



INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR

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December 18, 2012

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20001

Dear President Obama:

As fellow Nobel Peace Laureates who share your desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons and the danger they pose to our common survival, we would like to congratulate you on your election to a second term as President. We encourage you to use the next four years to make rapid and significant progress toward the global elimination of the only weapons capable of extinguishing life on Earth.

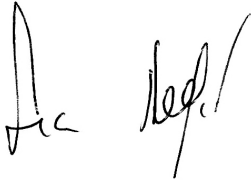
With that goal in mind, we want to express serious concern with the continued program of subcritical nuclear tests that have been conducted by the US since it signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996. We understand that you have received letters from the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and from groups of atomic bomb survivors protesting the most recent subcritical test on December 5—the fourth such test since you took office—and we join them in urging you to cancel this unnecessary and provocative practice.

While subcritical tests are permitted under compromise language that was meant to facilitate ratification of the CTBT by the Senate— but failed to do so—they go against the intent of the Treaty, which is to ensure that no new nuclear weapons will be designed and that no new capabilities will be developed for weapons that already exist. The nuclear-weapon states—and the US in particular—have a significant technological edge with regard to computer simulation of nuclear tests, derived from decades of actual test explosions. This advantage is not lost upon the rest of the world, which sees any such tests, with or without a nuclear chain reaction, as a means to extend and perpetuate the role of nuclear weapons in security policy, and not as a step toward disarmament.

The message subcritical testing sends to other States is that nuclear weapons are here for the long term and that their designs can be modified and enhanced simply by making use of a loophole in a treaty to which the US says it is otherwise committed. At the very least, this is a demoralizing message for the large majority of States who have made nuclear disarmament an urgent priority. For at least a few who may be questioning the wisdom of remaining non-nuclear in the future, subcritical tests are seen as a hypocritical practice that undermines the arguments for non-proliferation.

While nuclear disarmament will require complex and careful negotiation among many States, you can end future US subcritical tests with the stroke of a pen. We urge you to take this step without delay.

Sincerely,



Ira Helfand
Co-President



Tilman Ruff
Co-President



Robert Mtonga
Co-President

Vladimir Garkavenko
Co-President