

## **PM: Humanity at the Crossroads: Omnicide or Citizens Decide?**

*by Polly Mann*

*“Omnicide: The destruction of all life, especially by nuclear war.”* – Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary

One of the organizations which has my name on its mailing list is *Citizen’s Watch*, published by Tri Valley Communities Against a Radioactive Environment (Tri-Valley CAREs) at Livermore, California. Tri-Valley CAREs was founded in 1983 by concerned neighbors living around the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, one of two locations where all U.S. nuclear weapons are designed.

The Spring 2018 issue of *Citizen’s Watch* reports a \$15 billion request in the National Nuclear Security Administration, with most of those billions meant for “Weapons Activities” which include putting “new military capabilities into warheads and bombs that make the world more dangerous.”

*Citizen’s Watch* says the big winner in the DOE funding request now is Livermore Lab’s program to create a new nuclear tip (referred to as the W80-4 warhead) to be mounted on an air-launched cruise missile, called the Long Range Stand Off weapon (LRSO). The LRSO would enable a pilot to “stand off” from a target thousands of miles away and launch a radar-evading nuclear sneak attack, creating “a first-strike capability that is fueling a perilous new arms race.”



*High-altitude nuclear test, one of 210 tests conducted 1945 and 1962. Film was declassified and recently released to the public by Lawrence Livermore Lab. Tri-Valley CAREs is concerned that nuclear testing may be revived.*

Also under development is a modernized version of the B61 bomb (classified as a tactical or low-yield nuclear bomb), slated for deployment at six bases in five NATO countries surrounding Russia, as well as at four bases in the U.S. (The B61-12 can have up to several times the firepower of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it may be used at the discretion of generals in the “battlefield,” which has now been defined as anywhere in the world.)

And then there is a funding request to jump-start the development of the so-called “interoperable” warhead design. Originally, this interoperable warhead was supposed to sit atop both a land-based ICBM and a sub-launched ballistic missile. However, Tri-Valley CAREs and

Nuclear Watch New Mexico revealed to Congress that the Navy had several objections to this warhead, and citizens' groups convinced Obama to put a hold on its development. But now, in 2018, the U.S. Department of Defense's Nuclear Posture Review refers to it as a "warhead replacement." Weapons scientists warned the citizens' organizations that "design changes planned by Livermore, which has been designated as the 'lead lab' to create this novel warhead, may push the U.S. to resume nuclear testing underground in Nevada."

If I had a choice, I would much prefer that my tax dollars be used to build roads, feed the hungry, give teachers pay raises, and help build a better world rather than build weapons that could destroy it. We must bear in mind that the new Nuclear Posture Review can't move forward without funding.

*Citizen's Watch* recommends that concerned citizens contact their senators and congresspeople about these plans. I believe that a personal letter is the most effective way to communicate. Concerned citizens can make comments on the websites of their congressional representatives.

While things at the top of government are looking more and more dangerous, it's important for people to act on local levels. Every state does not host a nuclear weapons laboratory, but it's still possible to resist. That's why I sent a letter to Minnesota state senators asking them to outlaw nuclear weapons. Senators Scott Dibble, John Marty, and Sandy Pappas responded and plan to introduce legislation in the next session at the Minnesota State Capitol. A corresponding piece of legislation is to be introduced into the Minnesota House of Representatives. Antinuclear statements have been passed in city caucuses and city councils in various parts of the U.S.

One concerned citizen, Steve McKeown, who is with WAMM's Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons and Veterans for Peace, has traveled throughout the state of Minnesota with the goal of obtaining the signatures of residents in every city and town on a petition to pressure the U.S. to sign an international treaty to permanently ban all nuclear weapons – more than 11,000 Minnesotans have now signed in more than 300 cities and towns.

*Polly Mann is a founder of Women Against Military Madness and a regular contributor to the WAMM newsletter.*

**ACTION:**

Ask your local government bodies and U.S. congressional representatives to make nuclear weapons illegal and abolish them. Fact sheets, petitions, and other material for the WAMM Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons are available at the WAMM office. Call 612-827-5364.