

US researcher victimized over article opposing nuclear weapons

Tom Hall
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The Los Alamos National Laboratory fired James E. Doyle, a respected nuclear security expert, in early July after more than a year of persecution stemming from a scholarly article he had published calling for nuclear disarmament, according to an account published Thursday by the Center for Public Integrity.

The fact that a US government laboratory victimized a researcher for expressing opposition to nuclear weapons, a view shared by the overwhelming majority of the world's population, testifies to the crisis-ridden character of American foreign policy. In case after case around the world, the US is attempting to shore up its declining supremacy through increasingly reckless and brazen acts of aggression, up to and including stoking conflict with Russia and China, both nuclear powers.

Located in New Mexico, the Los Alamos National Laboratory is a Department of Energy facility that researches and develops nuclear weapons. It is one of the largest research facilities in the world and has an annual budget of over \$2 billion. Doyle had worked for 17 years as a contractor in the lab's Nuclear Nonproliferation Division.

In February 2013, Doyle published a front-page article in *Survival*, the journal of the UK-based think tank International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Titled "Why Eliminate Nuclear Weapons?", the piece argued that nuclear deterrence was a "myth" that damaged the ability of world governments to "meet the mutual global challenges of the twenty-first century."

Doyle's article dismantles the various official legends surrounding nuclear weapons. He disputes the shopworn assertion that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States in World War II saved tens of thousands of lives by precluding an invasion of the Japanese mainland, citing the "emerging view among historians that the entry of the Soviet Union into

the Pacific War on 9 August 1945 was more decisive in Japan's decision to surrender than the threat of further atomic bombings."

Moreover, Doyle points to the various near-misses during the Cold War, as well as the recklessness of American and Soviet politicians and military leaders during the Cuban missile crisis, as contradicting the theory that nuclear deterrence "induces caution during crises, [making] leaders more risk-averse." From this he concludes, "It is clearly unreasonable to assert that evidence supports the claim that nuclear deterrence was the major cause of war-avoidance [in the post-war era]. This assertion is a belief, unsupported by anything approaching a strong, clear body of historically documented evidence." He ends by appealing to the "international community" to eliminate nuclear weapons by 2045, the 100-year anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan.

Doyle submitted his article, prepared over months in his spare time, for review by the laboratory's censors, although he was not required to do so. While his supervisors encouraged him to adopt a more "moderate" stance to avoid hurting the interests of the laboratory, they did not raise any concerns about classified information and did not attempt to prevent him from publishing the article.

Less than a week after publication, however, Doyle's superiors declared that the article contained classified information. As part of a phony investigation, they demanded that Doyle hand over copies of every article he had ever published.

Demonstrating the politically motivated character of the investigation, Los Alamos' Chief Classification Officer Daniel Gerth overruled three subordinates who advised him that they had found no classified material in the article. Despite making no effort to remove the

article from circulation, which is still freely available on the IISS's website, security officials at the laboratory demanded access to Doyle's home computer in order to delete Doyle's personal copies of the article from his hard drive.

The Laboratory administration suspended Doyle's security clearance for one month. In addition, they suspended, rather than revoked, Doyle's access to information on foreign nuclear programs, a method of proceeding that prevented him from appealing their action. Such information was crucial to Doyle's work as a nuclear nonproliferation expert. Finally, on July 8, 2014, the Laboratory fired him.

There are indications that the campaign against Doyle originated from sections of Congress. The Center for Public Integrity cites Doyle's former supervisor, Scott Gibbs, as saying that the lab's government relations office in Washington had told him that Doyle's article had upset someone on the House Armed Services Committee. Gibbs refused to comment further, and Washington officials contacted by the Center for Public Integrity declined to confirm or deny Gibb's allegations.

However, the fact that all four of the complaints lodged by Doyle with numerous government agencies were summarily dismissed despite the obviously political character of the case suggests widespread collusion to punish Doyle for his remarks.

Doyle is a solidly establishment figure. Before working 17 years at Los Alamos, he wrote the Department of Energy's plan for securing nuclear material in Russia in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. He is a well-known researcher in nuclear non-proliferation and wrote a textbook on the subject that is used in more than 30 universities around the world. Indeed, his article opposes nuclear proliferation from the standpoint of safeguarding American "national security" and quotes Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama.

Yet clearly he is aware of the suicidal implications of contemporary American foreign policy and brought those concerns to the public at large in his article. This was considered a red line by sections of the US security apparatus.

The article clearly touched a nerve in government circles when it declared, "Current US nuclear posture with respect to Russia seems to be completely out of

step with declared policy. In 1994, Russia and the United States reached a bilateral de-targeting agreement...but if Russia is not presumed to be a potential adversary, [the] fundamental features of the current US nuclear force structure and operating posture make little sense." Although he holds back from any conclusions, the evidence Doyle offers makes clear that the real aim of US nuclear policy is maintaining an aggressive war footing, primarily against Russia, with an eye toward asserting its dominance over every area of the globe.

The government is clearly fearful of the examples set by Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning. Because of the immense dangers involved and the complete lack of any support for these policies among the population, the ruling elite cannot tolerate any dissension in the ranks of the military-industrial complex.



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