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The U.S. Nuclear weapons posture must not be politicized

Thomas C. Fox | Jan. 11, 2010 NCR Today

Keep a close eye in the coming weeks on Senate politics where all Republican senators recently expressed support [1]for modernizing U.S. nuclear weapons.

Washington is negotiating with Russia to replace the START treaty, which expired last month. It is the central framework between our two nations for reducing nuclear aresenals.

It is important to remember that the U.S. bishops, in their Peace Pastoral of 1983, offered only limited conditional moral support [2]to the U.S. nuclear deterrence system, as long as our nation is moving toward the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Modernizing U.S. nuclear wepaons takes us in the opposite direction.

Nuclear weapons policy is a survival issue for all humanity. It must not be politicized.

Differences of opinion on the need for the U.S. nuclear deterrence system exist. But where we go from here should be based on a discussion of the issues from a policy and defense posture -- and not from political partisanship.

Yet recently all 40 -- always say "no" to anything Obama -- Republican senators sent a letter to the president saying that further cuts in the U.S. arsenal must be linked to "modernizing" the U.S. arsenal. All 40!

Many of these senators are Catholic and, at least on the surface, it appears they are disregarding Catholic moral precepts.

The 40 senators - enough to block formal ratification of a new START treaty, which requires 67 votes - stated in the letter that they agree that modernizing the U.S. nuclear stockpile is critical to further U.S.-Russian arms cuts.

President of the Ploughshares Fund, Joe Cirincione, recently stated [3]that there are huge vested interests in keeping nuclear weapons and modernizing those we have.

"These includes some of the people working in the US nuclear weapons laboratories. It includes some of the contractors who make a lot of money from nuclear weapons production and maintenance. It includes senators whose states have nuclear weapons bases and labs. It includes conservative ideologues who want to portray the President as weak and argue that any change to the current Cold War strategy is risky."

"All those forces are combining to resist change. In many ways, this is a very typical Washington struggle, similar to the struggle over health care, or energy, or even terrorism policy. That's what's going on now."

Stay tuned.

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