

PSR



PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

U.S. AFFILIATE OF INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR

Talking Points: Investing in Cures Before Missiles Act

- COVID-19 has killed more than 2 million people worldwide and over 500,000 Americans. Variant strains of the virus have emerged, [threatening the effectiveness of current vaccines](#).
- After battling three novel deadly coronaviruses in the past two decades — SARS, MERS, and SARS-CoV-2 — we should redirect taxpayer dollars to develop a *Vaccine of Mass Prevention* before we spend that money on a new, unneeded *Weapon of Mass Destruction*.
- In 1943 the government diverted tens of billions of dollars from civilian programs to the project to build the atomic bomb. What the COVID-19 pandemic requires is the reverse: the diversion of nuclear weapons funds to biomedical, public health programs desperately needed to limit the current coronavirus outbreak and prevent future pandemics.
- [New polling](#) from Federation of American Scientists & Rethink Media shows that Americans do not get their sense of safety from military investments. When asked, “Which of the following would make you feel more safe?” only 5% of those polled answered “modernized nuclear weapons arsenal”, while 43% answered “Sense that covid-19 is under control”. Reallocating a portion of these funds towards combating #COVID-19 would be broadly supported.
- Former Secretary of Defense William Perry, who once briefed President Bill Clinton on a suspected Russian first nuclear strike, wrote that the ground-based leg of the nuclear triad is “destabilizing because it invites an attack” and intercontinental ballistic missiles are “some of the most dangerous weapons in the world” and “could even trigger an accidental nuclear war”.
- General James Cartwright, former vice chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and former Commander of the United States Strategic Command wrote, with Secretary Perry, “[T]he greatest danger is... that we might accidentally stumble into nuclear war. As we make decisions about which weapons to buy, we should use this simple rule: If a nuclear weapon increases the risk of accidental war... we should not build it... We are safer without these expensive weapons, and it would be foolish to replace them.”
- The Covid-19 pandemic is a wake-up call: we must correct our misplaced budget priorities and adequately fund public health to better protect American lives. Rather than investing in new nuclear weapons, public resources would have greater return if invested in diplomacy, humanitarian aid, global public health, sustainability initiatives, and basic research.