

OPINION

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A Massive Deployment of Nukes Next Door

Living with the bomb

BY MARTHA BASKIN

The ad pierces your consciousness and catches you by surprise. Plastered on the side of Seattle's King County Metro it hurls you momentarily back in time, to a time when nuclear weapons were an imminent threat to our survival. Or did the era never end?

The ad — sponsored by local Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action — reads: “20 miles west of Seattle is the largest concentration of deployed nuclear weapons in the U.S.”

Behind this text is a map, depicting the proximity of Seattle to Naval Base Kitsap, located on the eastern shore of Hood Canal, one of the four main basins in Washington state's Puget Sound. The base is home port for eight of the US Navy's 14 Trident ballistic missile submarines as well as an underground nuclear weapons storage complex. Together they're believed to store more than



1,300 nuclear warheads, according to Hans Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists.

This is arguably the biggest single concentration of nuclear warheads not only in the U.S., but in the world.

King County Metro was initially hesitant to run the ad, until Kristensen confirmed its accuracy. The combined explosive power contained in the base is equivalent to more than 14,000 Hiroshima bombs, he says.

But the most surprising thing to him about the underground nuclear weapons storage complex — known as the Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific and completed in 2012 — is the extent to which a \$294 million bunker has largely escaped public debate, except for a few industry-related articles.

The enormous amount of nuclear weaponry in Seattle's backyard is no secret to industry analysts, military contractors, or public officials. But the general public is less informed, say those who initiated Ground Zero's bus campaign. They describe the goals of the

advertisements as two-fold: to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding the naval base, and to re-ignite public debate about nuclear weapons in the U.S. arsenal.

“This is a wake up call,” says Ground Zero's Leonard Eiger. “Why do these nuclear weapons exist 70 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why do we continue to not only deploy them but why are we maintaining them and planning for a new fleet that could run over \$100 billion? What are the economic, political and social costs?”

The Washington Military Alliance — a group formally established in 2014 by Gov. Jay Inslee, which advocates for military investment in the state — claims that Naval Base Kitsap is a driving economic force in the region.

The U.S. Navy has presented a plan to spend more than a trillion dollars during the next 30 years upgrading and maintaining the entire triad of U.S. based nuclear weapons, according to Martin Fleck of Physicians for Social Responsibility, a group that advocates for nuclear disarmament. This includes over \$100 billion to replace the base's nuclear submarines.

The plan was approved by Obama in 2010.

“We and our allies,” says Fleck, “are arguing for sanity with nuclear weapons given that we have enough already to end the world several times over. Why on earth would we invest another trillion dollars in them at this late date?”

Nuclear weapons contractors in the United States brought in \$334 billion in government contracts between 2012 and 2014, according to research conducted by Physicians for Social Responsibility.

The ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., has questioned the nuclear spending currently being proposed. Smith joined 159 other members of the House of Representatives to support an amendment to the House Defense Appropriations bill, which would have slashed funding for a nuclear cruise missile.

Both Lockheed Martin and Boeing Corporation weighed in to oppose the amendment, and it was defeated along partisan lines. But the vote, says PSR's Fleck, proved that Congress is far from united over the government's massive

WMD spending plan. Smith later penned an op-ed for Foreign Policy magazine, titled “America Already Has More Than Enough Nuclear Missiles.”

Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists disputes whether a new nuclear arms race is underway, but admits there's been a resurgence in the adversarial relationship between the United States and Russia. As a result, “nuclear weapons are gradually becoming more explicit. For now, this is fueling modernization of arsenals and adjustments of operations and strategies.”

Nine nations, including China and North Korea, are engaged in building or modernizing their nuclear arsenal. In the face of this, those behind Ground Zero's bus ad say it's time to “demilitarize diplomacy.”

“It's time to step back from building another generation of nuclear weapons,” says Eiger. “The doctrine came out of the Cold War but it still exists. It's a dangerous road to travel.”

Martha Baskin is a Seattle-based journalist. Distributed by PeaceVoice.

Diversity Wins Gold at 2016 Olympic Games

The winning mosaic of America

BY MARC H. MORIAL

For 16 days, the eyes and the attention of the world were trained on the drama of victory and defeat in Rio de Janeiro. At a time when intolerance, conflict and division invade our headlines on a daily basis, the



greatest athletes from 206 countries gathered at the Games—held for the first time in a South American country—and reminded us that tolerance, peace and unity are real ambitions that can be achieved, even in the heat of intense competition.

Team USA set a gold standard for diversity in Rio. From the balance beam to the swimming lanes, our country's 555 athletes represented the gender, ethnic and religious diversity that has always made America great.

Team USA featured more women athletes than male athletes (292 to 263). Ibtihaj Muhammed, a Muslim-American fencer who went on to win a bronze medal, became the first Olympian to compete while wearing a hijab. Our women's gymnastics team—also known as the “Final Five”—was the most racially and ethnically diverse in the team's history.

A Kenyan-born American, who is a sergeant in the United States Army and has a brother serving in Afghanistan, competed for our nation in the 3,000-meter steeplechase. American lightweight boxer Carlos Balderas scored an emotional victory in Rio, representing our country all the way to the quarter-finals. The 19-year-old, a first generation Mexican-American, dedicated his victory to his grandfather and uncles who came to America and labored in California's strawberry fields to achieve a better life for their family.

Team USA's 121 medals are the most ever for a U.S. team in a non-boycotted Games, and individual achievement was everywhere to be seen. Winning five gold medals and a silver in Rio, swimmer Michael Phelps became the most decorated Olympian of all time with a total of 28, and holds the record for

most Olympic gold medals, with 23. The two gold medals she earned in Rio made runner Allyson Felix the only female track and field athlete to win six Olympic gold medals. And Simone Biles, the most decorated American gymnast of all time, set a new American record for most gold medals in women's gymnastics at a single Olympics. She was the first gymnast since 1984 to win four gold medals at a single games.

These stories, these achievements—some of them historic—these athletes, who train night and day and sacrifice everything for the love of their sport and our nation, could not exist in an America that builds walls.

Many of the inspirational stories we've watched unfold—and most importantly, our children can now take for granted—could not exist in an America that bars people from our country based on their religious belief. The winning mosaic of America we all watched walk in the Opening Ceremony's parade of nations could not exist in an America that shuns diversity and prizes above all the forced and inevitable homogeneity of ideological screen tests.

I believe the power of our Olympic victory lies in its representation

of what we as a nation are constantly striving to be: inclusive, tolerant, peaceful, united under one flag and committed to excellence at home and abroad. There are real problems and concerns we face as a nation and we must remain committed to solving them and keeping our country safe, but tolerance, diversity and camaraderie are not problems, and if the Olympics are any indication, they are, in fact, our strengths.

Our athletes are back now and they should how proud we are of them—all of them. President Barack Obama, our nation's first black president, can add this factoid to his legacy: with a total of 289 medals under both his terms, Team USA brought home more Olympic medals during his presidency than any other presidency. The president with the second highest tally of Olympic medals is Ronald Reagan with 282 medals.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Summer Olympics, and my hope is that one of them will be that America is great and always wins when we embrace, nurture and support the talent and skills of all Americans in all arenas.

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