



Senator Feinstein Argues Against Reopening Nuclear Door June 30, 2005

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today urged the Senate to eliminate funding from an Energy and Water Appropriations bill for the development of a “robust nuclear earth penetrator,” which would have the effect of reopening the nuclear door. The following is the prepared floor statement by Senator Feinstein:

“Mr. President, I was a girl of 13 when a nuclear bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Approximately 80,000 people died from the initial blast and 60,000 people died from radiation poisoning for a total of 140,000 people dead. Three days later, the second nuclear bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Approximately 75,000 of the city’s 240,000 residents were killed instantly. In total, approximately 100,000 people died due to the blast.

When we are debating nuclear weapons issues, these are the images we should keep in mind.

I rise today once again to address a critical issue related to the security of the American people and our nuclear nonproliferation efforts: the renewed push by the Administration to reopen the nuclear door, including funding for a nuclear bunker buster.

I have argued before on the Senate floor that such actions – combined with the policy of unilateralism and preemption — run counter to our values and nonproliferation efforts and put U.S. national security interests and American lives at risk.

Therefore, Senator Kennedy, Feingold, Dorgan, Levin, Wyden, Clinton, Mikulski, Lautenberg, Boxer, Reed and Harkin and I now offer an amendment to the FY 2006 Energy and Water Appropriations bill to eliminate \$4 million to resume the study of the development of Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. The Amendment redirects the funds saved for debt reduction.

The time has come for this Senate to send a clear and unambiguous message to the White House and the Pentagon: we will not support funding for programs that will only re-open the nuclear door. We have had this debate before.

Congress made a strong statement last year in deleting funding for the development of new nuclear weapons by eliminating \$27.5 million for the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator and \$9 million for the Advanced Concepts Initiative, which included the study for the development of low-yield weapons. This action was due in no small part to the leadership of Representative David Hobson, Chairman of the House Appropriations Energy Committee.

The House took a strong position of opposition and they are to be commended. In fact, the House removed new nuclear weapons from all bills, including the authorization in the defense bill.

This was a consequential victory for those of us who believe the United States sends the wrong signal to the rest of the world by reopening the nuclear door and beginning the testing and development of a new generation of nuclear weapons.

And that is why I was so disappointed to learn that the Administration requested funds this year to resume the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator study. There should be no doubt that Secretary Rumsfeld is determined to get this funding.

As a matter of fact, it is Secretary Rumsfeld who asked the Secretary of Energy to place the \$4 million in the Energy budget and \$4.5 million in the Defense Department budget thereby splitting the amount requested for the RNEP. In my view, he hoped to weaken opposition to the RNEP program by splitting the budget among two Departments, so that if he could not get funding in one, he could get it in the other.

The House had the foresight to reject this idea and reasserted its determination not to move forward with the bunker buster study. During its mark-up of the FY 2006 Defense Authorization bill, the House Armed Services Committee eliminated all the Department of Energy funding for RNEP and transferred the \$4 million to the Air Force budget for work on a conventional, non-nuclear, version of the bunker buster.

As House Armed Services Committee member Silvestre Reyes (D-TX) stated, the Committee took the “N” or “nuclear” out of the RNEP program.

Following the Armed Services Committee action, Chairman Hobson and Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-CA) led the effort to eliminate the Department of Energy funding of \$4 million for the bunker buster in its mark-up of the FY 2006 Energy and Water Appropriations bill. That bill also eliminated funding for the Modern Pit Facility and banned site selection for the facility for FY 2006. And, finally, the House FY 2006 Defense Appropriations bill limits research for a “bunker buster” to a conventional program.

These three actions by authorizers and appropriators, Republicans and Democrats alike, have dealt yet another blow to the Administration’s plans to develop new nuclear weapons and reinforced the clear intent of Congress that we should not go down that path because it will only encourage the very proliferation we are trying to prevent.

And the Administration may be listening. The Statements of Administration Policy on the House Defense Authorization and the House Energy and Water appropriations bills fail to mention the cuts made to the nuclear bunker buster.

Why should the Senate continue to fund programs that are rapidly losing support in the House and the Administration?

Now, the Senate has an opportunity to follow the House’s lead. And so, Senator Kennedy and I have come to the floor to offer an amendment to do just that.

During previous debates on this issue, we have argued that, according to the laws of physics, it is simply not possible for a missile casing on a nuclear warhead to survive a thrust into the earth to take out a hard and deeply buried military target without spewing millions of tons of cubic feet of radiation into the atmosphere.

Consider this: a 1-kiloton nuclear weapon detonated 25-50 feet underground would dig a crater the size of Ground Zero in New York and eject 1 million cubic feet of radioactive debris into the air.

