



MICRO-NUKES

BY JAMES GORDON PRATHER

One Cold War “lesson learned” at the Pentagon was that in confrontations between two nation-states, nukes do have a deterrent effect. The nuke deterrent worked in the Gulf War, as well. We suspected that Saddam Hussein might have nukes and chembio weapons, and so we warned him that if he used any of them against us or our allies, we would retaliate with nukes. It turns out Saddam did have chembio weapons, which he could have used. He didn’t, even after his armies in the field had been utterly destroyed, leaving Baghdad practically defenseless.

A Gulf War corollary for our nuclear warriors was that our existing stockpile did not then include the kind of weapon we would have needed if Saddam—hunkered down in his bunker—had in fact unleashed his chembio weapons. What we wanted then was the type of low-yield, earth-penetrating “micro-nuke” bunker-killer proposed by two Los Alamos National Lab scientists in a 1991 article in *Strategic Review* entitled “Countering the Threat of the Well-armed Tyrant: A Modest Proposal for Small Nuclear Weapons.”

By 1992 the Bush-Quayle administration had already begun to dismantle thousands of obsolete Cold

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War nukes. But George Bush—with Dick Cheney presiding at the Pentagon—supposed that a new class of nukes might need to be developed for the battlefields of the post-Cold War era. So, he vigorously opposed the efforts of the dis-

armament crowd in Congress to sign-on to an indefinite “zero-threshold” nuke test ban.

The next year, however, Clinton and Gore came to Washington and set out to dismantle our entire nuclear stockpile—not just nukes that were obsolete or excess to our more modest, post Cold War needs. Clinton also announced that we would abide by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—irrespective of whether the Senate ever ratified it—and that we would never again design, build or test new nukes. Clinton got the Democrat-controlled Congress to enact a total prohibition against “research and development which could lead to the production by the United States of a low-yield nuclear weapon ... a nuclear weapon that has a yield of less than five kilotons.”

The Pentagon got around this prohibition by modifying an existing weapon, the Air Force’s B-61 “dial-a-yield” gravity bomb. The lowest yield that could be dialed—essentially by disabling parts of the otherwise far more powerful weapon—was indeed less than five kilotons. Without actually modifying the warhead, the Pentagon turned the thin-shelled gravity bomb into an earth-penetrating projectile. Though hardly the ‘micro-nuke’ envisioned by the Los Alamos scientists, this “bunker-killer”—designated the B-61 Mod 11—entered the stockpile in 1997, and the B-2 bomber was certified to be its delivery vehicle.

Last year, the Republican-controlled Congress effectively repealed

the Clinton ban on “micro-nuke” research. The 2001 National Defense Authorization Act expressly authorized the Department of Energy—which provides nuclear warheads to the Pentagon—to assist the Pentagon in “options assessments for defeating hardened and deeply buried targets”. Of course, even if Congress actually does authorize development of new “micro-nukes,” it will be years before they can actually be ready for use. In the meantime, the only bunker-killer we have is the B61 Mod 11.

George W. Bush has declared war on terrorism, and that war’s battlefields will be here, at home, and in about fifty nation-states around the world, all harboring terrorists, knowingly or otherwise. In particular, Osama bin Laden may now be hunkered down in a bunker—as Saddam was a decade ago. And he is protected by the Taliban, still recognized as the official Afghan government by neighboring Pakistan.

So what? Well, we are not at war with Afghanistan and the world is a very different place in 2001 than it was in 1991. In particular, in 1991 no Islamic nation-state—Iraq included—had nukes. Now at least one—Pakistan—does. In answering India’s nuke tests in 1998 with their own, Pakistan has once again demonstrated the deterrent effect of nukes on nation-states. But can the threat of nuke retaliation deter suicidal terrorists? Obviously not. You can’t retaliate against terrorists who are already dead.

