

## 100 SECONDS TO MIDNIGHT

Since it became the first (and thus far, only) country to drop atomic bombs on a civilian population, the U.S. government has been attempting to refine its capability to fight and win a nuclear war. Many activists and scientists have challenged both the morality and the feasibility of such an endeavor. Both the long and short-term outcomes are unthinkable. But the war planners have continued to advance it as a realistic and desirable option, despite the unprecedented devastation and environmental catastrophe the use of nuclear weapons would wreak both on the intended targets and throughout the world.

*(The following is excerpted from **Democracy Now**. To listen to the entire program or read a transcript, go to [https://www.democracynow.org/2020/2/7/us\\_new\\_low\\_yield\\_nuclear\\_weapons?](https://www.democracynow.org/2020/2/7/us_new_low_yield_nuclear_weapons?))*

**AMY GOODMAN:** As the nation focused on President Trump's impeachment trial, a major story recently broke about a new development in U.S. nuclear weapons policy that received little attention. The Federation of American Scientists revealed in late January the U.S. Navy had for the first time deployed a submarine armed with a low-yield Trident nuclear warhead. The *USS Tennessee* deployed from Kings Bay Submarine Base in Georgia in late 2019, armed with a warhead which is estimated to have about a third of the explosive power of the atomic bomb the U.S. dropped on Hiroshima.

The deployment is facing criticism at home and abroad. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN, called the news "an alarming development that heightens the risk of nuclear war." On Capitol Hill, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Adam Smith said..."This destabilizing deployment further increases the potential for miscalculation during a crisis." Smith also criticized the Pentagon for its inability and unwillingness to answer congressional questions about the weapon over the past few months. Meanwhile, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov [stated], "This reflects the fact that the United States is actually lowering the nuclear threshold and that they are conceding the possibility of them waging a limited nuclear war and winning this war. This is extremely alarming," he said.

Goodman interviewed William Arkin, the reporter who broke the story of this new weapon.

**AMY GOODMAN:** So, talk about what this — what does it mean, "low-yield" nuclear weapon?

**WILLIAM ARKIN:** Well, "low-yield" is actually a little bit wrong. The United States actually possesses nuclear weapons with even smaller yields than five to six kilotons, which is what this is estimated at. That's 5,000 to 6,000 tons. And so, that would be — if you thought of it in Manhattan terms, it would be probably something on the order of 20 square city blocks obliterated and radiation coming from that area...

"The U.S.-Russian situation is certainly tense, but ...what this weapon is [really] about is having a more usable nuclear weapon against countries like Iran and North Korea, where in fact a shocking first use of nuclear weapons, a preemptive use of nuclear weapons, would be used to either stop a war or to destroy a very important target, say, for instance, if there were a missile on a launchpad ready to strike at the United States. ... You have to look at this new weapon and say, "In its most basic terms, what does it give the United States that it doesn't already have?" [It gives] a prompt capability, being able to strike at a target in 15 minutes or less, and, second, an assured capability — that is, a missile that's able to penetrate any enemy air defenses...That makes it a particularly dangerous weapon in the hands of the current president, because I've heard from many people... that they were concerned that Donald Trump... might be more prone to accept the use of nuclear weapons as one of the options when he was presented with a long list of options. One senior officer said to me, "We're afraid that if we present Donald Trump with a hundred options of what to do in a certain crisis, and only one of them is a nuclear option, that he might go down the list and choose the one that is the most catastrophic."

**AMY GOODMAN:** The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists recently advanced the Doomsday Clock 20 seconds closer to midnight, the clock a symbolic timekeeper that tracks the likelihood of nuclear war and other existential threats. It now stands closer to catastrophe than at any time since its creation in 1947. This is Mary Robinson, former Irish president, former U.N. human rights chief, speaking last month as the clock was set to 100 seconds to midnight.

**MARY ROBINSON:** The Doomsday Clock is a globally recognized indicator of the vulnerability of our existence. It's a striking metaphor for the precarious state of the world, but, most frighteningly...it's a metaphor backed by rigorous scientific scrutiny. This is no mere analogy. We are now 100 seconds to midnight, and the world needs to wake up. Our planet faces two simultaneous existential threats: the climate crisis and nuclear weapons.

**Distributed Sunday, February 16, 2020**  
**JOIN US TO RESIST THIS ENDLESS WAR!**  
<https://newhavensundayvigil.wordpress.com>

*Since 1999, the New Haven Sunday Vigil has been held here every week from 12-1pm at Broadway, Park and Elm Streets in New Haven, CT, to emphatically say NO to the state of permanent, ongoing war against the world being waged by our government and its allies, a war which is terrorizing the planet and destroying lives in order to consolidate enormous power and wealth in the hands of a very few people.*