plan

By H. JOSEF HEBERT

The Associated Press

Tuesday, October 25, 2005; 10:58 PM

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration has abandoned research into a nuclear "bunker-buster" warhead, deciding instead to pursue a similar device using conventional weaponry, a key Republican senator said Tuesday.

Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M., said funding for the nuclear bunker-buster as part of the Energy Department's fiscal 2006 budget has been dropped at the department's request.

US Scraps Bunker Buster

The nuclear bunker-buster had been the focus of intense debate in Congress, with opponents arguing that its development as a tactical nuclear weapon could add to nuclear proliferation.

An administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity because negotiations on the department's spending bill have not yet been completed, confirmed that a decision had been made to concentrate on a nonnuclear bunker-buster.

Administration officials have contended the country must try to develop a nuclear warhead that could destroy deeply buried targets including bunkers tunneled into solid rock. Potential adversaries increasingly are building hardened retreats deep beneath the earth, immune to conventional weapons, the officials said.

But Congress has been cool to the idea of a new nuclear warhead. The House blocked funding for the program, even though the Energy Department had requested only \$4 million, scaling back earlier requests.

The Senate approved the \$4 million, but a final decision was up to lawmakers working out a compromise between the House and Senate on the department's budget.

Domenici, chairman of the subcommittee that oversees DOE's budget, said the conferees had agreed to drop funding for the program at the request of the department's National Nuclear Security Administration, the agency that oversees nuclear weapons programs.

"The focus will now be with the Defense Department and its research into earth penetrating technology using conventional weaponry,"

Domenici said in a statement. The NNSA "indicated that this research should evolve around more conventional weapons rather than tactical nuclear devices," the senator said.

"This is a true victory for a more rational nuclear policy," said Stephen Young, a senior analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists, a nuclear nonproliferation advocacy group. "The proposed weapon, more than 70 times the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, would have caused unparalleled collateral damage."

Last April, a National Academy of Sciences panel concluded that an earth-penetrating nuclear device would likely cause the same casualties as a surface burst if the weapons are of the same size.

Such a bomb could cause from several thousand to 1 million casualties, depending on its yield and location, according to the report requested by Congress.

At a congressional hearing earlier this year, NNSA chief Linton Brooks acknowledged there is no way to avoid significant fallout of radioactive debris from use of a bunker-buster warhead.

He said the administration never intended to suggest "that it was possible to have a bomb that penetrated far enough to trap all fallout. I don't believe the laws of physics will ever let that be true."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., one of Congress' most vocal opponents of the bunker-buster, has said the nuclear bunker-buster "sends the wrong signals to the rest of the world by reopening the nuclear door and beginning the testing and development of a new generation of nuclear weapons."

On the Net:

Energy Department: <http://www.doe.gov>

Union of Concerned Scientists: <http://www.ucsusa.org/>

National Nuclear Security Administration: <http://www.nnsa.doe.gov/>

4) BBC NEWS 26 Oct 2005

US cancels 'mini-nukes' programme

The US has abandoned controversial plans to develop a nuclear "bunker-buster" warhead, a key Republican senator has said.

Sen Pete Domenici said funding for the bombs - part of the Energy Department's 2006 budget - had been dropped.

He said research would now focus on conventional penetrating weapons.

The warhead had been the focus of intense debate in Congress, with opponents arguing against the US developing new nuclear arms.

An administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed the move to the Associated Press news agency.

Fall-out debate

The Senate had approved \$4m in funding for the programme, but it was subsequently blocked by the House of Representatives.

Sen Domenici, chairman of the subcommittee that oversees the Department of Energy's budget, said the request for funding had been dropped at the request of the department's National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees nuclear weapons programmes.

The proposed nuclear "bunker-busters", also called mini-nukes, would have penetrated bunkers deep underground, including those tunnelled into solid rock.

The small nuclear charge would be buried in the explosion, and the fall-out contained.

However, critics doubted whether the weapon could go deep enough to contain any fall-out.

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/americas/4377446.stm>

Published: 2005/10/26 08:49:00 GMT

5) Washington File 26 October 2005

*Congressional Conferees Drop
Funding for Bunker-Buster Nuke*

Defense Department will focus instead on conventional weaponry

Washington — U.S. Senate and House budget conferees have canceled funding for an Energy Department study to design a new generation nuclear "bunker-busting" bomb, says Senate Subcommittee Chairman Pete V. Domenici.

"The focus will now be with the Defense Department and its research to [develop] earth-penetrating technology using conventional weaponry," Domenici said in a prepared statement October 25.

Previously, the Bush administration had asked for \$4 million for the "Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator" study in the 2006 Energy Department's budget and another \$4.5 million in the Defense Department budget.

Domenici, who is chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, said the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration asked for the project funds to be canceled.

