

## Five Minutes to Midnight

By Polly Mann

The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has moved the hands of its Doomsday Clock to five minutes to midnight, due to inadequate progress on nuclear weapons reduction and proliferation. Are we doomed, or can we turn back the hands of time?



As the U.S. hypocritically pressures other nations to sanction Iran for its development of nuclear power, one of the tightly guarded secrets of the major nations of the world is the number of nuclear warheads each possesses. Casual research reveals the following which is probably, at best, a very rough estimate. (Note: According to Jay Kvale, Twin Cities Peace Campaign and WAMM, who follows nuclear issues closely, numbers can be misleading because of the size and delivery mode of weapons. Although Russia has more warheads, the U.S. has a stronger arsenal because of advanced delivery systems in the form of its submarines, missiles, planes, etc.)

Russia: 11,000

United States: 8,500

France: 300

China: 240

United Kingdom: 225

Israel: 80

Pakistan: 90-110

India: 80-100

North Korea: 10

The new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, START, between the United States and Russia signed on July 6, 2009, will reduce the number of deployed warheads on each side to 1,500. To ascertain just where the other nuclear nations are in this effort would require much research. If there is such information, it is not easily available.

At the same time, in a November 11, 2011, Guardian Weekly article entitled, “Nuclear Powers Plan Arms Spending Spree,” Richard Norton-Taylor tells his readers that “the world's nuclear powers plan to spend hundreds of billions of dollars modernizing and upgrading weapons warheads and delivery systems over the next decade.” The break-down follows: The U.S. will spend \$700 billion and Russia \$70 billion; China, India, Israel, France and Pakistan are expected to devote formidable sums to tactical and strategic missile systems.

The report is the first in a series of papers for the Trident Commission, an Independent cross-party initiative set up by BASIC, the British American Security Information Council. The report warns that Pakistan and India appear to be seeking smaller, lighter nuclear warheads so that they have a greater range or can be deployed over shorter distances for tactical or “non-strategic” roles. In the case of Israel, the size of its nuclear-tipped, cruise missile-enabled submarine fleet is being increased and the country seems to be on course, on the back of its satellite-launch rocket program, for future development of an inter-continental ballistic missile.

A common justification for the new programs is perceived vulnerability in the face of nuclear and conventional force development elsewhere—for example, Russia has expressed concern over the U.S. missile defense and Conventional Prompt Global Strike programs. China has expressed similar concerns about the U.S., as well as India, while India's programs are driven by fear of China and Pakistan. Pakistan justifies its nuclear arms plans by referring to India's conventional force superiority.

North Korea unveiled a new Nusudan missile in 2010 with a range of up to 4,000 kilometers, capable of reaching targets in Japan but it is unclear whether the country can make warheads small enough to fit these missiles.

One thing is certain. We know that some people are very happy with this spending spree – the munitions makers and their stockholders—but one thing all of the people of the above nations have in common is that they are all paying for these weapons while they hope or pray that they will never be used. What a waste of resources and money!

However, there are some people and organizations doing more than hoping and praying. They are trying to beat the clock by working to eliminate nuclear weapons, through both grassroots and established institutions.

Here are some information and action resources:

Nukewatch: [nukewatchinfo.org](http://nukewatchinfo.org); Nuke Resistor: [nukeresistor.org](http://nukeresistor.org); Peace Action: [peace-action.org](http://peace-action.org); Global Network-Keep Space for Peace!: [space4peace.org](http://space4peace.org); Bulletin of Atomic Scientists: [thebulletin.org](http://thebulletin.org); Nuclear Age Peace Foundation: [wagingpeace.org](http://wagingpeace.org); Global Zero: [globalzero.org](http://globalzero.org); International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons: [ican.org](http://ican.org); Ploughshares Fund: [ploughshares.org](http://ploughshares.org)

Polly Mann is a co-founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor and columnist for the WAMM newsletter. She is active in the organization and serves on the WAMM Newsletter Committee.



Cold War Aesthetics by Chinese artist Wang Guangyi