



Worldwide Effects of Nuclear War: Some Perspectives

United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

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Recognizing that most research done on the effects of nuclear weapons had focused on short term consequences, in 1974 the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency commissioned the National Academy of Sciences to produce a study that became *Long-Term Worldwide Effects of Multiple Nuclear Weapons Detonations*. The highly technical report ran to over 200 pages, so the Agency produced an abbreviated version of the study which conveyed its essential findings along with information from other studies and basic background facts. The Academy found that a massive attack with multiple detonations was likely to create such widespread and long-lasting environmental damage that an aggressor nation would itself suffer serious environmental effects even without a response.

Perhaps the most compelling conclusion is that existing knowledge is largely based on theory and hypothesis and so uncertainty as to the consequences is the central truth. We just don't really know what would happen, and that alone should serve as a deterrent. The report presents the findings in language that common people can understand; scientific background is not necessary.

The Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) was established as an independent agency of the United States government in 1961. It succeeded the U.S. Disarmament Administration department in the Department of State and took as its mission to strengthen national security by “formulating, advocating, negotiating, implementing and verifying effective arms control, nonproliferation, and disarmament policies, strategies, and agreements.” Its establishment fully integrated arms control into the national security apparatus and policy and provided an agency to coordinate and conduct both research and the participation in international arms control negotiations and operations. The bureau was reorganized and reintegrated into the State Department in 1997 and merged with the State Department in 1999. It was merged into the Bureau of Verification, Compliance and Implementation in 2006 during the Bush Administration.