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"Limited" nuke wars loom

This is the second article in a series looking into the implications of Lockheed Santa Cruz' plans to build Trident II missile parts at their Empire Grade plant.

County Supervisors have now approved the use permit allowing Lockheed to proceed pending Congressional funding for Trident II.

In the first issue of the *Phoenix*, we noted that US nuclear policy explicitly allows this nation to initiate the use of atomic weapons in a conflict.

The following article focuses on the role of Trident II in current and emerging US nuclear war plans.

We are grateful for the insights by Daniel Ellsberg, the former Rand Corporation military analyst who helped expose the behind-the-scenes history of the Vietnam War by giving the Pentagon Papers to the New York Times.

"Trident II is part of a program which is consciously directed to making first use of nuclear weapons 'safer'."

Daniel Ellsberg

"None of our nuclear arsenal, at this point anyway, at least as interpreted by the Defense Department, is intended for first strike use."
Representative Leon Panetta

The major bone of contention so far in the local Lockheed debate has been whether or not Trident II missiles will be "first strike weapons."

Former Lockheed engineer Robert Aldridge and other Trident opponents suspect that the US military is actually preparing for a nuclear first strike against the Soviet Union, and that Trident II will play a key role.

"We've come close to initiating nuclear attacks a dozen times."

Trident supporters, on the other hand, find this notion absurd.

"It is inconceivable that any American official would entertain the thought of a first strike. Why would anyone risk the huge loss in lives?" writes Lockheed's John McGlothlan.

Interestingly enough, McGlothlan's basic premise is supported by defense analyst Daniel Ellsberg.

"Aldridge tends to assume that the pressure is to actually carry out a first strike," Ellsberg told the *Phoenix*, "but I doubt that very much."

In fact, Ellsberg believes that Trident II's mission is quite close to what local proponents have claimed all along—it is intended to deter the Soviet Union from using their nuclear weapons.

Although Ellsberg rejects the contention that US war planners are considering a massive first strike, he also lashed out at the innocent belief that this country would not start any atomic war.

To the contrary, he asserts, "We've come close to initiating nuclear attacks on other people a dozen times."

Nixon's plans to H-bomb North Vietnam in the fall of 1969 were thwarted only by that year's Mobilization Against the War, says Ellsberg.

And now, he believes, "We've returned to a concept of the '50s, that we can't afford to substitute conventional weapons for nuclear; we must rely on the threat of nuclear bombing and the practice of it if necessary."

"I think Trident II is a back-up for limited nuclear war."

For this reason, Ellsberg contends that "first strike weapons" like Trident II are designed to discourage the Soviet Union from retaliating when the US chooses to launch a limited atomic attack against a nation which has no nuclear weapons.

"I think Trident II is a back-up for limited nuclear war, in order to give us a free hand to initiate various kinds of limited nuclear operations all over the world," he charges.

"Of course," Ellsberg observes, "you could initiate a limited nuclear war without having a first strike capability, but it would be much more risky."

A "disarming first strike" is an atomic blitzkrieg which is so effective that the opponent would have practically no surviving nuclear weapons with which to retaliate.



"The crucial issue is first use," believes Daniel Ellsberg.

Through the 1950s and early 1960s, the United States was capable of such an attack on the Soviet Union. And although some officials suggested a "pre-emptive strike" against Russia at this time, Eisenhower never seriously contemplated it, according to Ellsberg.

When the USSR began to develop their own missiles during the late '60s, US first strike capabilities vanished.

A successful first strike against today's Soviet weapons would require not only highly accurate warheads to knock out all land-based missiles; it would also demand a flawless anti-submarine war to limit retaliation from missile-toting subs.

Although there is agreement that the US is far ahead in both missile accuracy and anti-submarine technology right now, predictions as to when this nation will again have a first strike capability vary widely.

Aldridge thinks it may be a reality by the mid-1980s. Ellsberg says most estimates he's seen are more like 8 to 15 years from now.

Whenever first strike is reborn, Ellsberg believes, the threat of small nuclear wars occurring will "certainly increase" because of the lower chance of a Soviet retaliation.

Dialogue between Trident supporters and opponents in Santa Cruz has been virtually nil.

Supporters have shown their ignorance of the fact that the United States has frequently threatened to initiate nuclear wars during the past three decades.

Opponents, on the other hand, hammer away at the notion that Trident will surely bring the Ultimate Holocaust, an idea understandably alien to the weapon's supporters.

"To oppose any particular weapon system like Trident in the abstract . . . is a mistake," says Ellsberg. "The crucial issue is first use."

"Unless the American public becomes conscious that any first use of nuclear weapons **must** be ruled out, the arms race on both sides is fated to continue and inevitably to explode."

John Keith