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POLITICS:
New U.S. Plans for Nukes Hypocritical, Say Experts
Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 11 (IPS) - Proposed new U.S. curbs on the proliferation of nuclear weapons are fundamentally hypocritical, U.S. academics, military analysts and peace activists said Wednesday.

"(U.S.) President George Bush seems committed to writing a new chapter in the grotesque saga of U.S. nuclear policy: 'do as we say, not as we do'," Norman Solomon, executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy, told IPS.

Solomon was responding to a major policy statement by Bush, who told the National Defence University on Wednesday that Washington plans to limit the number of nations permitted to produce nuclear fuel, in its attempt to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

"We must confront the danger with open eyes and unbending purpose," Bush said. "I've made clear to all the policy of this nation: America will not permit the terrorists and dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most dangerous weapons."

Solomon said that throughout the nuclear era, "the U.S. president has claimed the right to play "nuclear God", proclaiming which nations have a holy right to nuclear weapons, and which nations would be guilty of a terrible sin by acquiring nuclear weapons".

"But even the world's only superpower cannot force the nations of the world to worship the edicts from Washington," said Solomon, co-author of 'Killing our Own: the Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation'.

Currently, there are five declared nuclear powers, all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia. The other three countries known to possess nuclear weapons are India, Pakistan and Israel. But U.S. intelligence believes that even North Korea has successfully gone nuclear.

The Bush administration went to war with Iraq last March on the grounds that it had nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. But none have been found so far. The United States has also accused Iran and Syria of developing WMD. Both countries have denied the

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charge.

Last week the head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme, Abdul Qadeer Khan, confessed he helped transfer nuclear technology to Libya. Last December, Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi publicly proclaimed he was dismantling his proposed nuclear weapons programmes.

"The Bush administration is being hypocritical by criticising other countries for nuclear proliferation while it continues to develop nuclear weapons of its own," says Natalie Goldring, executive director of programmes on global security and disarmament at the University of Maryland.

"Preventing further proliferation of nuclear weapons is a vital national security. But the Bush administration has undermined its credibility by pursuing new nuclear weapons programmes, and moving towards resuming nuclear testing," Goldring told IPS.

She said the Pakistani network might be just the tip of the iceberg. "President Bush is correct to devote more attention to non-proliferation. But we also need to devote the financial resources necessary to control nuclear weapons material. The Bush administration has not done so," she added.

Francis A. Boyle, professor of international law at the University of Illinois College of Law, told IPS the Bush administration's "rank hypocrisy of nuclear non-proliferation" could not be more apparent.

The United States, he said, is already in "material breach" of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which says, "each of the parties to the treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

"The Bush administration also stands in anticipatory breach of the so-called negative security assurances that the United States government gave to the NPT non-nuclear weapons states, that it would not use nuclear weapons against them in return for their renewal and indefinite extension of the NPT," said Boyle, author of 'The Criminality of Nuclear Deterrence.'

He said Bush had already ordered the Pentagon to target several non-nuclear weapons states, a move that goes to the very heart of the bargain behind the NPT.

Both Boyle and Solomon also pointed to the U.S.' double standard in curbing nuclear weapons in the Arab world but ignoring Israel's nuclear arsenal.

"In the Middle East, the big nuclear elephant in the living room -- which Bush refuses to acknowledge as a problem -- is Israel," said Solomon.

When former chief U.N. arms inspector Hans Blix arrived in Baghdad in Nov 2002, he expressed hope for a "zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East as a whole".

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Solomon said Blix was referring to actions taken by the U.N. Security Council after the 1991 Gulf War that acknowledged the need for a nuclear-free zone for the entire region, including Iran and Israel.

"The U.S. government cannot make a reasonable case as to why it's OK for Israel to have a stockpile of about 200 nuclear warheads but it's not OK for any other nation in the Middle East to pursue nuclear weapons technology," he said.

"As for the U.S. government, it has arrogantly violated its obligations under the (non-proliferation) treaty by not only failing to work toward nuclear disarmament, but also by continuing to develop even more technologically advanced nuclear weapons, including the current push for 'bunker-busting' nuclear arms that reflect ongoing Pentagon interest in using nuclear weapons for war-fighting," he added.
(END/2004)

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