"The NNSA indicated that this research should evolve around more conventional weapons rather than tactical nuclear devices," Domenici said.

The nuclear bunker-buster bomb, which would have been a new generation of nuclear weapons, was being researched by the Energy Department for the Pentagon to determine if a tactical nuclear weapon could penetrate deeply buried targets, such as caves and underground tunnels that might be used by terrorist groups, U.S. officials testified before Congress this year.

Previously, the House of Representatives passed a \$24.3 billion version of the budget in May without including funds for the bunker-buster research. The Senate included the request in its \$25 billion version of the budget that passed in July. The conference committee has been attempting to resolve differences.

[See online: url of this article](#)

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U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)
xml

6) Aust 27 Oct 2005

Nuclear bunker-buster project abandoned

27oct05

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration has abandoned research into a nuclear "bunker-buster" warhead 70 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, deciding instead to pursue a similar device using conventional weaponry.

Republican senator Pete Domenici said funding for the nuclear bunker-buster had been dropped at the request of the Energy Department.

The nuclear bunker-buster had been the focus of intense debate in Congress, with opponents arguing that its development as a tactical nuclear weapon could add to nuclear proliferation.

An administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that a decision had been made to concentrate on a non-nuclear bunker-buster.

Administration officials have contended the country must try to develop a nuclear warhead that could destroy deeply buried targets, including bunkers tunnelled into solid rock. Potential adversaries increasingly are building hardened retreats deep beneath the earth, immune to conventional weapons, the officials said.

But Congress has been cool to the idea of a new nuclear warhead. The house blocked funding for the program, even though the Energy Department had requested only \$US4million (\$5.29million), scaling back earlier requests. The Senate approved the \$4 million, but a final decision was up to legislators working out a compromise between the house and Senate on the department's budget.

"The focus will now be with the Defence Department and its research into earth-penetrating technology using conventional weaponry," Senator Domenici said in a statement.

Stephen Young, a senior analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists, a nuclear nonproliferation advocacy group, hailed the decision as a "true victory for a more rational nuclear policy".

"The proposed weapon, more than 70 times the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, would have caused unparalleled collateral damage," he said.

Last April, a panel of the National Academy of Sciences concluded that an earth-penetrating nuclear device would likely cause the same casualties as a surface burst if the weapons are of the same size. Such a bomb could cause from several thousand to 1 million casualties.

Democrat senator Dianne Feinstein, an opponent of the bunker-buster, has said the nuclear device "sends the wrong signals to the rest of the world by reopening the nuclear door and beginning the testing and development of a new generation of nuclear weapons".

AP

7) UCS Press Release 26 Oct 2005

Sen. Domenici Drops the Bomb

October 26, 2005

Sen. Domenici Drops the Bomb

Agrees to Strip Funding for 'Bunker Buster' in Energy and Water Conference

Butterfly Links

in Nuclear Weapons

Nuclear Bunker Buster (RNEP) Animation

WASHINGTON, Oct. 26-Yesterday, Senator Pete Domenici agreed to cancel funding for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator, also known as the nuclear bunker buster, in the Energy and Water Appropriations conference committee.

"This is a true victory for a more rational nuclear policy," said Stephen Young, Senior Analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists' (UCS) Global Security Program. "The United States undercuts its own efforts to stop the spread of the bomb by pursuing new nuclear weapons for new 'war-fighting' missions."

"The proposed weapon, more than 70 times the size of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, would have caused unparalleled death and destruction," said Rob Nelson, UCS' Senior Scientist. "The bunker buster would not have performed many of the missions for which its supporters claimed it was needed, while spreading intense nuclear fallout over thousands of square miles."

"This is an enormous achievement by a nation-wide coalition of grassroots groups, scientists, and policy experts combined with opposition from many leading members of Congress," Nelson continued. "Particular credit goes to Rep. David Hobson, Sen. Domenici's counterpart on the House side, who has been an outspoken opponent of the program."

8) Arms Control Association

26 Oct 2005 Nuclear Bunker-Buster (As We Know It) Is Dead

Analysis by Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, Arms Control Association

October 26, 2005

Yesterday, the Chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee Pete Domenici (R-NM) announced that Senate Energy appropriators would recede to the House position and eliminate funds for the controversial Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP) from the fiscal year 2006 budget. As a result, for the second year in a row, a bipartisan coalition of forces has denied funding for RNEP, effectively killing the program.

The catalyst for the RNEP program was the Pentagon's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, which called for the United States to develop "new nuclear weapon capabilities" to deal with targets located in deep underground, hardened bunkers. The next year, the Bush administration requested funds for research for a modified, high-yield bomb for this mission.

