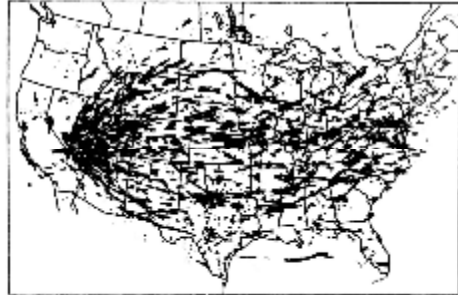


DOWNWINDERS UNITED



For Release January 7, 2007

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Downwinders See Divine Strake, Other Developments as Precursors to Resumed Nuclear Testing

Downwinders are charging that the detonation of Divine Strake scheduled for this spring at the Nevada Test Site is in all likelihood part of the Bush administration's desire to eventually resume testing.

The test would detonate 700 tons of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil to simulate blasts that may be able to destroy underground targets.

According to Defense Department budget documents, the Divine Strake test is designed to identify the smallest nuclear yield necessary to destroy such targets. But after critics pointed out that Congress specifically eliminated funding for new nuclear weapons such as bunker busters and mini nukes, the Defense Department claimed that the inclusion of the word "Nuclear" was a mistake - a claim downwinders aren't buying.

Contends Preston Truman of Downwinders United, "In truth, they made an error that disclosed what they did not want the public to know -- that the test is indeed nuclear-related and that research in the development of nuclear bunker busters is still ongoing despite the wishes of Congress and the vast majority of downwind residents."

The 700-ton conventional blast, which is a test for both conventional and nuclear weapons, is scheduled for this spring at the Nevada Test Site.

Congress has repeatedly rejected funding for research into the nuclear bunker buster and it has refused funding for any nuclear weapons concepts that would require new testing. Yet the Divine Stake Test is providing data useful for the development of a nuclear bunker buster in defiance of Congress' expressed position, charges Downwinders United.

Furthermore, the size of the blast itself far exceeds the capacity for delivering a conventional weapon of that size. "Bunker busters of that yield would have to be mini nukes," says Truman. "Does the Pentagon really think the American public, especially those downwind, are that slow on the uptake?"

Further evidence of administration plans to enter a new nuclear era are reflected in an exclusive report by William J. Broad in this morning's *New York Times*. The article suggests that the upcoming decision by the U.S. on developing reliable nuclear warheads will result in weapons that may require testing to verify that they will work. According to the article, if approved by Bush and funded by congress, the plan "would require a huge refurbishment of the nation's complex for nuclear design and manufacturing, with the overall bill estimated at more than \$100 billion."

The Bush administration is expected to announce next week a decision regarding the country's first new nuclear warhead in nearly 20 years. The announcement will be made through the interagency Nuclear Weapons Council whose decision, according to the *NY Times* article "raises the question of whether the United States will ultimately be forced to end its moratorium on underground nuclear testing to make sure the new design works."

The article quotes Bryan Wilkes, a spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration of the Energy Department, saying the government won't proceed with the Reliable Replacement Warhead "if it is determined that testing is needed." But other administration officials cited in the *NY Times* article, including Robert Joseph, the under secretary of state for arms control and international security, have said the White House should make no commitment on testing.

For full article

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/07/washington/07nuke.html?_r=2&th=&oref=slogin&emc=th&pagewanted=all&oref=slogin