

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan, international educational organization. It is comprised of individuals and organizations throughout the world that recognize the imperative for peace in the Nuclear Age. Our advisors are some of the world's greatest peace leaders, including many Nobel Peace Laureates. We are a non-governmental affiliate of the United Nations and are recognized by the United Nations as a Peace Messenger Organization.

Founded in 1982, the Foundation performs research and analysis on critical issues of peace and global survival, and prepares and distributes educational materials by leading thinkers on these issues. The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation is a catalyst in initiating worldwide efforts to abolish nuclear weapons, to create an International Criminal Court, and to use science and technology for constructive purposes.

Waging Peace Series

As far as is known, the term "Waging Peace" originated with Warren Wells of Santa Barbara, late husband of Ethel Wells, in a letter to President Eisenhower. It was a long-standing practice of Mr. Wells to keep in close touch with key national figures and give them his views on peace issues as well as other vital matters. This series is dedicated both as a memorial to him and in gratitude to Mrs. Wells for her continued efforts in this cause.

In this series the Foundation publishes and distributes short booklets stressing ideas for attaining peace. Concepts expressed will include views of many authorities, and will not necessarily be those of the Foundation. Suggestions for topics and ideas about this issue are welcome. Booklets in this series and two anthologies of Waging Peace booklets are available from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

*"Peace on Earth to men and women of goodwill.
In truth we trust." — Ethel Wells*

© 1999 Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Printed on recycled paper with soy-based inks

Ending the Nuclear Madness



General Butler giving his acceptance speech upon receiving the Foundation's 1999 Distinguished Peace Leadership Award.

Photo © Rick Carter.

by

General George Lee Butler (USAF, Ret.)

Contents

Introduction	1
The Challenge Ahead	3
The Evolution of My Views	11
Dispelling the Aura of Deterrence	17
About the Author	20



Michal Douglas presenting the Foundation's 1999 Distinguished Peace Leadership Award to General Butler. Photo © Rick Carter.

"General Butler's choice to make nuclear abolition his life's commitment has dramatically influenced many of us to commit ourselves with increased enthusiasm and energy. He continues living his life protecting our country, but his beliefs on how to achieve security have dramatically changed. For years, as head of the Strategic Air Command, he planned the ultimate destruction. Now, he tirelessly labors to prevent that destruction. A man willing to change based on reason and conscience is the kind of man who can change history. If that is not a true patriot then I do not know what is."

*—Michael Douglas
Actor and United Nations Peace Messenger*

“What is at stake here is our capacity to move ever higher the bar of civilized behavior. As long as we sanctify nuclear weapons as the ultimate arbiter of conflict, we will have forever capped our capacity to live on this planet according to a set of ideals that value human life and eschew a solution that continues to hold acceptable the shearing away of entire societies. That simply is wrong. It is morally wrong, and it ultimately will be the death of humanity.”

—General George Lee Butler

April 1999

Introduction

General George Lee Butler had a distinguished career in the United States Air Force that spanned more than three decades. His responsibilities included being in charge of all United States strategic nuclear weapons.

In his capacity as Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command, he was the principal advisor to the President of the United States on issues related to nuclear weapons. For over three years he was required to be no more than three rings away from his telephone and ready to execute an order from the President to use nuclear weapons. General Butler was a soldier prepared to carry out orders that might have resulted in the destruction of civilization and much of life on this planet.

What is so remarkable about General Butler is that he has changed his views dramatically. Since his retirement from the Air Force in 1994, he has become an outspoken and ardent proponent of abolishing nuclear weapons. As a member of the prestigious Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, he joined his fellow commissioners in a 1996 report which concluded: “The risks of retaining nuclear arsenals in perpetuity far outweigh any possible benefit imputed to nuclear deterrence.... The end of the Cold War has created a new climate for international action to eliminate nuclear weapons, a new opportunity. It must be exploited quickly or it will be lost.”

In reflecting upon his previous responsibilities in the Air Force, General Butler has said: “What I have come to believe is that much of what I took on faith was either wrong, enormously simplistic, extraordinarily fragile, or simply morally intolerable. What I have come to believe is that the amassing of nuclear capability to the level of such grotesque excess as we witnessed between the United States and the Soviet Union over the period of the 50 years of the Cold War, was as much a product of fear, and ignorance and greed, and ego and power, and turf and dollars, as it was about the seemingly elegant theories of deterrence.”

