

Pentagon Nuclear War Plans: Fallout Would Have Wiped Out Many More Countries than Previously Estimated

By [Shane Quinn](#)

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By 1961 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, a group of senior military figures advising the president, had concluded that proposed nuclear attacks across China, the USSR and Warsaw Pact allies would result in over half a billion deaths. Approximately 600 million fatalities.

Yet the Joint Chiefs of Staff, deliberately or subconsciously, were compiling an estimate that was not a complete reflection of reality. The true death toll would have soared towards one billion, quite likely even passing that number and reaching about 1.2 billion dead, double the original calculation.

In 1961, the USSR possessed [almost](#) 2,500 nuclear weapons, and had long since developed the far more powerful hydrogen bombs; though at this time, unknown to almost everybody but the Soviet leadership, Moscow held ownership of just four intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of hitting the US mainland with nuclear warheads. The US military then had 170 such long distance missiles in their arsenal.

However, American intelligence had grossly underestimated the number of Soviet nuclear-armed, mid-length missiles and bombers, which were within comfortable striking distance of every NATO state across Europe. The Kremlin had many hundreds of intermediate and medium-range ballistic missiles, along with jet aircraft, primed in responding to a US first strike upon Soviet soil. Even a full force American nuclear attack had the means to take out a mere fraction of the USSR's ability in retaliating through its own nuclear capabilities.

In riposte to a US first strike, a significant proportion of the Soviets' surviving nuclear devices would be fired at most, or all, of the following NATO countries: West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece and Turkey – each of which would face annihilation, either from precision hits through Soviet warheads, or via radioactive fallout dispersed on the wind.

By the early 1960s, there were more than 4,000 US nuclear weapons positioned in the above European NATO states, something that Moscow was aware of due to continuous intelligence reports.

It may be important to note that Britain – which first tested an atomic weapon in October

1952 – agreed to take more powerful US nuclear bombs on its territory from September 1954. This “nuclear sharing” policy was far from limited to the UK.

Britain was thereafter copied by the following NATO members, all of which became de facto nuclear powers from these dates, when they accepted US nuclear weapons upon [their soil](#): West Germany in March 1955, Italy in April 1957, France in August 1958, Turkey in February 1959, the Netherlands in April 1960, Greece in October 1960, and lastly Belgium in November 1963.

In an event of nuclear conflict between our planet’s superpowers, the list of countries to face extinction would not be limited to militarized nations. Britain, a key NATO and nuclear power, constituted particularly high priority scope in Soviet and later Russian nuclear war planning. Kremlin reprisal strikes over the UK would most probably have resulted in extensive fallout spreading westwards over neutral Ireland, with less than 400 miles distance between London and Dublin.

Finland was expected to be one of the first to face destruction following US nuclear attacks on Leningrad and her submarine pens.

This radioactive poisoning was anticipated to fan out across neighbouring Sweden, destroying this separate neutral country. NATO state Norway, to the west of Sweden, could also expect wide-scale ruin due to enlarging fallout.

Switzerland, a secretive nation bordering France and Germany, was directly in harm’s way and because of nearby fallout that country would have faced desolation. Likewise neutral Austria, which shared frontiers with Germany and Warsaw Pact states like Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

From 1960, American military plans were formulating to wipe all of the USSR’s Warsaw Pact allies off the face of the earth. This included not merely Czechoslovakia and Hungary but also East Germany, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania. In 1960, the population of Warsaw Pact countries (minus the USSR) comprised of 93 million people.

As the plans were developing General Thomas Power, the 55-year-old chief of Strategic Air Command, [said in](#) December 1960 that,

“I just hope none of you have any relatives in Albania, because they have a radar station there that is right in our flight path, and we take it out”.

Albania was to be obliterated early, with others to quickly follow. The Warsaw Pact’s destruction with nuclear attacks would, in addition, result in radiation reaching southwards over NATO states Greece and Turkey. These two countries, sharing borders with Warsaw Pact rivals, were likely to face devastation regardless; as Moscow responded to US first strikes with assaults of their own against NATO members and de facto nuclear powers, that were holding American warheads pointed towards Russia.

Furthermore, Tito’s Yugoslavia, also bordering various Warsaw Pact states, would face eradication following close-range fallout from US ground-burst nuclear explosions.

Virtually the whole of the European continent would have been decimated – either from

direct hits or through the devastating aftermath – had Pentagon nuclear programs undergone execution as envisaged by its commanders. This included all of Washington's NATO allies in western and southern Europe.

Come 1961, every urban area in the USSR containing 25,000 people or more was earmarked to be struck with a nuclear warhead.

To put the scale of these plans into perspective, the Soviet Union was a landmass greater in size than both America and Canada put together. Russia by itself is easily the biggest country in the world; but the USSR consisted of another 14 nations spanning thousands of miles across eastern Europe and Central Asia, from Estonia and the Ukraine to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

It was possible for the Pentagon with its new long-range, jet-powered bombers to strike each urban centre in the USSR. In 1961, Washington's nuclear cargo had climbed to 22,200 bombs, a significant rise from the 18,600 such weapons in 1960. The Kremlin held an aforementioned 2,470 nuclear bombs in 1961, just over a tenth the size of Washington's arsenal.

