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## The Biggest Threat

By Justin Raimondo  
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The headlines are filled with the latest alleged threat posed by ISIS – a band of savages thousands of miles away that, at most, has the capacity to inspire the crazies in our midst to acts of relatively smalltime violence.

Relative, that is, to the real threat of violence, which emanates from our own “defense” policies as formulated in Washington, D.C. – the very real and growing threat of nuclear war.

That ominous possibility, which hung over us during the cold war era – and spiked during the truly scary Cuban missile crisis, when the fate of the world hung on a very thin thread – never really went away. For as long as the US and the other members of the nuclear “club” possess these weapons, the chance that they might someday be used still exists. And those chances have increased lately due to the new cold war with Russia, started and ramped up by the War Party over Ukraine and the Russian decision to take out the Syrian terrorists. Ongoing arms talks have been stalled due to the radical breakdown of Russo-American relations, and joint efforts to trace and secure “loose nukes” – weapons and materials that may have been “lost” in the post-Soviet chaos – have ground to a halt.

As NATO sends troops and heavy weaponry to Eastern Europe and conducts massive military exercises within spitting distance of the Kremlin, plans to “modernize” and upgrade the US nuclear arsenal in Europe and Turkey are proceeding apace. The B61 nuclear bomb is being

outfitted with flexible fins, which will enable it to hit targets with more precision: also, the upgrade means that the impact – the nuclear yield – can be adjusted. These weapons are due to be shipped to bases in Europe and Turkey in 2024 – making the use of nukes more “thinkable,” as this *New York Times* piece puts it.

In response, Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu announced yesterday that “Russia will create three new military divisions on its Western flank in 2016 and bring five new strategic nuclear missile regiments into service.”

The miniaturization of nukes is a trend that encourages what was previously considered monstrous: “preemptive” nuclear strikes by the US. Gen. James Cartwright, former vice chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, has raised the horrific scenario of military officials seeing smaller scale nukes in a new light, asking “Does it make them more usable?”

Surely the answer is yes.

It isn’t just us peaceniks who are raising questions about the Obama administration’s “modernization” plan. The growing list of opponents includes:

- Andrew C. Weber, former assistant secretary of defense.
- Philip E. Coyle III, former chief of nuclear weapons testing at the Pentagon.
- Steve Fetter, former assistant director at-large of the Office of Science and Technology Policy.
- William J. Perry, former defense secretary during the Clinton administration.

President Obama campaigned on a platform of reducing – and eventually ending – US dependence on nuclear arms as the linchpin of US defense policy. Yet what we have gotten is merely a quantitative reduction, with an accompanying qualitative ramping up of our nuclear strike force in terms of its sheer deadliness – and the likelihood of it being used.

The cost of the “modernization” program – which is even now racing through Congress with almost no opposition – is measured in the trillions of dollars. And the fact is that we don’t need this nuclear “triad” – a throwback to the dawn of the nuclear age, when intra-bureaucratic infighting between the three branches of the military resulted in nukes for all. Intercontinental ballistic missiles are a relic of the cold war era: a commission headed by Gen. Cartwright recommended scrapping them entirely. Bill Perry concurs. “We’re on the brink of a new arms race,” says Perry.

In short, the world is rapidly becoming a much more dangerous place. And it’s not because of ISIS, or the “terrorist threat” – it’s due to our policy of global intervention, which requires a “forward stance” that includes rattling the nuclear saber.

With over 7,000 nuclear weapons in our arsenal, many of them stationed in a ring around Russia extending from Turkey to the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Germany, it is clear that America’s nukes are not defensive in nature. They are one more way we threaten those who defy Washington’s will. Under George W. Bush, US nuclear doctrine clearly stated that first use is not

out of the question: under Team Bush, nukes could've been launched to make sure we won what seems like a losing war – say, in Afghanistan, for example. President Obama has supposedly revised this policy, but the movement toward nuclear “modernization” renders his promise less credible. And who is to say what a future President might do – say, President Trump or President Cruz? The latter has stated he wants to see if sand can glow in the dark – do we want a “modernized” nuclear force as long as he and his ilk have a chance at the White House?

Why do we have over 7,000 nukes in our arsenal – enough to destroy the world several times over? Why are the contracts for “modernization” speeding through the procedural hoops faster than anyone can keep track of them?

The answer is that Washington is the epicenter of an aggressive empire that seeks to impose its will on every continent, and those 7,000-plus nukes are arrows in its quiver. They are meant to terrorize recalcitrant countries whose leaders don't ask “How high?” when Washington says “Jump!” They cement our status as the self-appointed enforcer of “world order.” And they fatten the wallets of the armaments industry, which uses its considerable resources to lobby for yet more weaponry in spite of our fragile financial condition.

Obama's pledge to reduce and eventually abolish nuclear weapons was worse than a fraud – it was a lie. We are seeing that now as he presides over the development of a whole new generation of nuclear arms. The new arms race is proceeding apace under a bipartisan consensus: together the two wings of the War Party are leading us to the day when nuclear weapons will actually be used, either deliberately or due to a tragic miscalculation.

Will Americans wake up before it's too late?