General Butler's life demonstrates the possibilities for personal transformation. He has turned his impressive intellect and considerable energy to ending the nuclear weapons era, and has become a leader in the global effort to abolish nuclear arms from the planet. As a leader of the abolition effort, he has demonstrated courage, conviction and conscience. His sense of duty and honor as well as his capacity to change his thinking have brought him into the service of all humanity.

In 1982 when the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation came into existence, we believed that nuclear weapons were the primary threat to humanity's future and initiated activities to rid the world of these instruments of genocide. At that time, it was inconceivable that we would be joined in this effort by a former Commander-in-Chief of the United States Strategic Command. And yet, this miracle has come to pass. General Butler and other generals and admirals throughout the world, who once defined security in terms of nuclear deterrence, have come to define it in terms of eliminating nuclear arsenals.

This *Waging Peace Series* booklet contains General Butler's acceptance speech upon receiving the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's 1999 Distinguished Peace Leadership Award, a description by General Butler of the evolution of his thinking regarding nuclear weapons, and comments by General Butler on the theory of deterrence.

—David Krieger
President
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

The Challenge Ahead

I am a latecomer to the crusade to eliminate nuclear weapons. As I have come better to know the global army engaged in this crusade, I have begun to appreciate more fully the uniqueness of my role and to feel increasingly the burden of my responsibility both to you, the abolition army, and to those in whose company I spent most of my professional life. My responsibility to this legion of former colleagues is to represent our common experience fairly, to honor their sacrifice and praise their sense of duty and patriotism. The men and women who serve so faithfully at the perilous ramparts of nuclear deterrence deserve our gratitude and our respect. It matters enormously to all of us that they do their job with the skill and devotion it demands.

My Responsibilities to Nuclear Abolitionists

My responsibility to you, the abolition army, has been first to feel the depth of your passion, to understand your rage and frustration, to absorb the logic of arguments for abolition, and to come to terms with the embedded moral issues. That task has largely been met during the past five years. I have studied, traveled, reflected, written and rehearsed publicly the evolution of my views on the role of nuclear weapons as instruments of national security. I have met with, interviewed with, and communed with thousands of individuals and organizations, who have showered me with praise, criticism and, periodically, confusion. My indoctrination into your world is complete, and I have begun the process of shaping my activities to fit my particular view of the work to be done.

That brings me to my second responsibility to the abolition army; to explain, patiently and humbly, who I am and who I am not; what I believe and what I do not; what I consider to be a fair critique of the U. S. nuclear weapons experience and what is not; and how I see the future of the task to reduce and eliminate the dangers posed by nuclear weapons.

As for who I am and what I believe, first and foremost, I am a husband, a father, a grandfather, a son and a brother who cherishes his family and the joys they bring. I am a child of God, a world citizen, a patriot and a responsible member of the city I call home. I am guided by my faith, devoted to mankind, inspired by democracy and with my wife Dorene, deeply engaged in community service. But you should also understand that I am a lifelong military professional and a combat veteran who holds firmly to the conviction that the United States plays an irreplaceable role in building global peace and security. We do not always play that role wisely, but by and large it has served the world supremely well. The history of this century would have been written far differently had our great nation faltered in its self-imposed task to defeat successive waves of tyranny no matter the risk or cost. My critique of the United States as a nuclear weapons power can be properly understood only in the context of that broader role.

The Steep Price of a Foolish Nuclear Policy

By clinging to the extreme precepts of Cold War nuclear deterrence we erode the respect for life that anchors our sense of humanity, and the moral sensibilities that increasingly inspire us to contain the violence of war and the suffering of innocents. Worse, with respect to the central issue of proliferation, we risk summoning the very nightmare we have worked so fervently to forestall. First-use policies and high alert postures are in direct contradiction to our self-interest, the objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the patent rejection of the use of nuclear weapons by American presidents in conflicts from Korea to Indochina to the Persian Gulf.

