



**Senator Feinstein Urges Secretary Rumsfeld to  
Abandon Efforts to Build Nuclear Bunker Buster**  
May 2, 2005

**Washington, DC** – *U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to heed research by the National Academy of Sciences disputing the effectiveness of the robust nuclear earth penetrator (RNEP) program.*

*The National Academies report states that a nuclear bunker buster could result in massive casualties at ground level and would be unable to contain chemical and biological weapons stored underground without directly landing in the chamber storing the weapons.*

*Below is the text of the letter sent to Secretary Rumsfeld today:*

**The Honorable Donald Rumsfeld  
Secretary of Defense  
Department of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301**

**Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:**

**I am writing to follow up on our dialogue on nuclear weapons issues and to bring to your attention the conclusions of a National Academy of Sciences report on earth-penetrating nuclear weapons.**

**As I stated yesterday in the Senate Defense Appropriations subcommittee hearing, I strongly oppose research and development of a nuclear bunker buster because, according to the laws of physics, it is impossible to develop a weapon that can survive a thrust into the earth and contain millions of cubic feet of radioactive fallout.**

**Your response (April 27, 2005) surprised me as you contended that this is just a study. Frankly, I find that difficult to believe in view of the fact that the President's budget requests \$25 million to increase the Nevada Test Site's time-to-test readiness from the current 24 to 36 months to 18 months, and \$7.8 million for a Modern Pit Facility that could build 450 new plutonium pits per year. This number is not necessary if, under the Moscow Treaty, the U.S. is to decrease its strategic nuclear force to 1,700 to 2,200 warheads by 2012. Also, last year the 5-year budget contained \$485 million for the "bunker busters."**

**The National Academy of Sciences study is the strongest evidence to date that moving forward with the robust nuclear earth penetrator (RNEP) program, in fact, makes no sense**

at all. That study, sponsored by the Department of Defense's Threat Reduction Agency at the request of Congress, confirmed that "earth penetrating nuclear weapons cannot go deep enough to avoid massive casualties at ground level, and they could still kill up to a million people or more if used in heavily populated areas."

In addition, with regard to hidden stores of chemical and biological weapons, the report found that a "nuclear weapon would be effective in destroying the agent only if detonated in the chamber where agents are stored." It also concluded that in an attack by a nuclear weapon on a biological weapons facility the "release of as little as 0.1 kilogram of anthrax spores will result in a calculated number of fatalities that is comparable on average to the number calculated for a 3 kiloton nuclear earth-penetrator weapon."

Why, then, should we support research and development of a nuclear weapon that will inevitably result in the deaths of up to a million people or more if used in densely populated areas and prove ineffective against deeply buried chemical and biological weapons depots?

Now is the time to build on the decision made by Congress last year to eliminate funding for the RNEP program and reclaim a leadership position for the United States on nuclear nonproliferation issues. By reopening the nuclear door, we send the wrong signal to the rest of the world about our intentions and only encourage other nations to follow our lead. Simply put, additional nuclear weapons will make our world less safe, not more.

I believe the Administration should focus its resources and attention on taking actions that will actually protect Americans and America's national security interests such as:

1. strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty;
2. expanding and accelerating Nunn-Lugar threat reduction programs;
3. securing and removing nuclear weapons-usable materials from vulnerable sites around the world; and,
4. improving our intelligence capabilities in relation to underground targets and expanding conventional options to put them at risk.

Instead of having this debate yet again, we should work together on our common goal to make the United States and our friends and allies more safe from the threat of nuclear terror. I would appreciate your thoughts on the National Academy of Sciences study and the issues I have raised in this letter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

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