



## Obama Visit to Hiroshima Highlights Commitment to a “World Without Nuclear Weapons”

The White House press secretary issued a release on May 10 about President Obama’s upcoming trip to Vietnam and Japan May 21-28 that ends with a significant statement: “Finally, the President will make an historic visit to Hiroshima with Prime Minister Abe to highlight his continued *commitment to pursuing the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.*” [Emphasis added.]



The importance of this wording consists of much more than the fact the Hiroshima was the first place where nuclear weapons were used in warfare against a civilian population, when the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city on August 6, 1945. The explosion destroyed 90 percent of the city and immediately killed 80,000 people, with tens of thousands more dying later of radiation exposure. Three days later, a U.S. plane dropped another atomic bomb on Nagasaki, killing an estimated 40,000 people — with a similar number dying afterwards of the effects of radiation.

The terrible loss of human life occurring in these bombings has since been used as a warning by those who would ban all nuclear weapons — or turn them over to international control under the United Nations. As the debate over the ethics of using these weapons against civilians has continued during the past 70 years — with many people accepting the original justification offered by our government that they were necessary to end the war and save more lives than were lost — others have made a strong case that Japan was prepared to surrender even before the bombing and that they were, therefore, unnecessary.

There is further evidence to suggest that the primary purpose of bombing these two cities was to provide a stark demonstration of the terrible potential of nuclear weapons, and to justify the establishment of an international authority (the UN) to police what the White House just described as “the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

Before exploring that argument, we’ll take a moment to preview Obama’s upcoming visit to Japan. Ben Rhodes, the White House deputy national security advisor for strategic communications and speechwriting, stated in an article on May 10 that the presidential visit is an appropriate follow-up to recent travel to Hiroshima by U.S. Ambassador to Japan Caroline Kennedy and Secretary of State John Kerry, as well as the city’s role in hosting the Group of Seven (G-7) ministerial talks in April. An article in the *Japan Times* last month reported that during those talks “the foreign ministers of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States [would] gather ... to discuss measures to fight terrorism as well as to realize *a world without nuclear weapons....*” (Emphasis added.)

Rhodes writes:

On May 27, the President will visit the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, a site at the center of the city dedicated to the victims of the atomic bombing, where he will share his reflections on the significance of the site and the events that occurred there. He will not revisit the decision to use



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the atomic bomb at the end of World War II. Instead, he will offer a forward-looking vision focused on our shared future.

Further along, Rhodes continues:

The President's time in Hiroshima also will reaffirm America's longstanding commitment — and the President's personal commitment — to pursue the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

As the President has said, the United States has a special responsibility to continue to lead in pursuit of that objective as we are the only nation to have used a nuclear weapon.

In an opinion piece posted on the liberal-leaning *Huffpost Politics* blog on May 11, two co-directors of the Global Security program of the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Union of Concerned Scientists provided their views on "What President Obama Should Say When He Goes to Hiroshima." A major point that Obama should make, they say, is "to announce three concrete steps I will take as U.S. commander-in-chief to reduce the risk that nuclear weapons will be used again." To achieve this objective, say the scientists, the president should propose:

First, the United States will cut the number of nuclear warheads deployed on long-range forces below the cap of 1,550 in the New START treaty, down to a level of 1,000. This is a level, based on the Pentagon's analysis, that I have determined is adequate to maintain U.S. security regardless of what other countries may do.

Second, I am cutting back my administration's trillion-dollar plan to build a new generation of nuclear warheads, missiles, bombers, and submarines. I am beginning by canceling plans for the new long-range nuclear cruise missile, which I believe is unneeded and destabilizing.

Third, I am taking a step to eliminate one of the ultimate absurdities of our world: The most likely way nuclear weapons would be used again may be by mistake.

Whether the authors from the Union of Concerned Scientists realize it or not, a past president once proposed an even more drastic elimination of our arsenal of nuclear weapons. In a speech to the United Nations on September 25, 1961, former President John F. President Kennedy (who was the father of our president ambassador to Japan) warned:

"Unconditional war can no longer lead to unconditional victory.... Mankind must put an end to war or war will put an end to mankind."

On that very day Kennedy formally submitted the U.S. State Department document *Freedom From War: The United States Program for General and Complete Disarmament in a Peaceful World* (State Department Publication 7277) to the UN. That document called for a disarmed world in which "no state would have the military power to challenge the progressively strengthened U.N. Peace Force."

