

Nuclear War: US or Israeli Attack on Iran could contaminate Middle East

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If the U.S. or Israel attack Iranian nuclear power facilities “huge amounts of radioactive material will be lofted into the air to contaminate the people of Iran and surrounding countries,” an eminent international authority on nuclear weapons warns.

“This fallout will induce cancers, leukemia, and genetic disease in these populations for years to come, both a medical catastrophe and a war crime of immense proportions,” Dr. Helen Caldicott writes in her new book, “Nuclear Power Is Not The Answer,” published by The New Press.

Dr. Caldicott said the Pentagon has met with its Israeli counterparts “to discuss the participation of Israel in plans to attack Iran” even though President Bush said “this notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous.”

Citing the accidental meltdown of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in the Ukraine in April, 1986, as an example of what can happen when radioactivity is released, she termed it a “medical catastrophe (that) will continue to plague much of Russia, Belarus, the Ukraine, and Europe for the rest of time.” Between 5,000 and 10,000 people have died prematurely to date, she said.

Between 1986 and 2001, Belarus suffered 8,358 cases of thyroid cancer as a result of the Chernobyl meltdown, and most of the afflicted have had their thyroids surgically removed, leaving them dependent on thyroid medications for the rest of their lives, said Dr. Caldicott, a physician and anti-nuclear activist. She writes the areas of Europe, and its populations, afflicted by the Chernobyl accident will suffer from its impact “for thousands of years.”

Dr. Caldicott noted Israel, along with Pakistan and India, are “rogue nations, outlaws who choose not to abide by international law” for their refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). “Understandably, the Arab states resent the IAEA’s intrusions on Iran, as the United States accuses it of a covert but un-proven nuclear weapons program, whereas Israel, also a covert nuclear state but a close U.S. ally, receives no such scrutiny.”

“It is unwise and dangerous for Israel to possess a nuclear arsenal,” she pointed out, as “such weapons are highly provocative for Israel’s Arab neighbors” and their presence “actively encourages Arab states to build their own.”

One or two nuclear bombs landing on the tiny Israeli nation would obliterate it,” Dr. Caldicott said. “Or, conversely, if a large conventional weapon landed on Dimona (the Negev Nuclear

Research Center), the ensuing meltdown would kill millions of people.”

Dr. Caldicott said “the Bush administration has adopted some very provocative and dangerous policies — all of them in direct violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty—which inevitably have led and will continue to lead to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in other countries.”

She charged Bush has drafted a revised plan allowing military commanders to request presidential approval to use nuclear weapons to preempt an attack by a nation or terrorist group deemed to be planning to use WMD.

“The ‘revised plan’ reflects a preemptive nuclear strategy first enunciated by the White House in 2002. Had this strategy been in place before the invasion of Iraq, a nuclear attack could have been justified to ‘take out’ Iraq’s imaginary WMD,” Dr. Caldicott wrote.

Under the NPT, Dr. Caldicott said, Iran is “perfectly entitled to pursue a uranium enrichment program for peaceful purposes” and she noted in the past “Iran was actively encouraged by the United States to develop its own nuclear power program.”

She quoted Tony Benn, a former British M.P., stating that when he was secretary of state for energy “enormous pressure was put on me...to agree to sell nuclear power stations” to the Shah of Iran, “who had been put on the throne by the U.S.” Benn said the pressure came from the Atomic Energy Authority and U.S. manufacturer Westinghouse, “who were anxious to promote their own design of reactor.”

Dr. Caldicott said, “Having initially encouraged Iran to develop nuclear capabilities, the United States now has plans to bomb Iran with nuclear weapons for doing so.”

Dr. Caldicott not only opposes development, stockpiling, and deployment of nuclear weapons but the use of nuclear plants for supplying energy as well on grounds they are inherently dangerous — as meltdowns at Chernobyl and Three Mile Island in the U.S. on March 28, 1979, demonstrated.

Additionally, she contends the extraction of the world’s dwindling supply of uranium ore for reactors is very costly and contributes greatly to the greenhouse effect, just the opposite of the nuclear power industry’s contention nuclear plants are environmentally friendly.

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