The price of this foolish nuclear weapons policy is steep and continues to mount. We have lost a priceless opportunity to negotiate with Russia sharp, accelerated reductions in nuclear arsenals. As a consequence both we and our former adversary are squandering vital resources to sustain nuclear forces that have no conceivable relevance to our mutual or unilateral security interests. The absurd standoff over Start II ratification, a treaty now overtaken by events, has stalled the arms control process, codified grossly excessive arsenals, weakened the political will essential to presidential leadership, and eroded the trust upon which further progress depends.

India and Pakistan have thrust themselves into the nuclear arena, casting aside pretense, brandishing their fledgling arsenals and declaring

themselves cloaked in the security of the self-same deterrence proclaimed so insistently by the charter members of the nuclear club. It is by no means certain that U. S. intervention could ever have stemmed the all too familiar tides of nationalistic fervor and mutual anxiety sweeping the subcontinent. However, it is painfully evident that no amount of protest would suffice coming from an American president hoist on the petard of his own nuclear weapons policy.

Of gravest concern, however, is the fate of the Non-Proliferation regime, that grand contract which long stood as a tribute to statesmanship and now stands imperiled by brinksmanship. What seems regrettably clear is that none of the five declared nuclear weapons states have any intention of taking meaningful near-term steps toward meeting their obligations under Article VI of the Treaty. Even what I consider to be half-measures, such as reduced alert postures and no first-use declarations, have met stiff resistance. Clearly we are at an impasse with profound implications for the non-proliferation bargain and for its enshrined principle that nuclear weapons are intolerable.

The Challenges: Establish Dialogue and Intensify Public Pressure

These cumulative blows to the spirit and to the letter of nuclear arms control have done great violence to the mutual reliance upon which this fragile balancing of sovereign anxieties depends. Reviving the process or simply preserving it through the current impasse poses a defining challenge to the proponents of abolition — establishing a productive, mutually respectful dialogue with the nuclear weapon states and bringing responsible public pressure to bear on their policies. Both of these tasks are crucial. In my judgment the abolition campaign has, in both, been largely unsuccessful.

The first task requires a more determined effort to understand the arguments, concerns and constraints of the policy makers in these states who must deal daily with the realities of arsenals in being, negotiations in deadlock and bitterly partisan politics. Even having been in these positions, I still devote much of my time and energy to the business of constructive dialogue and find it invaluable. I am, therefore, dismayed by the number of abolitionists I encounter who are unaware of, indifferent to or unwilling to address seriously the views of key government officials. I am put off by those who impute to them ill intent or ulterior motive. Rather, these decision-makers are still disposed to see the world darkly, a Hobbesian brew of lurking enemies wherein Americans tire of engage-

ment and nuclear weapons reign at once as ultimate threat and final salvation.

Patient, courteous dialogue will not necessarily transform this view, but it is essential to clarify differences, air alternatives, and begin the search for common ground.

With respect to mobilizing public interest and support, the task is equally daunting. It requires a sophisticated understanding of the role of the media; patient building of relationships with individual journalists; a very 'nuanced' and regionally-focused perspective of public opinion; and a detailed analysis of the constituencies who can be most effectively marshaled to influence the political arena. That entails in turn a careful appraisal of the attitudes of key public officials and a strategy to engage them on the merits of their objections and concerns.

None of this, of course, is new or different. It is the ordinary business of informing public policy debate on any issue. Further, I recognize that much of this spadework has been done by any number of organizations in the abolition camp. What seems yet to be done is for the results of this disparate effort to be brought together in an organized fashion that will serve the purposes of the entire community, hopefully as a basis for a common plan of action.

Examine the Dysfunctional Arms Control Process

Let me share my personal impressions and conclusions about why we find ourselves at what I have described as an impasse, and how I am structuring my time and resources to address it.

First, I am persuaded that the traditional arms control process, which served us well through the tensions of the Cold War, is not just stalled, but dysfunctional. It is freighted with psychology, language, assumptions and protocols that perpetuate distrust, constrain imagination, limit expectations and prolong outcomes. It is mired in partisan politics, the nation's most vital interest reduced to a spiteful standoff across a liberal - conservative divide. It focuses on things that now matter relatively less, like numbers of warheads, at the expense of things that matter a great deal more, such as the policies that drive the numbers, and the rapid response postures. With regard to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, ingrained patterns of interaction between the nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states are promoting a train wreck, a collision of competing expectations that I believe is at this juncture irreconcilable.