A 1959 Soviet census revealed that the USSR was home to almost 210 million people. Large-scale nuclear attacks would have killed off the vast majority of Soviet citizens – again from either the direct impact of scores of cities being razed to the ground, or from fallout spreading far and wide.

Primarily due to budgetary purposes the scheme for conflict with Soviet Russia, as outlined by outgoing president Dwight D. Eisenhower, was for direct escalation to first strikes with nuclear weapons. Conventional or "limited warfare" would be bypassed.

Eisenhower was aware of Pentagon death estimates regarding hundreds of millions of fatalities, but though understandably appalled he accepted the proposals, as too did his fresh-faced successor John F. Kennedy.

Communist China, the fourth largest country in the world, was to be attacked in synchronization with the Soviet Union. After 1950, this stratagem became firmly embedded in US nuclear conflict designs, and war planners were loathed to alter it. General Power himself, when asked at a conference in December 1960 if the Chinese could be spared, dismissed the suggestion when [he said](#),

"I hope nobody thinks of it because it would really screw up the plan".

In 1961, the US military had over 1,000 jet fighters positioned within striking range of the great USSR and Chinese land spaces; while further hundreds of jets could promptly be called upon if required. The planes were stationed in airfields like those at Kunsan in South Korea and Kadana in Japan, while many more were placed on aircraft carriers surrounding the Sino-Soviet bloc. Other US jets were located at American bases such as in West Germany.

Many of America's B-47, B-52 and B-58 aircraft were armed with hydrogen bombs, containing an explosive force ranging from five to 25 megatons.

The latter figure, 25 megatons, equates to 25,000 kilotons of explosive power. By

comparison, the Nagasaki bomb consisted of 21 kilotons. In this case, the most destructive hydrogen bombs were well over 1,000 times more powerful than the weapon which brought ruin to Nagasaki.

By 1962, Washington [held about](#) 500 of these 25 megaton mammoths. One 25 megaton weapon contained within it more firepower than all of the bombs and shells dropped throughout the combined wars in human history.

Elsewhere, China's population in 1961 comprised 660 million people, dwarfing the Soviet populace. In late 1960, a US military briefing calculated that proposed nuclear attacks against China, along with ensuing fallout, would kill around 300 million people.

Pentagon war plans also entailed hitting every Chinese city. China was less than half the USSR's size, and so could be attacked en masse more rapidly, with the inevitable fallout not having as large a distance to travel. A true death toll in China was most likely closer to 600 million. China was already under threat, as from January 1958 US nuclear-armed missiles were being stockpiled on the island of Taiwan, less than 200 miles from China's eastern coast. These Matador cruise missiles were within range of big metropolitan areas like Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Blowing up hundreds of Chinese and Soviet cities would have grave consequences for many other Asian states. The most notable of these was India, which shares a border with China to the north, and was home to over 450 million people in the early 1960s. Following nuclear attacks throughout China, radioactive material was anticipated to move southwards over India, killing untold more millions.

Afghanistan, sharing frontiers with China and the USSR, would face large-scale ruin from enveloping fallout – while neighbouring Pakistan, bordering China and India, could expect its fair share of radioactive substance. Further Asian countries resting upon China's boundary to the south may likely have experienced widespread radiation, such as Nepal, Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), Laos and Vietnam, five nations with a combined population of 65 million in 1960.

Significantly, the USSR's broad military apparatus would also have responded to US nuclear attacks upon her soil, emanating from the western superpower's air bases in Japan, South Korea, Guam, etc. In 1961, Okinawa alone was hosting almost 800 American nuclear bombs, while the nation of South Korea had about 600 such weapons. Guam, a tiny island in the western Pacific, was at the time holding 300 US nuclear warheads.

As relating to Europe, the Soviets had growing numbers of medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) and bombers focused on US military bases in the Pacific region – a reality further escaping the attention of American intelligence services.

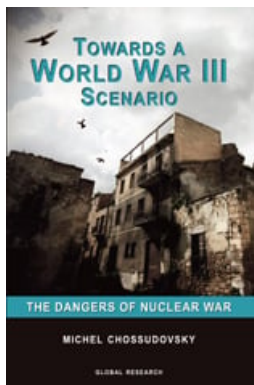
US first strikes, this time on the southern and eastern USSR, cannot have been remotely sufficient in eliminating a major Russian nuclear reply against US allies like South Korea and Japan. Both these latter countries would have been blown into dust during a nuclear war. As a consequence, North Korea could have faced destruction due to close-in fallout expanding quickly from the devastated South Korean capital Seoul.

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Shane Quinn obtained an honors journalism degree. He is interested in writing primarily on foreign affairs, having been inspired by authors like Noam Chomsky. He is a frequent contributor to Global Research.



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[Michel Chossudovsky](#) is Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), which hosts the critically acclaimed website www.globalresearch.ca. He is a contributor to the Encyclopedia Britannica. His writings have been translated into more than 20 languages.

Reviews

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Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world's only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

-Ellen Brown, author of 'Web of Debt' and president of the Public Banking Institute



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