

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Monday, November 4, 2024

U.S. ICBM Test Launch Set for Election Day from California, Activists Denounce It As ‘Wasteful’ and ‘Dangerous’

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At 11:45 pm on Election Day, Nov. 5, activists from around the state will gather near Vandenberg Space Force Base to witness and protest the test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). During such tests, which occur several times a year, the weapons are launched from the Vandenberg base near Lompoc, Calif., and aimed at Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands.

Activists with the [Defuse Nuclear War](#) coalition issued the following statement on Saturday:

We condemn these launches in the strongest possible terms as a wasteful, dangerous step backward for peace. Scheduling this latest test on Election Day is a clear attempt to avoid public scrutiny of these tests, even as the continued existence of ICBMs is a profound threat to the life and security of every single person in the United States and around the world. We ask that the upcoming ICBM test, and all future scheduled tests, be canceled.

ICBMs have been sold to the public as a guarantor of security. In reality, they are an imminent threat to public security. In the words of the late Daniel Ellsberg, author of *The Doomsday Machine*, these weapons make “any conflict enormously more dangerous than it has to be” by increasing “the danger that any armed conflict between major nuclear states can escalate to all-out war.” ICBMs are on hair-trigger alert and, once launched, cannot be recalled, virtually guaranteeing a strike on the country that launches them. As long as ICBMs exist, we live with the constant risk that misinterpreted intelligence, human error, or a single rash decision could end civilization as we know it within an hour.

Maintaining these weapons is a huge waste of resources. The U.S. has committed to spending hundreds of billions of dollars to “modernize” its ICBM force, which in practice means replacing the entire system. The ICBM program is now [an astonishing 81% over budget and years behind schedule](#), not including the expense for its new W-87-1 nuclear warhead development being done at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory or the new plutonium pits that will be built at Los Alamos National Laboratory. Yet the U.S. Secretary of Defense has [certified](#), through a “comprehensive, unbiased review” not shared with the public, that the program will proceed.

Test launches damage human communities and ecosystems. The Marshall Islands, already forced to bear the overwhelming environmental costs of U.S. nuclear weapons testing, are still used as a target test area.

When tensions among nuclear-armed states are high, each test launch carries an added risk. The U.S. military has acknowledged as much by pausing these launches at high points of tension in the war in Ukraine. The risk of nuclear escalation remains too high to introduce the possibility of misinterpretation of a test into the mix.

Activists will include Scott Yundt, Executive Director at Tri-Valley CAREs, a Livermore-based watchdog group that monitors the U.S. nuclear weapons complex with a focus on Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He will speak to the protestors on the broader meaning of these tests in the context of US nuclear weapons “modernization” and buildup. The event will also be live streamed

Organizers MacGregor Eddy and Leah Yantanon are available for interviews, questions about the live stream and comments. They can be contacted at info@defusenuclearwar.org

Scott Yundt can be contacted about his participation in the event at scott@trivalleycares.org or at 415-990-2070.