

# Dangerous Crossroads: America's Plan to Wage Nuclear War against Non-Nuclear States

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)  
Global Research, September 18, 2022

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)  
Theme: [Military and WMD, US NATO War Agenda](#)  
In-depth Report: [Nuclear War](#)

First published on September 9, 2022

## Introduction

*The World is at a Dangerous Crossroads.*

*Nuclear war threatens the future of humanity. We are no longer dealing with a hypothetical scenario. The threat of World War III is real.*

*Successive US administrations have contemplated the use of nuclear weapons directed against both nuclear as well as non-nuclear states.*

*This article focusses on nuclear war against "non-nuclear states".*

*In 2001, The Pentagon under the presidency of George W. Bush had envisaged a new generation of bunker buster tactical nuclear weapons for use in the Middle East and Central Asia against "non-nuclear states":*

*"Military officials and leaders of America's nuclear weapon laboratories [had] urged the US to develop a new generation of precision low-yield nuclear weapons... which could be used in conventional conflicts with third-world nations." (Federation of American Scientists, 2001, emphasis added)*

## Waging Nuclear War against Non-Nuclear States. "Top Secret Document"

As revealed by [William Arkin in early 2002](#) prior to the release of the historic 2001 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) , later approved by the U.S. Congress:

*"The Bush administration, in a secret policy review... [had] ordered the Pentagon to draft contingency plans for the use of nuclear weapons against at least seven countries, **naming not only Russia and the "axis of evil" Iraq, Iran, and North Korea but also China, Libya and Syria.** (See*

*In addition, the U.S. Defense Department has been told to prepare for the possibility that nuclear weapons may be required in some future Arab-Israeli crisis. And, it is to develop plans for using nuclear weapons to retaliate against chemical or biological attacks, as well as "surprising military developments" of an unspecified nature.*

Like all such documents since the dawning of the Atomic Age more than a half-century ago, this NPR offers a chilling glimpse into the world of nuclear-war planners: With a Strangelovian genius, they cover every conceivable circumstance in which a president might wish to use nuclear weapons—planning in great detail for a war they hope never to wage. (William Arkin, “Secret Plan Outlines the Unthinkable”, [Los Angeles Times](#), 9 March 2002, emphasis added).

I should mention that the preemptive nuclear war doctrine formulated in the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) prevails under the Biden administration. Nuclear war against “non-nuclear states” in the Middle East has been on the drawing board of the Pentagon since the mid-1990s.

### The Pentagon’s 1996 Plan to Nuke Libya. “Testing” the B61-11 Nuclear Bomb

Libya was the first non-nuclear state to be tagged and formally identified by the Department of Defense as a possible target for a US sponsored nuclear attack against a non-nuclear state, using the B61-11 tactical nuclear bomb. This decision was confirmed five years prior to the adoption of the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review by the Senate in 2002.



B-61-11 tactical nuclear weapon

The Department of Defense’s objective was to fast track the “testing” of the B61-11 nuclear bomb on an actual country and that country was Libya:

“Even before the B61 came on line, Libya was identified as a potential target”. ([Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](#) – September/ October 1997, p. 27). (For further details see Michel Chossudovsky, [America’s Planned Nuclear Attack on Libya](#), March 2011)

The 1996 plan to nuke Libya had been announced at a press briefing chaired by Assistant Secretary of Defense Harold P. Smith:

“[The] Air Force would use the B61-11 [tactical nuclear weapons] against Libya’s alleged underground chemical weapons plant at Tarhunah if the President decided that the plant had to be destroyed. ‘We could not take [Tarhunah] out of commission using strictly conventional weapons,’ Smith told the Associated Press. **The B61-11 ‘would be the nuclear weapon of choice,’** he told Jane Defence Weekly. ([The Nuclear](#)

## [Information Project: the B61-11](#))

The B61-11 tactical nuclear weapon was slated by the Pentagon to be used in 1996 against the “Qadhafi regime”:

“Senior Pentagon officials ignited controversy last April [1996] by suggesting that the earth-penetrating [nuclear] weapon would soon be available for possible use against a suspected underground chemical factory being built by Libya at Tarhunah. This thinly-veiled threat came just eleven days after the United States signed the African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone Treaty, designed to prohibit signatories from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against any other signatory, including Libya.” (David Muller, [Penetrator N-Bombs](#), International Action Center, 1997)

Tarhunah has a population of more than 200,000 people. It is about 60 km East of Tripoli. Had this “humanitarian bomb” (with a “yield” or explosive capacity of two-thirds of a Hiroshima bomb) been launched on this “suspected” WMD facility, it would have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths, not to mention the nuclear fallout...