Second, based on extensive recent discussions, I have concluded that the governments of the nuclear weapon states have simply stopped thinking seriously about their policies or the military utility of their arsenals. Civilian leaders talk in almost cavalier terms about the "political role" of nuclear weapons, as if the weapons can be divorced from the risks of misperceived intent, the demands of operational readiness or the emotional cauldron of real world crises. Nuclear deterrence has been transliterated from Cold War parlance as if it were immutable, an intellectual dodge that suspends the onerous requirement to fundamentally rethink outmoded doctrines and forces.

Third, I believe the rhetoric about nuclear issues and dangers is becoming badly overheated. The shrill language and exaggerated portrayal of threats coming from parties on both sides of the nuclear debate is damaging to their credibility and detrimental to public understanding. It may well provoke precipitous responses, such as abrogation of the ABM Treaty and a rush to defenses that will exacerbate tensions and foreclose options. Demonizing labels, such as "rogue states"; disparaging personal attacks; and scare tactics regarding ballistic missile threats, Y2K failures, or a "new Cold War" are a disservice to intelligent debate and unworthy of the stakes involved.

Fourth, turning specifically to the agenda, tactics and timetable of the abolition community, I see a widening gulf between its aspirations and their prospects, especially in the near term. That disparity is most immediately obvious in the disjunction between the name of the umbrella organization, "Abolition 2000," and the self-evident reality that its implied goal is not yet in sight, much less in hand. There is a real Y2K problem that must be addressed to ensure that the vitality of the ongoing work of the organization is not diminished by intimations of a failed strategic objective.

More to the substantive point, I worry that the message and the tactics are not attuned to the core conceptions and the priorities of its target audiences: publics and policymakers. With regard to both audiences, for example, I think the challenge of gaining and holding attention, igniting concern and prompting action is far more daunting than usually perceived. Belief in the utility of nuclear deterrence is a universal article of faith — and small wonder! Generations of authoritative figures, myself included, spent decades propounding its essence and extolling its virtues. And now, those who have no inclination nor see any reason to test its hypotheses have the intellectual luxury of asserting that "it worked." That simplistic but

highly appealing supposition too easily translates to the equally simplistic corollary, "and deterrence will work against rogue states."

Judiciously Choosing Tactics

As concerns tactics, I leave to your judgment whether the traditional marches, demonstrations, ban the bomb symbols, and calculated confrontations contribute to or detract from the task of dialogue. In my own view, they are more hurtful than helpful, but I readily admit that view comes from having too often experienced them from the other side of the chain-link fences and the Pentagon walls. That being said, I worry that such tactics and slogans may not be psychologically attuned to a far lower level of public trepidation about nuclear dangers than prevailed during the Cold War. As regards policy makers, I can tell you with some certainty these approaches are far from endearing.

My real concern, however, is that they depreciate the greatest strength you bring to this arena and that is the force of your moral conviction. My sense is that in today's environment, this powerful energy is best focused through the lens of carefully honed argument; otherwise it risks being diffused by the optics of erroneous or resentful perception.

I appreciate that I tread on very thin credibility in calling for a reappraisal of the abolition movement. Many of you have suffered great indignities, hardship and even incarceration in the name of a cause that touches the core of your being. I understand that and I respect it. I can only ask you to accept that I am gravely concerned for the continuing effectiveness of the campaign.

Many of you will also recognize that I am echoing frustrations arising from within your own ranks. The impasse I have described is widely felt and, as in the case of the April 1999 abolition strategy colloquy convened by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, has already begun to prompt thoughtful assessments of cause and effect. Indeed, we have already witnessed an exemplary demonstration of the rigorous, sophisticated and fruitful enterprise I believe essential to sustaining the abolition cause. The Middle Powers Initiative led by Ambassador Doug Roche and his very competent staff has already scored a major success. I have been privileged to play a small role in this activity as pertains to its Canadian dimension, and have seen at close hand the product of Doug's intelligent, focused leadership.