Given the insurmountable physics problems associated with burrowing a warhead deep into the earth, you would need a weapon with more than 100 kilotons of yield to destroy an underground target at a depth of 1,000 feet.

Yet, the maximum feasible depth of a bunker buster is about 35 feet. At that depth, a 100-kiloton bunker buster would scatter 100 million cubic feet of radioactive debris into the atmosphere. There is no known missile casing that can survive a 1,000 foot thrust into the earth to avoid overwhelming and catastrophic consequences. And, I must point out, the head of the National Nuclear Security Administration agrees.

At the March 2, 2005 House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee, Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher asked Ambassador Linton Brooks the following question:

“I just want to know is there any way a [Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator] of any size that we would drop will not produce a huge amount of radioactive debris?”

And the Ambassador replied: “No, there is not.”

When Congresswoman Tauscher asked him how deep he thought a bunker buster could go he answered:

“...a couple of tens of meters maybe. I mean certainly – I really must apologize for my lack of precision if we in the administration have suggested that it was possible to have a bomb that penetrated far enough to trap all fallout. I don’t believe that – I don’t believe the laws of physics will ever let that be true.”

So, here we have the Administration agreeing that the inevitable result of using a nuclear bunker buster is massive radioactive contamination and substantial loss of life. But, what do the experts say about the effects of a nuclear bunker buster?

An April 27, 2005 National Academies of Sciences study commissioned by Congress to study the anticipated health and environmental effects of nuclear earth penetrator weapons found that:

- current experience and empirical predictions indicate that earth-penetrator weapons cannot penetrate to depths required for total containment of the effects of a nuclear explosion;
- It would take a 300 kiloton weapon, at a penetration of 3 meters (or 10 feet), to destroy hard and deeply buried targets at 200 meters (or 656 feet).

- To destroy a hard and deeply buried target at 300 meters, you would need a one megaton weapon.
- The number of casualties from an earth penetrator weapon detonated at a few meters depth is, for all practical purposes, equal to that from a surface burst of the same weapon yield, and;
- For attacks near or in densely populated areas using nuclear earth penetrator weapons on hard and deeply buried targets, the number of casualties can range from thousands to more than a million, depending primarily on weapon yield.

The bottom line is that a bunker buster cannot penetrate into the earth deeply enough to avoid massive casualties and the spewing of millions of cubic feet of radioactive materials into the atmosphere. It would result in the deaths of up to a million people or more if used in the densely populated areas. This is the strongest evidence to date that we should not move forward with this study and put a stop to it once and for all.

In reality, this has never been about a study. Rather, it has been about the intent of this Administration to develop new nuclear weapons.

This year the request is for \$8.5 million. In Fiscal Year 2007, the request will increase to \$17.5 million including \$14 million for the Department of Energy and \$3.5 million for the Pentagon. And while the Administration is silent this year on how much it plans to spend on the program in future years, let us not forget that last year's budget request called for spending \$485 million on the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator over five years. This five year figure was omitted this year.

Let us look for a brief moment at the policies underlying this request for they too have not changed.

- The 2002 Nuclear Posture Review places nuclear weapons as part of the strategic triad therefore blurring the distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons. This makes them easier to use.
- National Security Directive-17 indicates that the United States will engage in a first use of nuclear weapons – an historic statement in itself – to respond to a chemical or biological attack.

In essence, these policies encourage other nations to develop their own nuclear weapons thereby putting American lives and our national security interests at risk. We are telling the world, when it comes to nuclear weapons, do as we say, not as we do.

There are alternatives. I have just been briefed by Northrop Grumman on a program they are working on with Boeing to develop a conventional bunker buster – the Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP) – which is designed to go deeper than any nuclear bunker buster and take out 25 percent of the underground and deeply buried targets.

This is a 30,000 pound weapon, 20 feet in length, with 6000 pounds of high explosive. It will be delivered in a B-2 or B-52 bomber and can burrow 60 meters into the ground through

5,000 psi (pounds per square inch) of reinforced concrete. It will burrow 8 meters into the ground through 10,000 psi reinforced concrete.

We have already spent \$6 million on this program and design and ground testing are scheduled to be completed next year.

We should focus on these programs that will put these underground targets at risk without re-opening the nuclear door. We have a solemn obligation to spend our resources in the most effective manner to make this country safer and more secure.

That is why I am so concerned about this Administration's decision to come back to Congress and request additional funds for new nuclear weapons. The Administration's request makes us more vulnerable to the very nuclear threat we are trying to prevent.

There are far more effective ways for the United States to protect our homeland and at the same time support substantive and meaningful nuclear nonproliferation efforts. I hope this Administration will agree to work with Congress to do just that.

I urge my colleagues to support the Amendment which mirrors what the House has already done and strikes funding for a program that will only re-open the nuclear door and make us all less safe."