The man behind this diabolical project to nuke Libya was Assistant Secretary of Defense Harold Palmer Smith Jr.

Harold Palmer Smith had been appointed by President Bill Clinton to oversee nuclear, chemical, and biological defense programs with a focus on “the reduction and maintenance of the US arsenal of nuclear weapons”.

From the outset, his actual mandate, was not to “reduce” but to “increase” the nuclear arsenal by promoting the development of a new generation of “harmless” mini-nukes for use in the Middle East war theater.



Harold Palmer Smith Junior

Five months after Harold Smith called for an acceleration of the B61-11 production schedule, “he went public with an assertion that **the Air Force would use the B61-11 [nuclear weapon] against Libya’s alleged underground chemical weapons plant at Tarhunah** if the President decided that the plant had to be destroyed”.

“We could not take [Tarhunah] out of commission using strictly conventional weapons,” Smith told the Associated Press. The B61-11 “would be the nuclear weapon of choice,” he told Jane’s Defence Weekly.

Assistant Secretary of Defense [Harold Smith made the above statement at a press briefing](#) “after Defense Secretary William Perry had earlier told a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on chemical or biological weapons that the U.S. retained the option of using nuclear weapons against countries armed with chemical and biological weapons.”

namely non-nuclear states (emphasis added)

Whereas the Pentagon later denied its intention to bomb Libya's Tarhunah plant, it nonetheless confirmed that "Washington would not rule out using nuclear weapons [against Libya]". (Ibid., emphasis added.)

While the 1996 plan to bomb Libya using tactical nuclear weapons was subsequently shelved, Libya was not removed from the "black list": "The Qadhafi regime" remained a target country for a pre-emptive ("defensive") nuclear attack.

## Operation Odyssey Dawn: The US Bombing Campaign of Libya (2011). **The Testing of the B61-11 Nuclear Bomb.**

*From Clinton to Joe Biden, there is continuity. The 2001 Nuclear Review had set the state.*

*Libya was the chosen country. Nuclear weapons were also contemplated by president Barack Obama under the March 2011 Operation Odyssey Dawn.*

Shortly after the commencement of the Libya bombing campaign on March 19, 2011, the US Department of Defense ordered the testing of the B61-11 nuclear bomb. These tests pertained to the installed equipment and weapon's components of the nuclear bomb. The objective was to verify the functionality of the nuclear bomb.



B61-11 Simulation bombing

The announcement of these tests was made public on April 4 2011; the precise date of the test was not revealed, but one can reasonably assume that it was in the days prior to the April 4 press release by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA. Press [Release, NNSA Conducts Successful B61-11 JTA Flight Test](#), Apr 4, 2011,). Scroll down for further details.

### Examine the Command Structure

In late March 2011, the B-2 Spirit Stealth bomber from the 509th Bomber Wing operating



out of Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri , was used in the so-called “Joint Test Assembly” (JTA) of the B61 Mod 11 nuclear bomb.

In other words, the B61-11 was tested using the same B-2 Spirit Stealth bombers out of Whiteman, which were being used routinely to bomb Libya from the very outset of the air campaign on March 19, 2011.



Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri

The B-2 Spirit Stealth bomber out of Whiteman was not only sent on a mission to bomb Libya, it was also used in the testing of the B61 Mod 11 nuclear bomb. The B-2 Spirit Stealth bomber was the “chosen carrier” of the B61 -11 nuclear bombs.

Why were these tests of the equipment and functionality of a tactical nuclear weapon scheduled shortly after the onset of the Libya bombing campaign?

Was the timing of these tests coincidental or were they in any way related to the chronology of the Libya bombing campaign which started in March 2011?

U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command, which is responsible for the coordination of US bombing operations directed against Libya was also involved in the testing of the B61-11 nuclear bombs.