My Strategic Focus: Addressing the Unconvinced

In no small way I have taken a page from Doug's book in reordering the nature of my participation in the nuclear weapons arena. My wife Dorene and I have established our own foundation dedicated to reducing and eliminating nuclear dangers. We have decided on the name, "Second Chance." Our charter commits us to two major activities: promoting public education toward awareness of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons; and sponsoring activities to reduce or to eliminate these dangers.

We recognize that does not make us uniquely different, but it does give us strategic focus. For example it suggests that I must greatly curtail speaking to the converted, as uplifting as I find such audiences. Rather, I am going to spend my time assessing and interacting with those key constituencies who will or can play determining roles in affecting outcomes, but who are unaware or unconvinced of what must be done.

Our mandate suggests equally that within the constraints of finite resources we intend to sponsor research and assist efforts that bear most directly on resolving the most difficult and important issues and obstacles. We are mindful that the bar of expectation for performance in this arena has been raised very high by organizations like the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation who pioneered the crusade against nuclear weapons. And, we are indebted to the individuals and organizations who have provided valuable support in getting us airborne, especially Howard and Myra Brembeck and their Fourth Freedom Forum, and Warren Buffett.

Most importantly, we know what is at stake. It is too much to ask of our Creator a third chance to purge our souls and to mend our ways. We dare not continue to trifle with His work lest He finally leave us to our self-assigned damnation of nuclear hell on Earth.

I accept your award tonight in the name of those who have labored so long in this cause. I accept it in tribute to my family who love and support me. I accept it as an obligation to serve the sanctity of life, the wonder of our planet and the birthright of every child who enters this world to live free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.



"Nuclear weapons are the enemy of humanity. Indeed, they're not weapons at all. They're some species of biological time bombs whose effects transcend time and space, poisoning the earth and its inhabitants for generations to come."

—General George Lee Butler

March 1999

The Evolution of My Views

I get a lot of questions like, "If you had been President Truman, would you have made the decision to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima?" "Was this a revelation?" "Was it an epiphany?" "What was the catalyst for your change of view?" The questions go to the issue of when I had the responsibilities as the Commander of the nuclear forces, as a nuclear advisor to the President and, perhaps most particularly, as the person who devised the nuclear war plan. Did that give me pause? Were there some reservations there?

The evolution of my views was not an epiphany, nor some road to Damascus revelation. From the very outset, the nuclear arena was superimposed with a blanket of secrecy that was virtually impenetrable. Access to the knowledge and access to the levers of power that control this arena was reserved to a very small number of people throughout its history in this country and in the Soviet Union.

I was commissioned as a lieutenant in June 1961. I became the commander of the nuclear forces of the United States in January 1991, almost thirty years later to the month. Until the day I assumed those responsibilities, I had never been given access to the nuclear war plan of the United States in its entirety, even though in Washington I had policy responsibilities that directed the plans. I knew nothing about the submarine operations of the strategic nuclear forces of the United States, and I had no idea how the decision process took place that would lead to a command from the President of the United States to unleash nuclear war and retaliation for a presumed strike.

Deepening Doubts

Up to that point, I had developed a series of reservations and doubts that progressively deepened. I had no basis for understanding whether these concerns were based on lack of information and insight or whether they were rooted in the reality of bureaucratic processes run amuck, by the intrusion of the self-serving profit interests of the military-industrial complex, by the collision of cultures and turf in the Pentagon for budget dollars, or simply by the towering forces of alienation and isolation that grew out of the mutual demonization between the U.S. and the Soviet Union over a period of forty-five years. I just didn't know.

Beginning in early 1991, I went through a process that very quickly accelerated and confirmed my worst fears and my worst concerns. What we had done in this country, what I believe happened in the Soviet Union, and what I think will inevitably happen in any country that makes the fateful decision to become a nuclear power — to acquire the capability to build and employ nuclear weapons — is this: *the creation of gargantuan agencies with mammoth appetites and a sense of infallibility that consume infinite resources in pursuit of a messianic vision of a demonization.* When that happens, it quickly moves beyond the capacity for any single individual or small group of people, like the President, the National Security Council, or the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, or the Joint Staff, to control them or to understand. I'm going to quickly give you a couple of instances to illustrate what I mean.

