

Trump announces resumption of US nuclear weapons testing

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On Thursday, President Donald Trump announced the resumption of US nuclear weapons testing, in the latest move by the United States to remove all remaining guardrails restricting its preparations for World War III. All countries in the world have officially banned nuclear testing, and the move makes the United States the only country in the world to allow the practice.

Nuclear testing, beyond scattering deadly radiation into the atmosphere and contaminating groundwater, is universally understood as a massively escalatory act, expanding the possibility of nuclear war, whether through miscalculation or deliberate provocation.

In 1963, one year after the United States and the Soviet Union came to the brink of nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Kennedy administration negotiated the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which banned all nuclear testing except those conducted underground. In 1992, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, President George H.W. Bush declared a unilateral ban on nuclear testing.

In the decades before testing was banned, over 2,000 nuclear detonations were conducted, more than half of which were carried out by the United States. These tests sickened communities both inside the American West and throughout the South Pacific and rendered entire areas uninhabitable.

Trump made his announcement just before he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping for talks in South Korea on the ongoing US-China trade war. Trump was using the US nuclear arsenal as a means to secure the predatory interests of US imperialism on the world stage, dangling over the head of humanity the threat of extermination through nuclear warfare.

The United States has the world's largest nuclear program, spending twice as much on nuclear weapons as Russia and China combined. The US is also the only country that has ever used nuclear weapons, exterminating the defenseless populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to threaten the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War.

In reporting Trump's announcement, the US media has failed to present any historical context or antecedents to it. But, far from being a spur-of-the-moment improvisation, US military planners have been actively discussing the resumption of nuclear testing since at least 2020.

Trump's own post announcing the move clearly placed it in the context of a years-long buildup of the US nuclear arsenal. He wrote, "The United States has more nuclear weapons than any other country. This was accomplished, including a complete update and renovation of existing weapons, during my first term in office."

He added, "I have instructed the Department of War to start testing our nuclear weapons on an equal basis. That process will begin immediately."

Trump's post, however, only told part of the story. The nuclear buildup that he bragged about was, in fact, initiated under the Obama administration and continued in Trump's first term, Biden's term and now in the second Trump term. This nuclear buildup, which the vast majority of the American population is not aware of, has continued with complete bipartisan support, at a cost of more than \$1 trillion.

One year ago, the *New York Times* published an extensive feature story about the secret plan dedicated to "making America nuclear again" through the creation of a "modern arsenal for a volatile new nuclear age."

"If you don't live where the submarines are welded or the missile silos are dug, there's a good chance you wouldn't know it's happening," the *Times* wrote. "The federal government has said little about the plan in public, outside of congressional hearings and strategy papers, or the vast amount being spent. There has been no significant debate. The billion-dollar programs move under the radar."

In the year since the publication of that article, both the massive US nuclear buildup and the conspiracy of silence surrounding it have continued. In December, Congress approved the \$895 billion National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the largest military budget of any country in human history, including record funding of nuclear modernization efforts.

In January, Trump announced that the United States would "immediately begin the construction of a state-of-the-art Iron Dome missile defense shield." Far from being a defensive measure, this so-called "Golden Dome" would encourage the White House to threaten other countries with a preemptive nuclear first strike, since the missile shield would supposedly protect the US from retaliation.

As part of the ongoing US nuclear buildup, the Trump administration has sought to eliminate all restrictions on the use of nuclear weapons. Most prominently, the United States withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in August 2019, again under Trump.

In response to Trump's announcement in October 2018 that the US would withdraw from the treaty, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that Russia would embark on the development of a new series of nuclear delivery mechanisms, including an underwater drone known as the Poseidon and a new long-range cruise missile known as the Burevestnik.

Russia recently conducted tests of the delivery mechanisms, but not the nuclear payload, of both systems, an act that Trump seized upon in order to announce the long-planned and long-discussed resumption of US nuclear testing.

Following its withdrawal from the INF treaty, the US has moved to deploy nuclear weapons previously banned under the treaty to locations from which they can hit Russia and China. The Pentagon has extended the range of its Precision Strike Missile and has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the development of a new nuclear-armed, sea-launched cruise missile known as the SLCM-N.

The development of ballistic and cruise missiles previously banned under the INF Treaty has been combined with the escalation of direct attacks by Ukraine, a NATO proxy, deep inside Russia. This month, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, “The Trump administration has lifted a key restriction on Ukraine’s use of some long-range missiles provided by Western allies,” leading to an attack this month using UK-supplied Storm Shadow missiles on the city of Bryansk in southern Russia.

Earlier this month, Trump confirmed he was considering sending Tomahawk missiles to Ukraine. Responding to Trump’s threat, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev observed, “It’s impossible to distinguish a nuclear Tomahawk missile from a conventional one in flight.” Tomahawk missiles have long had the ability to deliver nuclear warheads.

Between the deployment of short-range nuclear weapons on the borders of Russia and China, the lobbing of NATO-supplied long-range weapons into Russian cities, and the resumption of nuclear testing, the whole world will be on a nuclear hair trigger.

Any time a “conventional” missile is shot from the semi-official NATO ally Ukraine, or whenever the United States carries out an unscheduled nuclear test ordered by Trump, the world’s leading practitioner of the so-called “madman theory,” planners in Russia and China will ask themselves: “Are we under nuclear attack?”

The brinksmanship of the United States, while calculated to bring about the submission of Russia and China, can trigger a massive escalatory spiral, with incalculable consequences.

The rise of imperialist militarism is inextricably connected to the escalating assault on the working class in the United States.

Trump’s announcement that the US will resume nuclear testing comes just days before the administration is scheduled to end funding for food stamps, cutting tens of millions of Americans off of a vital lifeline just ahead of the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

There is a direct connection between the two. In a statement published this month, the Democratic Party-aligned Brookings Institution, speaking for a policy supported by both the Democratic and Republican parties, called for “a whole-of-society strategy of resilience that leverages all the public and private tools at its disposal: total defense for an age of total war.”

The doctrine of total war, pioneered by the German military leadership during World War II and continued as state doctrine under the Nazi regime, saw the subordination of all of society to the war effort, demanding “sacrifice” from the working class in the name of national military success.

Under the doctrine of “total war,” the leaders of Nazi Germany brought disaster upon the population of Germany just as surely as it waged a war of extermination throughout Eastern Europe. Now, Trump, speaking for the American oligarchy as a whole, sees the Nazi regime as a model, not only for dictatorship in the United States, but for military violence all over the world.

The ruling class ties the assault on the working class at home with military escalation abroad. The working class must respond by uniting the defense of its social and economic rights with the struggle against imperialist war. The “No Kings” rally earlier this month showed that there is mass opposition to the Trump administration’s policies of dictatorship and austerity. This opposition must be developed as a movement of the working class, in which the fight against imperialist war is connected to the fight against capitalism and for socialism.



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