[Categorized as a mini-nuke \(“earth penetrating bomb”, the B61-11 has a variable yield \(depending on the model\) up to 400 kilotons. \(See table below\). In comparison, the yield of a Hiroshima bomb is of the order of 15 kilotons. \(See Michel Chossudovsky, \[America’s Planed Nuclear Attack on Libya\]\(#\), Global Research, March 25, 2011\)](#)

## B61-11 and B53 Comparison

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>B61-11</u>	<u>B53</u>
Yield	400 Kilotons	9,000 Kilotons
Dimensions	12 ft x 13.4 in	12 ft 4 in x 50 in
Weight	~1,200 lbs	8,900 lbs
Delivery platform	B-2A (primary); also tested on B-1B, B-52H, and F-16	B-52H
Delivery mode	Free fall, airburst, contact, laydown, retarded, time delay, earth-penetration.	Free fall, airburst, contact burst, only laydown delivery. Timer armed and fired.
Probability of arrival	High (B-2A)	Low to moderate

[Source: Nuclear Information Project](#)

## The Joint Test Assembly (JTA) of the B61-11 Tactical Nuclear Weapon

This JTA testing was undertaken by the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) together with the U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command, which coincidentally was in 2011 responsible for the coordination of US bombing operations directed against Libya as well as ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“The JTA was produced by the NNSA in support of the Joint Surveillance Flight Test Program between the Department of Defense and the NNSA” (Press release, op cit)

The Joint Test Assembly (JTA) in the case of the B61 Mod 11 nuclear bomb, requires testing the equipment of the B61-11 using a proxy conventional non-nuclear warhead. Essentially what was involved was to test all the installed equipment on the nuclear bomb and ensure its functionality without actually having a nuclear explosion.

The JTA test “was built to simulate the actual B61-11 weapon configuration utilizing as much war reserve hardware as feasible. It was assembled at the Pantex plant in Amarillo, Texas and was not capable of nuclear yield, as it contained no special nuclear materials.” (Press Release, [NNSA Conducts Successful B61-11 JTA Flight Test](#), Apr 4, 2011)

“JTA tests [are to ensure] that all weapon systems [e.g. B61-11 nuclear bomb] **perform as planned and that systems are designed to be safe, secure and effective,**”....

A JTA contains instrumentation and sensors that monitor the performance of numerous weapon components [e.g of the B61-11] during the flight test to determine if the weapon functions as designed. This JTA also included a flight recorder that stored the bomb performance data for the entire test. The data is used in a reliability model, developed by Sandia National Laboratories, to evaluate the reliability of the bomb. (Ibid)



B61 Model 11 nuclear bomb at Whiteman Air force base



B61 Model 11 nuclear bomb at Whiteman Air force base

The B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber operating out of the Whiteman Air Force Base was reported to have “delivered and released” the B61-11 JTA at the Tonopah Test Range in Nevada, which is routinely used to test nuclear ordnance. (See Press Release, op cit.).

The Tonopah Test Range while owned by the US Department of Energy, is managed and operated by [Sandia National Laboratories, a division of America’s largest weapons producer Lockheed-Martin](#) (under permit with the NNSA).





Aerial View of Tonopah Test Range where the B61 11 JTA was tested using a B-2 Spirit Stealth bomber. Source NASA.

## **The Deployment of B-2 Stealth Bombers to Libya in 2011**

Why were these JTA tests of the equipment and functionality of a tactical nuclear weapon scheduled shortly after the onset of the Libya bombing campaign?

Was the timing of these tests coincidental or were they in any way related to the chronology of the Libya bombing campaign?

It is worth noting that the U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command was in charge of both the JTA tests of the B61-11 as well as the deployment of three B-2 Spirit Stealth bombers to Libya on March 19, 2011

“Three B-2 Spirit bombers, piloted by two men each, made it back after the 11,418-mile round trip from the Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri - where they are kept in special hangars - to Libya, where they hit targets on forces loyal to Colonel Gaddafi and back again.”(Libya-crisis-B2-stealth-bombers-25-hour-flight-Missouri-Tripoli, Daily Mail, March 21, 2011)

In other words, both the deployment of the B-2s to the Libya war theater as well as the JTA test (using the B-2 bomber for delivery) were coordinated out of Whiteman Air Force base.





## “Humanitarian Warfare”

“Humanitarian war” is carried out through a “Shock and Awe” Blitzkrieg. Three B-2 Spirit Stealth bombers were sent on a bombing mission at the very outset of the Libya bombing campaign. According to the reports, they returned to Whiteman Air Force base on March 21st. The reports suggest that the three B-2s were carrying bunker buster bombs with conventional warheads.

The report suggests that the B-2 Stealth bombers dropped 45 one ton satellite guided missiles on Libya, which represents an enormous amount of ordnance:

“At \$2.1bn, they are the most expensive warplanes in the world and rarely leave their climate-controlled hangars. But when it does, the B-2 bomber makes **a spectacularly effective start to a war - including during this weekend’s aerial attack on Libya’s air defences.** ([Daily Mail](#), March 21, 2011, *op cit*)

While we are not in a position to verify the accuracy of these reports, the 45 one-ton bombs correspond roughly to the B-2 specifications, namely each of these planes can carry sixteen 2,000 pound (900 kg) bombs.