A Chilling Ballet

In those responsibilities of commander of the forces responsible for the day-to-day operational safety, security, and preparation to employ those weapons, I was increasingly appalled by the complexity of this ballet of hundreds of thousands of people managing, manipulating, controlling, and maintaining tens of thousands of warheads and extremely complex systems that flew through the air, were buried in the bowels of the land, or patrolled beneath the seas of the world.

The capacity for human error, human failure, mechanical failure, misunderstanding, was virtually infinite. I have seen nuclear airplanes crash under circumstances that were designed to replicate, but were inevitably far less stressful than, the actual condition of nuclear war. I have seen human error lead to the explosion of missiles in their silos. I have read the circumstances of submarines going to the bottom of the ocean laden with nuclear missiles and warheads because of failures, mechanical flaws, and human error. I read that entire history, and when I came away from it — because I was never given access to it before — I was chilled. I was chilled to the depth of my strategic soul.

Secondly, consider my responsibilities as a nuclear advisor. Every month of my life as a commander of the nuclear forces I went through an exercise called the Missile Threat Conference. It would come at any moment of the day or night. For three years I was required to be within three rings of my telephone so that I could answer a call from the White House to advise the President on how to respond to nuclear attack. The question that would be put to me in these conferences, and as it would be in the event, was "General Butler, I have been advised by the Commander-in-Chief of the North American Air Defense Command that the nation is under nuclear attack. It has been characterized thusly. What is your recommendation with regard to the nature

of our reply?"

That was my responsibility, and about half the time that call came in the middle of the night as Dorene and I lay in our bedroom. I had to be prepared to advise the President to sign the death warrant of 250 million people living in the Soviet Union. I felt that responsibility to the depth of my soul, and I never learned to reconcile my belief systems with it. Never.

My third responsibility was to devise the nuclear war plan of the United States. When I became the Director of Strategic Target Planning, another hat that I wore as the Commander of the Nuclear Forces, I went down to my targeting room, many floors beneath the surface. I told my planners that we were going to get to know each other very well because I wanted to understand the plan in its entirety. I think this story is the most graphic illustration of the evolution of my views and my concerns and, ultimately, my convictions. When I began to delve into that war plan, I was absolutely horrified to learn that it encompassed 12,500 targets. I made the personal commitment — because I viewed it as absolutely integral to my responsibilities and the consequences of that targeting — to examine every single one of them in great detail.

Ending the Madness

It took me three years, but by three months I was absolutely convinced that it was the most grotesque and irresponsible war plan that had ever been devised by man with the possible exception of its counterpart in the Soviet Union, which in truth probably mirrored it exactly. Because what that plan implied was, among other things, in the event of nuclear war between two nations, in the space of about 16 hours some 20,000 thermonuclear warheads would be exploded on the face of our planet, signing the death warrant not just for 250 million Soviets, but for mankind in its entirety.

The second thing that I began to grasp was that neither in the Soviet Union nor in the United States did any of us ever understand those consequences, because the calculation as to the military effectiveness of that attack was based on only one criterion, and that was blast damage. It did not take into account fire; it did not take into account radiation. Can you imagine that? We never understood, probably didn't care about, and certainly would not have been able to calculate with any precision, the holistic effects of 20,000 nuclear weapons being exploded virtually simultaneously on the face of the Earth.

That was the straw that tilted my conviction with regard to the pros-

pects of nuclear war, and ultimately to an unavoidable responsibility to end this. To end it! And by the grace of God I came to that awareness, and I inherited my responsibilities at the very moment the Cold War was ending and, therefore, I had the opportunity to end the madness.

So in those three years I did what I could to cancel all of the strategic nuclear modernization programs in my jurisdiction which totaled \$40 billion. I canceled every single one of them. I recommended to the President that we take bombers off nuclear alert for the first time in thirty years, and we did. I recommended that we accelerate the retirement of all systems designed to be terminated in present and future arms control agreements, and we did. We accelerated the retirement of the Minuteman II force. We shrank the nuclear war plan of the United States by 75 percent. By the time I left my responsibilities, those 12,500 targets had been reduced to 3,000. If I'd had my way and I'd been there a while longer, they would have been reduced to zero. Ultimately, I recommended the disestablishment of my command. I took down its flag with my own hands.

