



INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

6935 Laurel Avenue, Suite 201
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Phone: (301) 270-5500
FAX: (301) 270-3029
e-mail: ieer@ieer.org
<http://www.ieer.org>

**Statement of Michele Boyd, Global Outreach Coordinator
Institute for Energy and Environmental Research**

Back From the Brink press conference
Moscow, Russia
May 21, 2002

I am here today as a Board member of [Back From the Brink](#), a campaign to remove nuclear weapons from high-alert status, and as the Global Outreach Coordinator for the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, a non-governmental organization based in the United States. The *Back From the Brink* campaign is comprised of over 40 national arms control and disarmament organizations and hundreds of local and regional groups in the United States, whose goal is the removal of all nuclear weapons from high-alert status.

Since 1985, the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research has worked to reduce nuclear dangers by providing scientific and technical assistance on nuclear issues to the public, policymakers, and media around the world. IEER has published its quarterly newsletter, *Energy & Security*, in Russian for six years. IEER has provided technical advice and international outreach on de-alerting for many years and is a founding member of *Back From the Brink* campaign.

In two days, Presidents Putin and Bush are meeting in Moscow to sign an agreement on reducing their nuclear arsenals to between 1,700 and 2,200 warheads over the next 10 years. President Bush has said that the treaty will "liquidate the legacy of the Cold War" but the agreement falls far short of this claim.

The treaty would in some years temporarily reduce the numbers of US and Russian nuclear weapons on high alert, but vast numbers, enough to destroy the world, would still be ready for launch in minutes. The treaty requires that 3,800 U.S. warheads be removed from operational status at the end of ten years. However, these warheads could be removed from missiles and stored separately much faster - within only three years. Further, this agreement will not require that a single US or Russian missile launcher or warhead actually be destroyed. Each side can carry out the reductions at its own pace, or even reverse them and temporarily build up its forces. At the end of 2012, all of the surplus weapons can be kept in storage, leaving open the possibility of future deployment of these weapons. The agreement also allows either side to withdraw on three months' notice.

The treaty has additional problems. It explicitly allows multiple warhead missiles within the context of the proposed U.S. deployment of a ballistic missile defense as well as large numbers of weapons on hair trigger alert. This has long been considered a destabilizing arrangement that would increase the risks of nuclear war by miscalculation. It sets aside the commitments to irreversible cuts in nuclear arsenals that are part of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty II (START II) Treaty, which has often been held up before the world community as an example of progress in nuclear disarmament by the United States and Russia. The START III framework agreement on irreversible cuts, made in Helsinki in 1997 has also been abandoned. Finally, the treaty will expire in 2012, leaving both sides free to expand their nuclear arsenals and increase the number of warheads that are operationally deployed and on high alert.

We do not agree with the characterization that this treaty will "liquidate" the legacy of the Cold War. The following steps would be much more helpful:

- U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons slated for elimination should be taken off high alert immediately, warheads should be removed from missiles and stored, secured and verified as quickly as possible;
- Nuclear weapons slated for elimination should be dismantled so that reductions in nuclear arsenals are irreversible;
- The U.S. and Russia should commit to removing all their nuclear weapons from high-alert status and to ending the policy of Launch-on Warning. This would help set a Global Zero Alert standard: No nuclear weapons poised for quick launch. They should move to reduce the alert status of all warheads as soon as technically possible and move progressively to complete de-alerted status by verified removal of all nuclear warheads from their delivery systems.

The vast majority of people and governments around the world support taking nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert. Moreover, all parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), including the United States and Russia have committed themselves to reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons.

We urge Presidents Bush and Putin to commit to further negotiations and actions that will truly help us leave the Cold War behind. We also urge them to remove the destabilizing elements in this treaty.

(This statement also available in Russian.)