VIDEO: [Returning to Whiteman Air force base on March 21, 2011](#)

## Concluding Remarks: Nuclear War against Non-Nuclear States

Through a propaganda campaign which has enlisted the support of “authoritative” nuclear scientists, the B61-11 “mini-nuke” is presented as an instrument of peace rather than war.

In an utterly twisted logic, “low yield” tactical nuclear weapons are presented as a means to building peace and preventing “collateral damage”.

In this regard, US nuclear doctrine ties in with the notion that the US-NATO war directed against Libya under Operation Odyssey Dawn was a humanitarian undertaking. The important question addressed in this article was whether the test of a B61-11 was “routine” or was it envisaged by the DoD directly or indirectly in support of Operation Odyssey Dawn directed against Libya.

In retrospect this deployment of nuclear weapons against Libya was a dress rehearsal implying the possible deployment of mini-nukes at some future stage of the Libya bombing campaign.

## “Non-Nuclear States” “Allies of America” Slated to Wage Nuclear War against “Non-Nuclear States”, “Enemies of America”

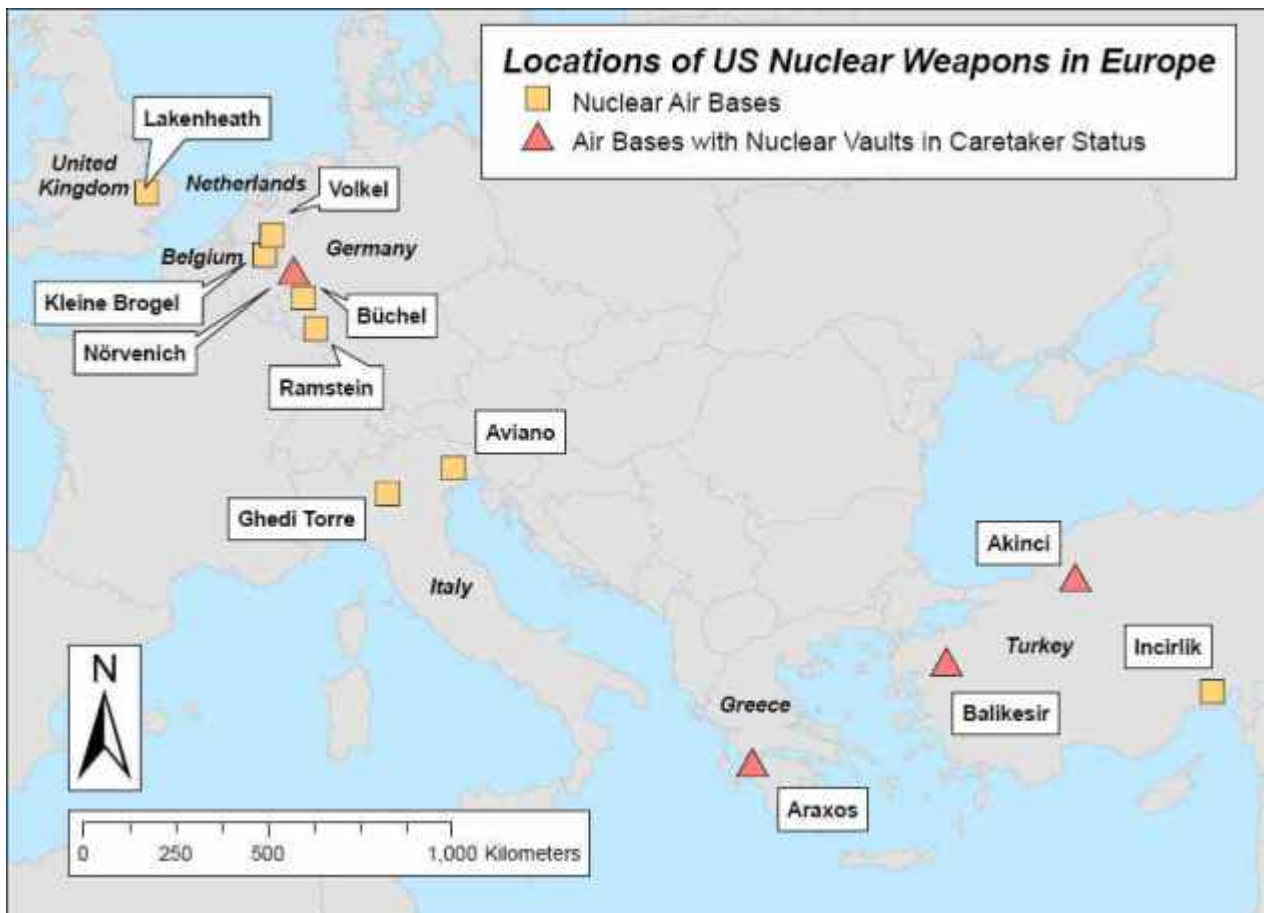
More recently a modernized version of the B61-11, namely the B61-12 is slated to be deployed in five non-nuclear states (Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Turkey). These countries (allies of America) are slated to wage nuclear war on behalf of Uncle Sam against the enemies of America .