Creeping Re-rationalization of Nuclear Weapons

When I retired in 1994, I was persuaded that we were on a path that was miraculous, that was irreversible, and that gave us the opportunity to actually pursue a set of initiatives, acquire a new mindset, and re-embrace a set of principles having to do with the sanctity of life and the miracle of existence that would take us on the path to zero. I was dismayed, mortified, and ultimately radicalized by the fact that within a period of a year that momentum again was slowed. A process that I have called the creeping re-rationalization of nuclear weapons was introduced by the very people who stood to lose the most by the end of the nuclear era.

The French re-initiated nuclear testing at the worst possible moment as the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty hung in the balance. We have re-initiated the process of demonization of "rogue nations" — what a horrible, pernicious misuse of language! What an anti-intellectual de-humanizing process of reducing complex societies and human beings and histories and cultures to "rogue nations." Once you do that, you can justify the most extreme measures to include the re-introduction of nuclear weapons as legitimate and appropriate weapons of national security.

A Second Chance

That was my evolution. That's how I transitioned from the coldness of the Cold War years, when I became an officer in the United States military

at the height of the Cold War just prior to the Cuban Missile Crisis, to someone today who simply sees himself as a citizen of this planet and who was given an opportunity to step back from the brink of nuclear catastrophe. I left office feeling that this process, this extraordinary and unimaginable opportunity had been delivered to us by a Creator who forgave our transgressions and who gave us a second chance. Now we seem determined to fritter it away. I can't tolerate that. This is what our belief system is about, this is our challenge, and this is why Dorene and I have decided to devote the balance of our lives on this planet to do our best to save it.

“Nuclear deterrence was and remains a slippery intellectual construct that translates very poorly into the real world of spontaneous crises, inexplicable motivations, incomplete intelligence and fragile human relationships.”

—General George Lee Butler

May 1999

Dispelling the Aura of Deterrence

For many people nuclear weapons retain an aura of utility and legitimacy that justifies their existence well into the future. I was for years among the most avid keepers of the faith in nuclear weapons. My contemporaries and I believed that superior technology brought strategic advantage, that greater numbers meant stronger security, and that the ends of containment justified any means. These beliefs intensified ideological animosity; spawned successive generations of new and more destructive nuclear devices and delivery systems; incited primal emotions; and set in motion forces of ungovernable scope and power. Today these enduring beliefs and fears perpetuate Cold War policies and practices that expose all mankind to unconscionable dangers. Nuclear weapons play on our deepest fears and pander to our darkest instincts.

Deterrence — the simple prescription for adequate military preparedness in the lexicon of conventional warfare — suspended rational thinking in the Nuclear Age about the ultimate aim of national security: to ensure the survival of the nation. It disconnected planning from any sense of scientific or military reality. Deterrence failed completely as a guide in setting rational limits on the size and composition of military forces. It has spurred an insatiable arms race with a reckless proliferation of the most destructive power ever unleashed, tailored for delivery by a vast array of vehicles to a stupefying array of targets. Nuclear weapons give no quarter. Their effects transcend time and place, poisoning the Earth and deforming its inhabitants for generation upon generation. They leave us wholly without defense, expunge all hope for survival. They hold in their sway not just the fate of nations but of civilization.

Deterrence serves the ends of evil as well as those of noble intent. It holds guilty the innocent as well as the culpable. It is a gamble no mortal should pretend to make. It invokes death on a scale rivaling the power of the Creator.

Sadly, the Cold War lives on in the minds of men who cannot let go the fears, the beliefs, the enmities of the Nuclear Age. They cling to deterrence, clutch its tattered promise to their breast, shake it wistfully at

bygone adversaries and balefully at new or imagined ones. They are gripped still by its awful willingness not simply to tempt the apocalypse but to prepare its way.

To them I say we cannot at once keep sacred the miracle of existence and hold sacrosanct the capacity to destroy it. It is time to reassert the primacy of individual conscience, the voice of reason and the rightful interests of humanity.

“By what authority do succeeding generations of leaders in the nuclear weapons states usurp the power to dictate the odds of continued life on our planet? Most urgently, why does such breathtaking audacity persist at a moment when we should stand trembling in the face of our folly and united in our commitment to abolish its most deadly manifestation?”

