



COME CLEAN
WMD Awareness Programme

News : Robert McNamara says UK should not develop new nuclear weapons capability

FORMER US DEFENCE SECRETARY, ROBERT McNAMARA, SAYS UK SHOULD NOT DEVELOP NEW NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY

Speaking today, 3rd June 2005, in London at a press conference with the WMD Awareness Programme, Mr McNamara said that the European 3, Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schroeder, are right in saying that the greatest threat to humankind is nuclear proliferation. He said that Britain should not develop a new nuclear weapons capability and that the development of new nuclear weapons is insane and a waste of money.

He also said that "Despite the end of the Cold War fifteen years ago, the US nuclear weapons policies are today essentially what they were when I was Secretary of Defense 40 years ago. If I were to characterize US and NATO nuclear policies in one sentence, I would say they are: immoral; illegal; militarily unnecessary; very, very dangerous in terms of the risk of inadvertent or accidental launch; and destructive of the non-proliferation regime that has served us so well over the 40 years."

He went on to warn of the dangers of nuclear proliferation, "North Korea states that it has produced a nuclear weapon and that it will continue to proceed on that path. Iran seems to be moving in the same direction. If proliferation proceeds, it will adversely affect the security of nations across the globe. Therefore it is an issue that should be dealt with by the United Nations Security Council.

I do not believe there are acceptable military actions by which the US can respond to North Korea and Iranian moves toward proliferation. Therefore the US and its allies in Asia and the Middle East must address issues raised by North Korea and Iran through effective diplomacy. In particular, the US should agree to meet bilaterally with both North Korea and Iran. It should do so in the context of the multilateral negotiations involving the European 3 and Asian 6."

To prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, Mr McNamara urged the current nuclear weapons states to take action to provide confidence building measures. He said, "The US and Russia should be directed to remove their nuclear forces from hair-trigger alert and from preparation for launch on warning. The five declared nuclear weapons states should follow a policy of No-First-Use, reinstate and make explicit their Negative Security Assurances pledges and accelerate reductions in their level of their nuclear forces. They will stop developments of new nuclear weapons and will not initiate action to prepare for weapons testing"

Mr McNamara is in the UK to support the aims of the WMD Awareness Programme in creating a wider public debate on the very real threat from the possession and proliferation of nuclear weapons. This comes at a vital time for the Government as a decision needs to be taken on whether to replace Trident, the UK's current nuclear weapon system.

Mr McNamara will be speaking with Professor Robert Hinde, chair of the British Pugwash Group, to Jon Snow at the Guardian Hay Festival on Sunday 5th June.

For information on the programme or for a copy of Mr McNamara's recent speech at the UN, where he set out further steps to reduce the dangers of nuclear proliferation, see www.comeclean.org.uk