

The Bomb at 64 Let's Retire It

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It has been over six decades since the first nuclear weapons were used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing and disfiguring hundreds of thousands of human beings in the process. While at the moment it may not be the stuff of dinner table conversation, it's long past time that we had a dialogue about eliminating these weapons of mass terror once and for all.

Anti-nuclear activism comes in cycles, and each cycle has brought important progress towards reducing the nuclear threat. The ban-the-bomb movement of the 1950s set the stage for the prohibition of above-ground nuclear tests. The nuclear freeze campaign of the 1980s helped turn Ronald Reagan from a reckless, loose-talking cowboy who joked that "the bombing starts in five minutes" into a leader in nuclear arms reductions who almost moved to abolish them in his 1986 summit with Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik.

There have been other signs of progress as well. Global nuclear arsenals have been slashed by two-thirds from their 1960s peak. None of the major nuclear weapons states (Russia, China, the United States, France, and the UK) have tested a bomb since 1992. And since the end of the Cold War, more countries have given up nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons programs than have started them. And since the 1990s, the United States and Russia have worked together to dismantle or destroy thousands of nuclear warheads ("loose nukes"), bombers, and inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Given all of this progress, why don't we feel any safer? There are two reasons.