—General George Lee Butler
February 1998

AUTHOR

A 1961 graduate of the US Air Force Academy, George Lee Butler served with distinction in military service for 33 years. He completed numerous flying and staff assignments, including professor of nuclear subjects at the Air Force Academy. General Butler was the last Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) before that command ended in 1992. He served as the Commander-in-Chief of the US Strategic Command, successor to the SAC, formulating strategic plans and policy for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In both command positions he helped in the revision of US nuclear war plans. He was the principal nuclear advisor to the President to whom the President would have issued a command to launch America's nuclear arsenal.

From 1994-1998, he was the president of the Kiewit Energy Group which developed alternative, renewable fuels; Chairman of the Board of BioClean Fuels Inc.; and Chairman of the Clean Fuels Foundation.

Since his retirement from the Air Force in 1994 at the age of 54, General Butler has become an outspoken and powerful advocate for a world free of nuclear weapons, meeting with global leaders and addressing parliaments, commissions, and conferences. He received the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's 1999 Distinguished Peace Leader Award for his courageous advocacy of abolishing nuclear weapons. He recently founded the Second Chance Foundation, which is dedicated to the effort of globally eliminating nuclear weapons by promoting public education of awareness of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and sponsoring activities to reduce or to eliminate these dangers.

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

waging peace worldwide

Directors

Wallace T. Drew, *Chair*
David Krieger, J.D., Ph.D., *President*
Frank K. Kelly, *Senior Vice President*
Ilene Pritikin, *Secretary*
Eli Luria, *Treasurer*
Selma Brackman
Diandra Douglas
Peter O. Haslund, Ph.D.
Marc Kielburger
Jane Olson
Douglas Roche, O.C.
Selma Rubin
Ethel R. Wells

Consultants

Larry Agran, J.D.
Robert C. Aldridge
Dean Babst
Rt. Rev. George W. Barrett
Eric H. Boehm, Ph.D.
Francis A. Boyle, J.D., Ph.D.
Ernest H. Brooks II
Adam Curle, Ph.D.
Hugh E. DeWitt, Ph.D.
M. M. Eskandari-Qajar, Ph.D.
Frances Farenthold, Esq.
Dietrich Fischer, Ph.D.
Don George
Jonathan Granoff, J.D.
Gene Knudsen Hoffman
Fred H. Knelman, Ph.D.
Peter R. MacDougall, Ed.D.
Ved P. Nanda, L.L.M.
Farzeen Nasti, Ph.D.
Jan Øberg, Ph.D.
Dan K. Smith, Ph.D.
Theodore B. Taylor, Ph.D.
Leonard Wallock, Ph.D.
Burns H. Weston, J.S.D.
Robert C. Wilkinson

Advisory Council

Elisabeth Mann Borgese
Gen. George Lee Butler (USAF, Ret.)
Helen Caldicott, M.D.
Hon. Rodrigo Carazo
Jean-Michel Cousteau
Senator Alan Cranston
Anne H. Ehrlich, Ph.D.
Paul R. Ehrlich, Ph.D.
Daniel Ellsberg, Ph.D.
Richard Falk, J.S.D.
Benjamin B. Ferencz
Johan Galtung, Ph.D.
Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, M.D.
The XIVth Dalai Lama*
Rt. Hon. David Lange, C.O.H.
Adm. Gene R. La Rocque
Bernard Lown, M.D.
Mairead Corrigan Maguire*
Alan McCoy, O.F.M.
The Lord Menuhin, OM, KBE
Hon. Robert Muller
Hon. Arthur N.R. Robinson
Joseph Rotblat, Ph.D., F.R.S.*
Jonathan Schell
Stanley K. Sheinbaum
Gerry Spence
Ted Turner
Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

Staff

Christoph Hanterman, Ph.D.
Laura Lynch
Carah Ong
Christopher Pizzinat
Penny Sidoli
Sharon M. Tolar

*Nobel Laureate

PMB 121 • 1187 Coast Village Road, Ste. 1 • Santa Barbara, CA 93108-2794

(805) 965-3443 • Fax (805) 568-0466

e-mail: wagingpeace@napf.org • web site: <http://www.wagingpeace.org>