Some may consider Kennedy's proposed plan to be just a natural — if extreme — reaction to the fear of nuclear war that was prevalent among Americans during the Cold War (during which the Soviets tested a 50-megaton bomb — 3,000 times more powerful than those dropped on Japan).

However, had the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki not occurred, the concept of nuclear war would have been just an interesting theory, largely ignored by most. But because of the vivid images of the devastation of these two cities, nuclear war became the stuff nightmares were made of for several generations of Americans.



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Going back to the question of whether the use of the atomic bomb against Japan was necessary to achieve its immediate surrender, and therefore, save the lives of countless American soldiers whose lives would have been lost in a conventional invasion of the island nation, evidence exists to suggest otherwise.

In his article “Dropping the Bomb,” in the August 21, 1995 issue of *The New American* magazine, then-publisher John F. McManus confirmed the pointlessness of destroying two cities and killing tens of thousands of civilians — supposedly to force Japan’s surrender:

The first atomic bomb was exploded over Hiroshima on August [6], 1945; the second was detonated over Nagasaki [three] days later. On August [9]th, the Soviet Union declared war on an already beaten Japan. But other Japanese attempts to surrender had been coming fast and furious prior to these historically important developments. One of the most compelling was transmitted by General MacArthur to President Roosevelt in January 1945, prior to the Yalta conference. MacArthur’s communiqué stated that the Japanese were willing to surrender under terms which included:

- Full surrender of Japanese forces on sea, in the air, at home, on island possessions, and in occupied countries
- Surrender of all arms and munitions. Occupation of the Japanese homeland and island possessions by allied troops under American direction
- Japanese relinquishment of Manchuria, Korea, and Formosa, as well as all territory seized during the war.
- Regulation of Japanese industry to halt present and future production of implements of war.
- Turning over of Japanese which the United States might designate war criminals.
- Release of all prisoners of war and internees in Japan and in areas under Japanese control.

Amazingly, these were identical to the terms that were accepted by our government for the surrender of Japan seven months later.

If Japan was willing to surrender before the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we must seek an explanation for why our government would act in such an irrational and inhumane manner. We must ask two questions: First, who benefited from deliberately delaying Japan’s surrender, and second, who benefited from the dropping of the atomic bombs?

The prime beneficiary of delaying Japan’s surrender was the Soviet Union. When Japanese first made surrender overtures through MacArthur to President Roosevelt in January 1945, the Soviets were still fighting Germany, which didn’t surrender until May 7. Since the Western front near Berlin was nearly 5,000 miles from the Soviets’ Pacific port of Vladivostok, the Soviets required some time to shift their military resources that distance if they were to engage Japan. The U.S. refusal of Japan’s surrender offer bought them that time.

The Soviets declared war on Japan the same day the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and were at war for just one week before Japan surrendered. In return for that token participation, the Soviets received the disputed Kuril Islands and Manchuria, where they found massive stores of arms that the Japanese kept there. The Soviets turned over these arms to the communist forces of Mao Tse-tung, enabling him to gain control of all of China.

The other beneficiaries were the world’s internationalists, who had been trying since the U.S. Senate



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rejected the League of Nations treaty after World War I to have the United States enter a new incipient world government, which they would call the United Nations.

The dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated a new horror that terrified the world and would produce a fear of a terrible nuclear holocaust that lasted throughout the Cold War. Recalling the defeat of the League of Nations treaty, the internationalists needed a more convincing argument and the terrible example of what happened to the Japanese cities provided just the ammunition needed to frighten Americans into accepted the UN as mankind's "last, best hope for peace."

From the very beginning, the internationalists who created the UN (and their communist allies) intended to give the international body control over the world's nuclear weapons. U.S. Communist Party chief William Z. Foster wrote in an article appearing in the party newspaper *Daily Worker* on August 13, 1945: "If ... the new atomic power which is a product of international science is to be directed to constructive uses, the general military control of it will have to be vested in the Security Council of the United Nations."

As we saw, this plan to turn over the world's nuclear arsenal to the UN became more of a reality when President Kennedy presented *Freedom from War* to the United Nations.

Obama's itinerary calls for him to meet with Japan's Prime Minister Abe in Hiroshima to highlight his continued commitment to pursuing the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. By so doing, he will be continuing to implement an agenda begun with the bombing of that city more than 70 years ago and followed by his predecessor in the White House 55 years ago.

*Photo of President Obama: AP Images*

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