At first, Congress grudgingly supported research on the RNEP, also known as the "nuclear bunker-buster." But over the last four years, the depth and breadth of congressional opposition has grown as public interest groups, former military officials, and former weapons designers have campaigned against the nuclear bunker-buster. Much of the credit for the complete elimination of the RNEP funding from the fiscal year 2006 Energy Department appropriations bill goes to Domenici's counterpart in the House, Chairman David Hobson (R-OH).

Arguments for RNEP Not Credible

After a detailed examination of the proposal, Hobson did not buy the administration's arguments for the program. As he did last year, Hobson once again led the bipartisan opposition to RNEP and prevailed in the end-of-year conference committee to reconcile differences between the House and Senate spending measures.

Administration officials have argued that the RNEP would make U.S. nuclear capabilities and threat of their use more credible in potential future conflicts, presumably with states such as North Korea or Iran. Although the "nuclear bunker-buster" became a symbol around the globe of the administration's "do as I say, not as I do" nuclear nonproliferation attitude, the administration insisted that program would only "slightly complicate" U.S. nonproliferation efforts.

Hobson and many of his Republican and Democratic colleagues realize the nonproliferation costs of trying to enhance the credibility of U.S. nuclear threats are high and the benefits illusory. Maintaining and expanding the role of U.S. nuclear weapons not only contradicts accepted international norms of nonproliferation behavior, but it invites countermoves by other countries. The devastating power and collateral effects of the proposed new weapons also make it clear that their use or threat of use is no more credible, necessary, or justifiable than existing nuclear weapons.

"Other than a Cold War 'Russia gone bad' scenario, I don't believe our nuclear stockpile is useful against our new foes," Hobson told a National Academy of Sciences gathering last year. "What worries me about the nuclear penetrator is that some idiot might try to use it," he said.

Hobson has good reasons to worry. Destroying a deeply buried bunker requires a high-yield blast too large to avoid dispersal of radioactive debris and fallout even if the weapon is designed to penetrate tens of meters before detonation. Even if new, smaller-yield nuclear weapons are developed and used against suspected chemical or biological weapons sites, the fallout would still be significant, and small errors in intelligence and targeting could disperse rather than destroy deadly chemical or biological material. Improvements in specialized conventional munitions offer significant and more practical capabilities without the risk of crossing the nuclear threshold.

The Debate Evolves

RNEP may be dead, but the debate in the United States over the roles and missions of existing and possibly "new" nuclear weapons is far from over.

In response to the Nuclear Posture Review and a 2001 Bush National Security Presidential Directive, the Pentagon is still pursuing a revised "Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations" that calls for maintaining an aggressive nuclear posture with weapons on high alert to strike adversaries armed with weapons of mass destruction (WMD), pre-emptively if necessary. Details of the draft doctrine are reported and analyzed in an article by Hans Kristensen published in the September issue of *Arms Control Today*, the monthly journal of the Arms Control Association.

And, even though it failed to convince Hobson on the RNEP, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has won his initial support for a program to research new "reliable replacement warheads to sustain existing military capabilities" that will supposedly lower costs and not require nuclear explosive proof testing. NNSA

Administrator Linton Brooks told Congress the goal of the effort should be to develop and produce a "small build" of the new warheads by 2012-2015.

Reliable replacement warheads may sound more attractive, but the rationale for the program is dubious, the scope is vague, and it is potentially dangerous. Congress must carefully define the scope and direction of the program.

Why? New replacement warheads are not necessary to preserve existing U.S. nuclear-weapon capabilities. Each year, a representative sample of the existing arsenal is inspected to check for signs of deterioration, and limited-life components are replaced if necessary. The reliability of existing warheads has been and can continue to be maintained if the weapons labs avoid unnecessary alterations to the existing weapons during refurbishment.

Worse still, if weapons scientists get the green light to build more rugged nuclear weapons and the program is given carte blanche, the weapons labs may, in the end, be able to achieve their controversial new nuclear weapons research ambitions denied with the defeat of RNEP. In a revealing comment to The Oakland Tribune earlier this year, the former NNSA deputy administrator Everet Beckner said, "[T]hat's not the primary objective, but [it] would be a fortuitous associated event."

Finally, replacing existing, well-proven nuclear warhead designs with "new" and "improved" replacement warheads or warhead components could, if carelessly pursued, increase pressure to conduct nuclear explosive proof tests. Even if it does not, replacing existing systems with more robust systems would likely require costly testing and retrofitting of the delivery systems to carry the new "replacement" warheads.

Rather than continue to pursue its obsession with a new generation of more "usable" nuclear weapons, the White House should focus the NNSA on its primary mission: maintaining the reliability of the remaining nuclear stockpile without testing, while dismantling the tens of thousands of excess strategic and tactical weapons here and abroad.

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1150 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 620
Washington, DC 20036

Tel: (202) 463-8270 | Fax: (202) 463-8273

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