“The will do “dirty work” for us.”

The B61-12 are not intended to attack Russia or China. They are intended to target non-

nuclear states in the Middle East, specifically Iran.

It should be emphasized, however, that under the doctrine of “pre-emptive nuclear war” mini nukes are always deployed and in “a state of readiness” (even in times of peace). Libya was the first “rogue state” to be tagged for a nuclear attack in 1996 prior to the approval of the mini-nukes for battlefield use by the US Senate in 2002.



The Pentagon claims that “mini-nukes” are harmless to civilians because “the explosion takes place under ground”. Not only is the claim of an underground explosion erroneous, each of these ‘mini-nukes’, constitutes - in terms of explosion and potential radioactive fallout - a significant fraction of the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

We are at a dangerous crossroads: The rules and guidelines governing the use nuclear weapons have been “liberalized” (i.e. “deregulated” in relation to those prevailing during the Cold War era).

The decision to use low yield nuclear weapons (e.g. against Iran) no longer depends on the Commander in Chief, namely the president of the United States.

The new doctrine states that Command, Control, and Coordination (CCC) regarding the use of nuclear weapons should be “flexible”, allowing geographic combat commanders (e.g. Three Star Generals) to decide if and when to use of nuclear weapons. What this signifies is that tactical nuclear weapons have were redefined in 2002 as conventional weapons:

Known in official Washington, as “Joint Publication 3-12”, the new nuclear doctrine (Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations , (DJNO) (March 2005)) calls for “integrating conventional and nuclear attacks” under a unified and “integrated” Command and Control (C2).

It largely describes war planning as a management decision-making process, where military and strategic objectives are to be achieved, through a mix of instruments, with little concern for the resulting loss of human life.

Military planning focuses on “the most efficient use of force”, i.e. an optimal arrangement of different weapons systems to achieve stated military goals. In this context, nuclear and conventional weapons are considered to be “part of the tool box”, from which military commanders can pick and choose the instruments that they require in accordance with “evolving circumstances” in the “war theatre”.

None of these weapons in the Pentagon’s “tool box”, including conventional bunker buster bombs, cluster bombs, mini-nukes, chemical and biological weapons are described as “weapons of mass destruction” when used by the United States of America and its “coalition” partners. (Michel Chossudovsky, [Is the Bush Administration Planning a Nuclear Holocaust?](#) Global Research, February 22, 2006)

Author’s note:

*Having examined the various facets of US nuclear doctrine for more than 20 years, I have become increasingly aware that the danger of nuclear war is real.*

*In researching these issues, I have attempted to present the documented facts without drawing simple conclusions as to the potential use of nuclear weapons against non nuclear states.*

*It is my sincere hope that this article will contribute to an understanding of US nuclear doctrine as well as a greater awareness of the impending dangers of nuclear war.*

Michel Chossudovsky, September 9, 2022

Related Articles: [America’s Planned Nuclear Attack on Libya](#), by Prof. Michel Chossudovsky - 2011-03-30

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#), Global Research, 2022

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Prof Michel](#)



## About the author:

Michel Chossudovsky is an award-winning author, Professor of Economics (emeritus) at the University of Ottawa, Founder and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), Montreal, Editor of Global Research. He has taught as visiting professor in Western Europe, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Latin America. He has served as economic adviser to governments of developing countries and has acted as a consultant for several international organizations. He is the author of 13 books. He is a contributor to the Encyclopaedia Britannica. His writings have been published in more than twenty languages. In 2014, he was awarded the Gold Medal for Merit of the Republic of Serbia for his writings on NATO's war of aggression against Yugoslavia. He can be reached at [crgeditor@yahoo.com](mailto:crgeditor@yahoo.com)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.  
For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)