

*Nuclear Age Peace Foundation Questionnaire
Response from Senator John Edwards*

- 1) The current U.S. administration is planning to replace every nuclear weapon in its arsenal with a new H-bomb under the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program. If elected, will you cancel the RRW program?**

Stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and technology is one of our most important international goals, and we need to do much more to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and keep these weapons out of terrorists' hands. Instead of producing new nuclear weapons, we need to focus our attention on keeping America safe through proven methods, such as securing the existing stockpile of weapons and ensuring that terrorists are denied access to them, strengthening security at our ports and vital infrastructure – like chemical and power plants -- and investing in maintenance of our equipment after the disastrous war in Iraq.

- 2) Do you pledge not to build new nuclear weapons should you become president?**

As president, I will be dedicated to building a nuclear-free world. I believe we should lead by our own example, stop further testing and development, and demonstrate our credibility by beginning to reduce our own arsenal. By taking these steps, I believe we will be in a much stronger position to lead an international effort to build a nuclear free world.

- 3) If elected, will you seek to eliminate all federal funding for nuclear weapons research and instead support funding to tackle the technological challenges of nuclear disarmament and verification?**

Our ability to lead an international effort against proliferation is badly undermined by George Bush's stubborn and senseless determination to continue testing and developing nuclear weapons. As stated above, I believe we ought to shift our priorities and our funding from testing and development to disarmament and verification. I will accelerate efforts to provide states-in-need with financial and technical assistance to safeguard their nuclear facilities and nuclear scientists, and well as to improve their border controls. I support using U.S. assets to accomplish these goals.

Within six months of taking office, I will convene a summit of leading nations to develop a new Global Nuclear Compact, which will increase the international community's role in providing access to fuel for peaceful nuclear programs and for reacquiring and storing wastes produced by them; strengthen security for existing stocks of dangerous nuclear materials; limit the capabilities of dangerous states to make such materials; and ensure more frequent verification that materials are not being diverted and facilities not being misused. International experts should be given authority to mount challenge inspections, without notice, in countries that have a record of past noncompliance with their obligations. Any country that joins the NPT, and then opts out, or that violates the rules of the Global Nuclear Compact, will be subject to strong, immediate and multilateral penalties aimed specifically at its military capabilities.

4) Do you support negotiations for the global elimination of nuclear weapons, as required by Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (which has been ratified by the U.S. and 187 other nations)?

We should aspire to a nuclear-free world. The U.S. must abide by our commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and set an example for others to follow. Working with the international community to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles will be one of my top priorities as president. The very existence of nuclear weapons and the possibility that new states might acquire them presents one of the greatest threats to international peace and stability. States like Iran and North Korea can sell dangerous technologies to terrorists intent on doing us harm. Nearly two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, hundreds of tons of nuclear materials—enough material to produce over 60,000 Hiroshima-size bombs—and 20,000 nuclear warheads remain at risk in Russia. A recent study concluded that 60 percent of the country’s nuclear materials have not been secured. Unfortunately, the Bush administration has failed to address this challenge in any serious, sustained way—a policy failure that must be reversed. The U.S. will set the example for others to follow by making sure we abide by our own NPT commitments. This means opposing any plans to build new nuclear weapons and gradually reducing existing stockpiles in conjunction with other nations such as Russia.

5) Do you agree with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Secretary of Defense William Perry that the United States should take a leadership role internationally to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons?

Yes.

6) The U.S. and Russia, between them, maintain some 3,500 nuclear weapons on high alert status. If elected, will you negotiate with Russia to remove all nuclear weapons from high alert status?

Last year, in a Council on Foreign Relations task force I co-led with former Republican Congressman Jack Kemp, we concluded that the United States ought to initiate a new era of cooperation with Russia on nuclear nonproliferation. Our most important goal should be to draw Russia into the Western political mainstream through continued engagement and, when necessary, diplomatic and economic pressure. This goal includes improving the posture of both nations’ nuclear arsenals on the path to the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

7) In 1996, the United States signed the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which prohibited “any nuclear weapons test.” In 1999, the U.S. Senate failed to ratify this treaty. If elected, will you work to win the ratification of this treaty?

Yes. In 1999, I voted to adopt the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. As president, I will refocus attention on this important priority. The U.S. needs to set a clear example for the rest of the world that it is serious about an international regime which controls, limits, and restricts the testing of nuclear weapons. Doing so would push other nuclear-capable countries that have not signed the treaty, such as India and Pakistan, to take similar steps.

8) The U.S. currently reserves the option of using nuclear weapons first. If elected, will you support a commitment that legally binds the United States to no first use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances?

While I do not think it is responsible for a presidential candidate to talk specifically about when he or she would or would not use nuclear weapons, I strongly believe the world will be a better place without nuclear weapons and without nuclear strikes.