



ELEPHANTS AND THE UNICORN: CANCELING PEACE AT THE NUCLEAR STRATEGY FORUM

► WHAT YOU CAN DO INSTEAD ◀

Given the shocking language describing its purpose, the attendees from the nuclear weapons establishment, its unusual secrecy and more, we believe this forum is out of touch with diplomatic realities, international law, and post-2014 Vatican teachings and is damaging to prospects for peace and disarmament. What value can be salvaged from it lies in protest and the resultant dialogue, and the actions YOU, the attendees, take afterwards.

There are a lot of elephants in the room – and actions you can take.

- The U.S. is in a hot war with Russia and a cold (so far) war with China. There will be no successful arms control or disarmament negotiations until some time after the U.S. stops its participation in and support for war against Russia, and stops interfering in China’s internal affairs. Halting the war in Ukraine and beginning to restore trust in the U.S.-Russia relationship is the #1 priority for nuclear disarmament efforts. Educate yourself (see our web site for sources) and oppose these wars.
- It is essential to stop President Biden’s escalations in nuclear and conventional threats, which are very close to triggering wider war in Europe if not also nuclear war. They are also boxing in the next president. Senior Catholic leaders should publicly call for a meeting with President Biden, a practicing Catholic, right now and ask him in one way or another whether he is a man of peace or of war. With the election looming, there will never be a better opportunity.
- The \$22 billion effort to start up industrial warhead core (“pit”) production at LANL is essential for additional warheads and the planned growth of the U.S. nuclear stockpile. Join the [opposition](#) to LANL pit production. See our web site for more information. Use this QR code.
- The greatest single obstacle to nuclear disarmament is the U.S. attempt to cling to global hegemony, aka “the rules-based international order.” We all need to publicly oppose the U.S. empire, which is incompatible with peace. Arrogantly blaming other countries and making enemies is not the path to peace or disarmament. We cannot fail to mention here the ongoing U.S. support for genocide in Palestine, against which we must all speak out.



This state and this country are steeped in poverty – physical and spiritual. Our climate is collapsing. It will be impossible to address these problems

with our present level of militarism, including nuclear militarism. A profound, bold transformation is required, not just a tentative, negative peace. We must speak out against militarism and for a positive peace in the strongest terms. Failure to do so is morally unacceptable.

- We must foster wide public education and real citizenship, not passive deference to supposed “experts” and “moral authorities.” That attitude of assumed deference to alleged prestige and authority is hard-wired into every aspect of this forum.
- According to the official description, this forum credences nuclear postures that are not just immoral in Catholic teaching but also illegal. The Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons, U.S. law since 1970, requires “negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...” Taking that obligation and others into account the International Court of Justice unanimously found “[t]here exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.” This goes beyond the strong case that can be and has been made for the criminality of nuclear deterrence itself. The U.S. is now explicitly violating the NPT, the most important legal cornerstone of global nuclear security, by its acts, by its stated plans and threats that trigger actions by other states, and in the utter lack of good-faith negotiations so evident since 2021 but actually running back decades. We urge you to learn about and publicize these legal violations, which speak to wider publics than just Catholics or the religious in general.

The “MVGND” Unicorn

In his first promotional video for this forum, organizer Richard Wood characterizes the Catholic teaching on nuclear weapons as “multilateral, verifiable, gradual disarmament to zero nuclear weapons [“MVGND”] as the best approach to national security.” This is false, of course.

It hardly needs to be said that what is “best” for “national security” is not the proper framework for evaluating “strategies” for nuclear weapons, any use of which could destroy civilization and most species on earth. The thermonuclear weapon is “an evil thing considered in any light,” (Rabi and Fermi, 1949). This conference apparently posits something different, setting the debate back.

“MVGND” has never existed and won’t for the foreseeable future if ever. It is a unicorn. Chasing a unicorn at the expense of genuine efforts for peace is futile at best, mischievous at worst. Post-2014 Vatican thought and guidance delegitimizes nuclear weapons possession altogether, with no provision for “interim” possession as the American bishops allowed in 1983.