

December 20, 2002

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We the undersigned representatives of religious organizations note the release of "National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction." We share the premise of the report that the potential use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) is a grave concern to citizens of the United States, indeed to all people on Earth.

Therefore, we favor a strong nonproliferation program that emphasizes diplomacy, reliance on multilateral regimes, controls on nuclear materials, and cooperative nuclear threat reduction, such as the Nunn-Lugar program. However, we strongly disagree with elements of the National Strategy related to counter-proliferation. In particular we have two major concerns.

First, we are greatly disturbed by the idea of unilateral preemption by U.S. military forces. Many of us have articulated this concern in relationship to Iraq. We believe that unilateral military intervention is a dangerous precedent which could have disastrous effects if pursued by other nations in diverse situations. Rather we favor strict observance of international law and collective security through the United Nations and multilateral regional organizations.

Second, we strongly oppose threatened and actual use of nuclear weapons in dealing with chemical and biological weapons. Such a policy is immoral because it would be disproportionate, would harm innocent civilians, and would have negative environmental effects. Further, this approach extends the role of nuclear weapons at a time when the world should be working for their elimination. It is contrary to previous policy of not threatening first use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. It adds to the appearance that the use of nuclear weapons is legitimate, thus encouraging other nations to develop their own nuclear arsenals. We note the disastrous effects in South Asia as India and Pakistan have copied the superpowers in believing that nuclear weapons have utility for deterrence and war-fighting.

Therefore, we urge you to reconsider the policies of unilateral Preemption and first use of nuclear weapons.

Sincerely yours,

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