June 29—Daniel Ellsberg's Case Against Nuclear ICBM's

"A Common Insanity" is documentary Ellsberg created shortly before his death two years ago on June 16, 2023.



"Every man, woman, and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us."

JFK, 1961

President Kennedy to the U.N., Sept. 21, 1961



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5R87YhYbnkA

True then. 64 years later, still true.

Questions seldom asked, or answered, now in 2025:

- What is the current "Sword of Damocles"?
- What are the current "slenderest of threads"?
 - What would Daniel Ellsberg say?

A Common Insanity: A Conversation with Daniel Ellsberg About Nuclear Weapons "A Common Insanity"



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nsh15GB8oYA

Why Do We Still Have ICBMs?

Ultimately, partial self-interest prevails over the common good of humanity, PLUS collective delusions about what makes us safe.

To Start—Let's look at the U.S. nuclear weapons "modernization" program initiated by President Obama in 2010, as the "price" for Republican approval of the New Start Treaty capping deployed nuclear weapons by the U.S. and Russia at 1550 each.

Upgrading or replacing every element of the nuclear stockpile, costing \$1.7 trillion through 2046, it will include:

- 12 Columbia-class submarines to replace 14 Ohio-class ones
- A new strategic bomber, the B-21 Raider, as many as 145 of them, with a new airlaunched cruise missile
- Replace all 400 Minuteman III single warhead ICBM's with 450 new multiple warhead missiles called the "Sentinel" designed to last into the 2070's

Other nuclear-weapons states have their own "modernization" programs—

This equals the New Nuclear Arms Race.

Legislative Efforts to Oppose "Modernization"

- None yet in the current, 119th Congressional Session (2025-26).
- In the 117th Congress (2021-22), H.R.4260 in the House and S.982 in the Senate were introduced but never acted on—the "ICBM Act" or "Cures Before Missiles Act" aimed to redirect funds from a new generation of ICBM's to Covid-19 vaccine development. Rep. John Garamendi supported this legislation.
- However, there have been several House Resolutions introduced.



The U.S. Congressional Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Group

The group's primary purpose is to:

- Oversee nuclear weapons spending and modernization programs to ensure they are necessary, cost-effective, and in line with national security needs.
- Promote arms control agreements and advocate for the United States to remain committed to international treaties that reduce nuclear risks.
- Engage in public debate and congressional hearings to scrutinize the Pentagon's rationale for nuclear programs and to ensure accountability and transparency in defense spending.
- Advocate for continued dialogue with Russia and other nuclear powers to prevent a new arms race and reduce the risk of nuclear conflict.

The current co-chairs are:

Senate: Senator Edward J. Markey (D-MA) and Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR); House: Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA-08) and Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA-08)

"Modernization" and the replacement of the 400 Minuteman III ICBM's with 450 "Sentinel" ICBM's is moving full speed ahead.

The Fiscal Year 2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was signed into law by President Biden on December 23, 2024.

The NDAA directs the Pentagon to plan for the potential expansion of the ICBM force up to 450 deployed missiles—the Sentinel Program.

The NDAA includes a provision that **prohibits reducing the number of deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles below 400**, with the exception of facilitating the transition from the Minuteman III to the Sentinel missile system. This confirms that the law does include a provision aimed at preventing significant reductions in the ICBM force, with a focus on maintaining strength during the transition to the new Sentinel system. (Source: Perplexity) What is driving the bipartisan commitment to perpetuating this "Common Insanity" in perpetuity?

Congress has maintained a strong bipartisan consensus in favor of modernizing and expanding the ICBM force.

Meet the ICBM Coalition--

Primarily a Sensate-based group of Senators from states with major ICBM bases or significant roles in the Sentinel missile program, mainly:

North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, South Dakota.

Prominent Senators have been John Hoeven (R-ND), Jon Tester (D-MT), John Barrasso (R-MT), Steve Daines (R-MT), Mike Lee (R-UT), Mike Rounds (R-SD), and Kevin Cramer (R-ND). Mitt Romney (R-UT) in the past.

What is your take-away from today's presentation?

Questions to ponder—

If Daniel Ellsberg's argument is valid, why don't the decisionmakers change course and phase out ICBM's, or at the least take them off "launch on warning" status?

Do the nuclear weapons proponents really believe that nuclear weapons can be used in a way that is not utterly suicidal for all?

Is our confidence in the reliability of nuclear deterrence so high and rational that we can risk the survival of all of humanity (and untold other life forms on the planet)?

Do the predictions of "nuclear winter" and consequent global famine enter into the decision-making to enter a new nuclear arms race? What don't decision-makers understand? Or do they care? How could they not?

Are moral arguments relevant to the new nuclear arms race? If yes, what are they? If not, why not, and then, what ultimately guides decision-making?

Are nuclear weapons abolitionists missing some critical reasons why nuclear weapons are necessary, even morally necessary? What could they be?

Are not <u>we</u>, in a nuclear weapons state, holding the "Sword of Damocles" over <u>all</u> the peoples on the planet (nuclear and non-nuclear alike)? Are we not morally obligated to put down and relinquish this threat to their very existence?

Given that we are citizens of a nuclear weapons state that is nominally a democratic state of, by and for the people, what is our obligation toward the rest of humanity now and into the future?