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## Voices of Reason vs. the Doomsday Lobby

By John LaForge  
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In 2010, three high-ranking military officials including Air Force Colonel B. Chance Saltzman, Chief of the US Air Force's Strategic Plans and Policy Division who had worked directly for the Secretary of the Air Force, published a major policy paper suggesting that the US should unilaterally cut its nuclear arsenal by more than 90 percent. The paper argued, "...the United States could address military utility concerns with only 311 nuclear weapons in its nuclear force structure...." With about 1,300 warheads on Trident submarines, another 500 or so on heavy bombers like B-52s or B2s, 180 on fighter-bombers in Europe and the last 450 on top of the Minuteman rockets, cutting to 311 would clearly mean the ICBMs would go the way of the Berlin Wall (since the favored war-fighting nukes are on submarines which can be kept secret from the American public and everybody else).

An even more direct dismissal of land-based missiles came in 2012, when Gen. James Cartwright, a former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, chaired a large study group which concluded that US ICBMs are not useful. The committee's report was signed by then Senator Chuck Hagel who would later become the Secretary of Defense. At a Senate committee hearing that year, Gen. Cartwright defended his findings in formal testimony. Gen. Cartwright's study said: "No sensible argument has been put forward for using nuclear weapons to solve any of the major 21st century problems we face .... In fact, nuclear weapons have on balance arguably become more a part of the problem than any solution."

Then, as a sort of exclamation point for our Revised Edition, on December 3, 2014, former Secretary of Defense William Perry declared, “ICBMs aren’t necessary ... they’re not needed.” Speaking to a group of military affairs writers, Sec. Perry called for the complete elimination of the last Minuteman III, saying, “Any reasonable definition of deterrence will not require [the ICBMs].” Perry warns that ICBMs, “are simply too easy to launch on bad information and would be the most likely source of an accidental nuclear war. He referred to the ICBM force as “‘destabilizing’ in that it invites an attack from another power.” On the former secretary’s web site, the “William J. Perry Project,” he declares emphatically, “Nuclear weapons no longer provide for our security, they endanger it.”

### **ICBM Coalition Learned to Love the Bomb**

These voices of reason – and earlier ones – have been drowned out by the powerful self-styled “ICBM Coalition” – a group of 10 U.S. Senators with large Air Force Bases in their states. The mixed group of Democrats and Republicans are from Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, Utah, and Louisiana. (Utah has Hill Air Force Base where Minuteman IIIs are tested and refurbished; Louisiana has Barksdale Air Base, headquarters of Global Strike Command (its real name) which controls Air Force bombings across the Middle East and Africa.)

The 10 senators would evidently rather take their chances with accidental nuclear war, as long as billions keep pouring into their home states and into the bank accounts of weapons contractors that support their election campaigns. They are John Hoeven (R) and Heidi Heitkamp (D) (earlier Kent Conrad) of N. Dakota; Mike Enzi (R) and John Barrasso (R) from Wyo.; Jon Tester (D) and Steve Daines (R) of Mont.; Orrin Hatch (R) and Mike Lee (R), from Utah; and finally Bill Cassidy (R), and Dave Vitter (R) of Louisiana.

Sometimes called the “Doomsday Lobby,” the ICBM Coalition works to stop further reductions in the nuclear arsenal “to protect jobs” (i.e. votes) in their districts, and large military contracts upgrading and maintaining the rockets in their ready-for-launch alert status. The 10 lead moves in Congress to spend several hundred billion dollars to replace rather than retire the land-based arsenal.

In 2012, a Russian proposal to cut 1,950 active warheads now on various launchers down to 1,550 was halted by Montana’s Jon Tester and (then) Max Baucus. The senators didn’t say the cut would weaken the force. They warned the move would mean closing a missile base – probably their beloved Malmstrom AFB in Montana. Bill Hartung with the Center for Responsive Politics reported the same year that the 10 senators over their careers had gotten \$513,000 from the military’s four largest missile contractors: GE, Northrup-Grumman, Boeing, and United Technologies.

Taking the generals and Pentagon chiefs at their word, it’s not just the missiles that endanger our security, but the Senators from Missileville.