

Biggest, deadliest weapons remain in arsenal

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's most powerful and modern weapons will still be ready, in missile silos on land and aboard nuclear submarines prowling the oceans, even after the cut-backs President Bush is ordering in the nation's arsenal.

"The world has changed, but insurance is still a good idea," Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said over the weekend. "Under this plan, we believe we will have enough."

And "enough" means some 2,000 nuclear warheads ready to be hurled aloft by 550 intercontinental nuclear missiles, as well as the more than 5,000 nuclear warheads that could be launched from the Navy's 24 ballistic missile submarines.

Cheney says nuclear force is insurance policy

The core of the nation's nuclear defense remains a mighty one, particularly until the Soviets say they are willing to agree to further cuts in the most deadly weapons — the land-based, multiple-warhead ballistic missiles.

Even though Bush ordered startling cuts in the nation's arsenal of nuclear weaponry, much remains untouched by his initiative.

In his Friday speech, the president moved to sharply reduce the number of nuclear arms used at sea and on the battlefield, known as tactical nuclear weapons. He also took off hair-trigger alert status the front line of the nation's nuclear bomber forces, as well as the old-

est sector of its intercontinental ballistic missiles, the Minuteman IIs.

But the premier weaponry will remain in place.

"We are doing nothing that would put the nation at risk," Gen. Colin Powell said.

Bush ordered the 450 single-warhead Minuteman II missiles off alert and accelerated moves that will mean their eventual elimination.

But that still leaves the nation defended by 50 Peacekeeper missiles, with 10 warheads each, and 500 triple-warhead Minuteman III missiles in their silos.

That means that a force now armed

with 2,450 nuclear warheads will retain the destructive power of the 2,000 most modern nuclear warheads.

And there is no change in the alert status of the Peacekeepers or the Minuteman IIs, Air Force officials said.

Even though Bush ordered the 280 premier long-range bombers, and their tankers, off their alert status — ending the practice of keeping a portion of them ready to roll, engines running, on their runways, in case of sudden attack — all the B-52s and the B-1Bs will be maintained.

Their nuclear bombs and nuclear cruise missiles will also be kept in storage, but could be reloaded in the bombers within a day's time, officials said.

Cold Warriors brace for new world reality

FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE, Wash. (AP) — Air Force pilots who once tensely awaited orders to launch nuclear air strikes against the Soviet Union found their aircraft disarmed and their futures uncertain Monday.

"I never thought we'd live to see the full reduction," said Maj. Joe Nelson, a KC-135 pilot.

"I thought it was a misprint when I read it in the paper," he said of President Bush's "stand-down" order.

Since 1957, the Air Force has placed B-52 long-range bombers and the KC-135 tankers that refueled them in flight on 24-hour alert. They often waited with engines running, braced to launch strikes against the Soviet Union the instant the command was given.

But the command never came, and stunning changes in U.S.-Soviet relations resulted Friday in Bush's decision to reduce the nation's nuclear arsenal.

The Soviet Foreign Ministry said Monday it would send a top diplomat to Washington to open talks on Bush's arms control proposals. It said unilateral cuts were not ruled out, but Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev said he was in no hurry to give specific answers to Bush's suggestions.

Since Friday, crews at Fairchild and 10 other Strategic Air Command bases removed nuclear cruise missiles from the bombers and locked them away in storage.

The planes were sent to maintenance shops to be ready for regular flight-line duties.

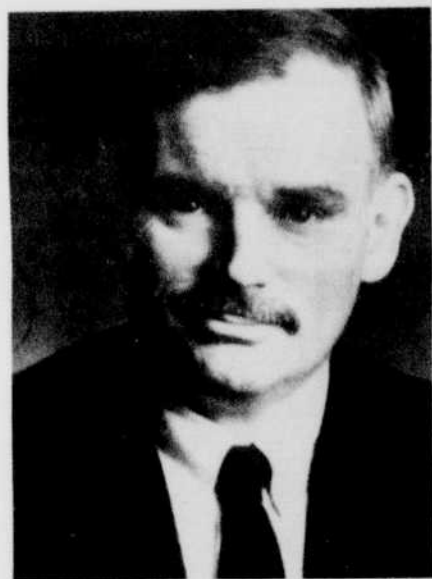
"Our families will like it. The divorce rate should go way down," Master Sgt. Jack Sprague said. "We're still waiting to see what happens next. We're wondering if we will still have jobs."

As many as eight of the 325th Bombardment Squadron's 20 or more bombers — the exact number remains classified — were on the alert "pad" at all times, armed, fueled and ready to go.

Waiting on alert could involve sitting in a plane for 12 hours at a stretch.

That could be boring, but it had its exhilarating moments, said Master Sgt. Keith Krebs, a B-52 gunner.

WAR OF THE WORDS



Freedom of Expression, the University and the Media

Everette E. Dennis

Executive Director
The Freedom Forum
Media Studies Center
New York

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1991 ♦ EMU BALLROOM, 3:30 P.M.

1991 CONVOCATION

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Following the convocation lecture, members of the university community will join Dennis for a panel discussion on First Amendment issues. The panel will be moderated by journalism dean Arnold Ismach. Other panelists will be

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Associate Professor, Journalism

James Klonoski
Professor, Political Science

Paul Holbo
Associate Provost for Academic Affairs

Lauren Kessler
Professor, Journalism

Christopher Blair
Editor, Oregon Daily Emerald

Public Reception, EMU Ballroom, 5:30 p.m.

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