



This series of bulletins explores many aspects of the global arms trade, including its participants, its promotion, its victims, and some of the lessons of history. The information is very relevant to Canberra and its identity. Despite very welcome recent additions to the advertisements at Canberra Airport that promote some positive features of our beautiful city, significant weapons advertisements remain

Bulletin 4 - November 2016

## Nuclear Weapons: Who makes these horrific devices?



Hiroshima August 1945

Nuclear weapons are the world's most destructive weapons. A single weapon can incinerate a city in an instant and leave tens or hundreds of thousands of people injured in a radioactive wasteland with virtually all health and emergency services destroyed and no rescue effort possible. There are still over 15,000 of these weapons globally, in the hands of nine countries – Russia, the US, France, China, the UK, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. The risk of their use is significant, many commentators saying it is the highest it has been for decades. Each year the nine nuclear-armed countries spend over [\\$100 billion](#) on maintaining and modernising their arsenals.

A series of government and civil society conferences - in Norway, Mexico and Austria - in 2013 and 2014 focussed attention away from talk of military doctrines based on

nuclear threats to the issue of what happens when deterrence fails, as it will unless the weapons are abolished. What will happen to people and the environment? The conferences [concluded](#), with an increasing sense of alarm and urgency, that *any* nuclear weapons use would be a humanitarian and environmental catastrophe, there would be very little assistance for the survivors, and that therefore the weapons must never be used again.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has been a consistent and strong voice for getting rid of these weapons. In 2011, it [appealed](#) to all governments to “conclude with urgency and determination negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons”.

The 2013 – 14 conferences led directly to UN discussions this year (2016) that are leading to a prohibition treaty. On October 27, the UN passed a [resolution](#) for the start of negotiations next year for a nuclear weapons ban treaty. This is historic. [ICAN](#), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, has played a key role in working with governments for this outcome. The Australian government unfortunately is working hard to undermine the process.



Just as divestment has been used successfully to help achieve other essential goals, such as the fall of apartheid, there is a global movement also to divest from companies that are involved in nuclear weapons manufacture. ICAN and the global peace organisation [Pax](#) produce a regular [report](#), *Don't Bank on the Bomb*, on the financing of nuclear weapons producers.

The 2015 report listed 26 of the companies heavily involved in the production of key components for the nuclear weapons industrial complex. They include the following:

- **Lockheed Martin (US)** is responsible for the construction of the Trident II (D5) nuclear missiles for the US and the UK, is involved in the production and maintenance of the US Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) system, and helps manage the UK Atomic Weapons Establishment.
- **BAE Systems (UK)** also contributes to the US and UK Trident II system and the US Minuteman III, and to the provision of air-to-surface missiles for France.
- **Raytheon (US)** contributes to the guidance systems of Trident II and is involved in the new W80-4 Long-Range Standoff missile for the US.
- **Thales (France)** is part of a joint venture to build the M51 submarine-launched nuclear missiles for the French Navy.

- **Northrop Grumman (US)** is involved in the production and maintenance of the Minuteman III ICBM for the US, and provides support for the US and UK Trident II system.

These are all familiar names that promote their concern for our security, including at Canberra Airport. Meanwhile they, or their parent company, are helping produce the worst of all weapons of mass destruction that threaten virtually everything on this planet.

Some argue that, because nuclear weapons are so terrible, they help to prevent wars and “keep the peace”. However this “deterrence” argument – apart from relying on the ethical problem of threatening mass destruction - can only work in a perfect world, where there are no mistakes or errors of judgement made. During the Cold War we came frighteningly close to global nuclear war on many occasions, including the Cuban Missile Crisis. ([Chatham House](#) in the UK lists 16 such occasions.)

A nuclear weapons ban treaty is coming. When these weapons are finally outlawed and the process of eliminating them begins, will Canberra Airport continue to accept advertising from those who profit by the manufacture of these worst of all weapons?

*A nuclear weapons ban treaty is coming. Will Canberra Airport then continue to accept advertising from those who profit by the manufacture of these worst of all weapons?*

The No Airport Arms Ads campaign was formed because weapons advertisements are inappropriate at a major gateway to our national capital. They help to normalise warfare by presenting sanitised images of weaponry, and they sell short our city by presenting it as a place focussed on preparing for war. New advertising panels in mid-2016 celebrating Canberra’s 100% renewable energy target and our excellent educational institutions are extremely welcome. However significant weapons ads remain, and we look forward to their replacement also by more welcoming signage.

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