

US Doctrine letter

President William Jefferson Clinton
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Mr. President:

We note your decision to revise the 1981 nuclear doctrine, and commend your decision to drop the policy of fighting a prolonged nuclear war. This policy was always unrealistic and is now totally out of date. We regret, however, that the new Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) fails to adjust nuclear policy to the realities of the post-Cold War security environment, to specific legal obligations and to the manifest desire of the overwhelming majority of people in this country and throughout the world to be rid, once and for all, of the danger of catastrophic nuclear destruction. Based on reports in the media which, in the absence of access to the PDD itself, we assume to be accurate, we submit the following comments:

1. The PDD's proclaimed option to use nuclear weapons for protection against biological and chemical weapons cannot but stimulate efforts by other countries to develop a nuclear capability for the same reason. It also violates the negative security assurances contained in the NPT and various regional nuclear-free zone treaties to which the United States is a party.
2. The failure to announce a no-first-use policy or steps to take nuclear weapons off alert is a grave disappointment and enhances the risk of accidental nuclear war in an increasingly unstable nuclear environment.
3. The secrecy in which the new policy was developed and in which it continues to be wrapped runs counter to the American tradition of public debate on issues of vital interest. No single policy could have more devastating effects if it misfires, yet the Congress and the public have been and [continue](#) to be totally excluded from the process.
4. Finally, continuing, indefinite reliance on nuclear weapons as the cornerstone of United States defense strategy is a clear violation of the nuclear disarmament obligation in Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which was described in the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice as an obligation "to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects." Two public opinion polls conducted in 1997 [confirmed](#) that the aim of nuclear weapons abolition is supported by over 80% of the U.S. public. This aim is also endorsed by 60 retired admirals and generals in their statement of December 1995 and by a group of distinguished world leaders in a statement [about to be released](#).

We therefore urge you, Mr. President, to call for a public debate on this vital question and, as a first step, to release the text of the PDD.

Yours sincerely,