That leaves pre-emptive strikes—say, with the B-61. But, before we nuke bin Laden—as some pundits and warhawk Congressmen have urged—maybe we ought to take into account that we will also be nuking the nation-state of Afghanistan. Then consider that Pakistan’s version of our CIA—the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, a rogue elephant if ever there was one—not only installed and sustains the Taliban, but is also the custodian of the several dozen Islamic nukes in the Pakistani stockpile. Just a thought. ↘

ULTIMATE SACRIFICE WHEN MOM AND DAD GO OFF TO WAR

BY MAGGIE GALLAGHER

In long lines for security checkpoints, many of us are learning the answer to the question George W. Bush posed in his landmark Sept. 20 speech before Congress: "Americans are asking, what is expected of us?" But few of us stateside will be asked for anything like the sacrifices 14-month-old Kody is being asked to make.

For most of his young life Kody Kravitz has shared a Pennsylvania apartment with his mom and dad, his half-sister Shaiyann and their pet snakes. His father is a GI. His mother joined the Army Reserves while

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she was still in high school. So now, Kody is parentless, at least for the duration. His home has dissolved—his half-sister has been packed off to her mom's house, while Kody will go and live with grandma. The snakes are still looking for placement.

Kody of course has no idea why his mom, dad, and sister suddenly disappeared. "There is no way to explain this to Kody, he's just too little to understand," his mom, Jaime Strathmeyer, told the *New York Times*. "By the time I get home, he'll be calling my mother Mommy and my father Daddy."

Kody is not alone. Suzanna and Mary Connolly are two-year-old twins. Daddy's been deployed. Their mom, in the Navy Reserves, struggles with what will happen when she is called. The plan is to send the girls to Milwaukee to stay with her brother, whom they have never met.

Arlene Innis is a 27-year-old single mom who joined the Army a year ago so she could better provide for her two kids, seven-year-old Shante and Sharica, 4. Now she is trying to figure out how to explain they might have to "go to Grandma's house for a little while." Like six months or a year. In other words, for a small child, an eternity.

These are just a few of the thousands of children asked to make pretty much the ultimate sacrifice, from a child's point of view: to risk, not just one parent, but both. Or the only parent they have. In World War II, the country agonized and debated before sending married fathers to fight and die for their country. Now we send single mothers off to war, and nobody raises a peep.

It's not easy to find out how many children are so affected. In his 1998 book, *Women in the Military* (Regnery Press), Brian Mitchell estimated there were 24,000 single moms and about an equal number of single custodial dads, plus more than 50,000 dual-service couples. Conservatively, call it 150,000 kids.

The effects of long-term separation from both parents (or a child's only parent) are themselves, deeply

traumatic. It is an immense, unremarked toll of suffering small children and babies are being asked to pay.

Here's my question: Why? If it were necessary, then of course, it would be different. If it's necessary, toss me an M-16 and I will figure out what to do with it. But is it necessary? Are we as a nation in such desperate straits that we must ask single moms to fight and die for our country? Do we feel good about asking Kody and thousands of other young kids to risk both of their parents, or their only parent, for us?

And if it is not necessary, is it even a civilized thing to do? Yes I know, these women all volunteered. Recruited years before they had children under slogans like, "Join the Army, be a journalist!" But no doubt by the strict demands of contractual morality, we are justified at holding these mothers to their word. Nor are these women complaining, or agitating to be released. (We hear their voices as part of staged photo ops—the troops going off to war—not as part of any grievance campaign).

That these women are bravely willing to live up to their commitments, I do not doubt. Their willingness to serve is commendable. Can we say the same about our unreflective willingness to order Kody's mom, and thousands like her, into harm's way?

Of course military service requires sacrifice from families. They also serve who only sit and wait. And equally obvious, crafting military policies that lessen the toll would take time and cause controversy among adults with gender agendas.

I do not blame the military for policies crafted largely by civilians with many things in mind other than national defense. But creating 150,000 parentless kids (temporary orphans, really) seems more like what a heartless enemy would do than what a great and generous nation would choose to inflict on its own children.