



Peace Action of New York State

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Comments on Complex Transformation by Cheryl Wertz, Executive Director of Peace Action New York State and the Peace Action Fund of New York State March 25, 2008

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Good afternoon. My name is Cheryl Wertz and I am the Executive Director of Peace Action New York State and the Peace Action Fund of New York State. Founded in 1957 as the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, Peace Action is dedicated to promoting the non-violent resolution of conflict, the abolition of nuclear weapons, building a human rights culture and supporting human needs instead of militarism. The New York State affiliate, of which I am the director, has hundreds of members and thirteen chapters around the state.

I know that citizen activists around the country have already submitted thousands of comments about the myriad of reasons that either increasing or updating the American stock pile of nuclear weapons is a bad idea. I want to take a couple of minutes of your time to speak specifically to how this program would impact New York residents.

Economic Impact

\$150 billion for Complex Transformation is a bad investment for New York State. According to the National Priorities Project, taxpayers in 32 states pay more in military spending than is returned to the state in salaries, contracts and other expenditures. New York State has the third worst return on its investment. For every \$1 that we pay for military spending, including Department of Energy expenditures for nuclear weapons, only \$0.24 comes back.

In 2004, New York State taxpayers spent a total of \$1.4 billion dollars on nuclear weapons production. Based on the National Priorities Project's calculation, one can assume that only \$350,000 of that money was actually spent in New York State.

I came to Washington, DC today because there are no formal public comment hearings on Complex Transformation being held in the Northeast. The vast majority of your hearings are being held in communities near national nuclear laboratories. Four out of the twelve public hearings either have been, or will be held in New Mexico. According to the same National Priorities Project study, residents of New Mexico get the highest return on their military and nuclear spending - \$5 back for every \$1 spent.

I do not begrudge residents of New Mexico and other communities supported by nuclear laboratories their desire to support their families. Nothing is more important. But the question before this committee today is not "should we spend \$150 billion dollars on upgrading and increasing our nuclear arsenal?" but "how should the federal government spend \$150 billion dollars?"

The National Priorities Project study went on to review how various federal funding impacts the economy, including the jobs generated. The study found that spending on education creates more and higher paying jobs than the same amount of money spent on the military. Public spending on health care and energy efficiency also create more jobs, although those jobs have lower pay and benefits. Nevertheless, the overall economic impact of money spent in health care and energy efficient is still higher than that of

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military funding. The study does not even take into account the positive long-term impact of the workforce skill training or infrastructural improvements made through spending on education, health care or energy efficiency.

Environmental Impact

New York's lush, beautiful landscape is a core element of both our economy and our quality of life. Two local experiences make New Yorkers wary of the environmental cost of any nuclear weapons production.

The nuclear reactors at Indian Point in Westchester County are strictly for energy production, but the environmental threats that they pose are identical to those of weapons production facilities. The reactors at Indian Point are such an environmental danger that earlier this month the State of New York took the unprecedented step of supporting the legal battle to prevent the plant's operating license from being renewed. Since at least August of 2005 radioactive contaminants such as tritium and strontium-90 have been leaking from Indian Point's spent fuel pools into the ground water and the Hudson River. As of January of 2007, neither the private company that runs Indian Point, nor the Nuclear Regulatory Commission have been able to identify the source of the leaks, determine their extent or develop a plan to stop them. Strontium-90 has been found in one quarter of study samples of fish taken from around Indian Point and areas downstream.

New York State's other nuclear experience comes from the production of depleted uranium weapons at National Lead Industries in suburban Albany in the 1960s and 70s. As I am sure you know, depleted uranium, or DU, is the resident left in massive quantities when bomb-grade uranium is refined to make reactor fuel and nuclear weapons. Although it is less intensely radioactive than bomb-grade uranium, it has devastatingly similar health impacts.

National Lead Industries in Albany was subject to federal environmental regulations, but over time lack of oversight prevented them from being enforced. By 1984 the federal government acknowledged that the NL Industries site was an environmental disaster, shut down production and agreed to take responsibility for the clean-up. The project took more than twenty years, required the removal of 150,000 tons of soil and cost \$190 million. Despite the colossal effort, high concentrations of DU particles can still be found in the soil, stream sediments and household dust in the vicinity of the site. In 2007, twenty three years after DU production ceased at the plant, one hundred percent of former plant workers and twenty percent of local residents who were tested by researchers from the University of Leicester still had DU in their urine. Residents in the area who are now in their early fifties have tumors, aneurysms, fatigue, kidney and thyroid problems, and immune system disorders.

The moral of New York State's environmental story is that federal regulations have not, are not, and will not, prevent negative environmental impact at nuclear weapons production facilities. Once tanks have leaked, or uranium has entered the atmosphere, no

amount of time, energy or money spent on clean-up can neutralize the impact to the local environment or people who live in the neighborhood.

Security Concerns

My comments regarding security will be shorter than those about either the economic or environmental impacts of this proposal, not because I think it is less important, but because I suspect these issues have been covered by the more than 11,000 comments you have already received from Peace Action members around the county.

New Yorkers do not believe that nuclear weapons, even the newer, safer, smaller nuclear weapons envisioned by Complex Transformation, make us safer. By spending money on nuclear weapons technology, rather than domestic needs or international aid, we are announcing, to Americans and to the international community, that our top priority is intimidation rather than mutual cooperation. The lesson of the Cold War is that the production of ever more weapons, rather than threatening our enemies into submission, creates a perpetual game of one-up-manship in which it is either strike first, or it may be too late to strike at all.

I have come here today to represent the members of Peace Action New York State in asking you to reject the Bush administration's proposal to spend \$150 billion dollars on Complex Transformation. We do not need newer nuclear warheads. We need to spend a fraction of that money on dismantling our current weapons stockpile and creating environmental containment procedures for the deleted uranium we already own. The rest should be put toward educational opportunities, improvements in infrastructure and economic development. The residents of New York State feel strongly that this proposal is a bad investment, in our economy, our environment, and our security.