

feat

The neutron bomb opens up

by Bruce Cooley
of the Gauntlet

The question of the development and deployment of the neutron bomb is rapidly becoming one of the most crucial tests of detente in our times; particularly in view of recent shifts in U.S. nuclear strategies in isolation; nor is it simply a matter of casual academics. It is a serious struggle between those who stand for a continuation of the arms race and a continuation of the policy of "Balance of terror" politics on the one hand, and those who stand in favour of the lessening of world tensions through disarmament and the consolidation of the benefits of detente.

In a world already supersaturated with enough atomic firepower to incinerate our planet many times over and where it has already proven difficult enough to put into practice actions designed to reduce the nuclear arsenal, the deployment of yet another weapon of mass annihilation leads us further away from peace. It reaps no benefits to anyone except the arms merchants who produce these weapons and the generals who deploy them.

Those who argue for the neutron bomb claim that it is a more clean, more humane warhead than the atomic bombs already in position throughout the world. These persons, who have already taken pains to call the neutron bomb a "Reduced-blast radiation device," explain that this

weapon is more humane because it will for the most part, leave buildings and machinery unharmed while wiping out the population within the blast area.

According to General Alexander Haig, former supreme commander of the NATO forces,

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and now U.S. Secretary of State, in the event of an enemy attack, it will allow the defender to defend his territory without having to destroy it, by allowing him to carry on a more localized war in which the more destructive atomic and hydrogen bombs would not have to be used.

In short, the basic concept behind it is well stated by one of the developers of the original atomic bomb when he said that "only if the atomic bomb can be made usable in that it becomes a normal part of military operations will it really be of great help in fighting wars rather than simply warning mankind to avoid them."

Firstly, what is the neutron bomb, what are its effects and what is its use in war? Generally speaking, the neutron bomb is a fusion weapon, of the same family as the hydrogen bomb. The main

contrast is between the intense blast over a wide area produced by the hydrogen bomb with the accompanying searing heat wave and persistent fallout; and the much slower energy release of the neutron bomb is designed to be carried in the heads of standard artillery shells and by Lance missiles, and is therefore much cheaper to deploy.

The neutron bomb destroys life by means of the production of "fast" neutrons which are dispersed over roughly a two kilometre area from the centre of the blast area. Comparable quantities of radioactivity are produced both by hydrogen and neutron weapons, but the latter produces them over a longer time. The neutron radiation travels just as far as that produced by the atomic and hydrogen bombs. The main

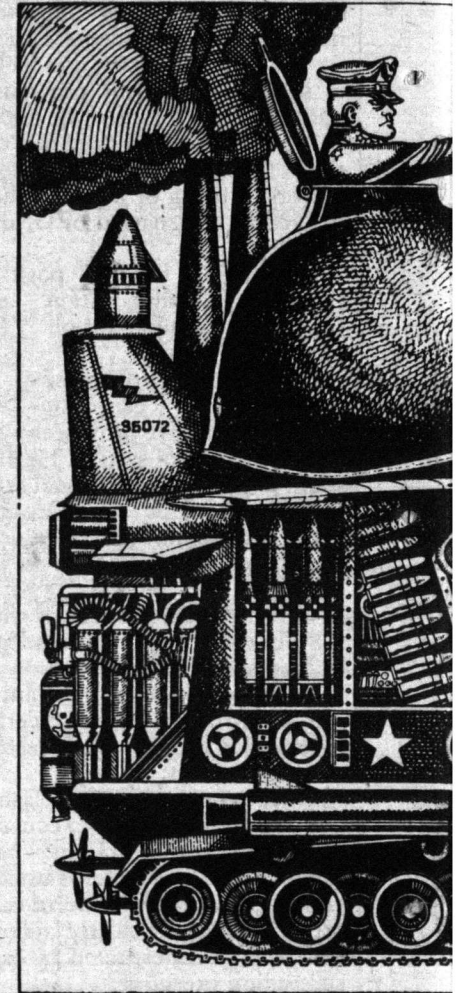
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difference is that while those within effective range of a hydrogen bomb explosion might be expected to die very rapidly as a result of the intense blast and heat of the weapon, those within the blast area of a neutron bomb can be expected to die lingering and terribly painful deaths a few weeks, months, or even years after

the blast, depending on how close they were to the place where the explosion occurred. The effects on people of this neutron radiation include, but are not strictly confined to, vomiting, diarrhea with blood, spontaneous internal bleeding, fever, delirium, the destruction of white blood cells and the bone marrow which produces them, subsequent blood poisoning, and finally coma leading to death.

To the Pentagon's argument that the use of the neutron bomb is superior in that it leaves the factories, businesses and homes of the enemy intact so as to allow immediate occupation and use by whoever used the bomb, Western scientists reply that this is false and misleading. In the words of one of these scientists: "First of all, there is still appreciable fallout from the fission trigger; nor can blast and heat be completely eliminated; since there must be sufficient fission energy released to raise the temperature of the thermonuclear materials to the level required to trigger the fusion reaction. Furthermore, the neutrons will eventually be absorbed in the ground and other materials in the vicinity of their release, and in the air as well, leaving behind appreciable long-lived radioactivity to render the use of the preserved property somewhat less convenient than is generally acknowledged by the weapon's proponents."

In the same vein, those who



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA CAMPUS TOUR PROGRAM



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Office of the Registrar

Help prospective students, parents and interested members of the public learn more about the University of Alberta.

This year the Office of the Registrar is expanding its campus tour program to include parents, family groups, individuals and members of the public, as well as the school groups which already tour the campus regularly. And, we are looking for interested students to lead these tours.

In addition to leading tours, students in this program may also become involved in several other programs of interest to prospective students, such as visits to high schools in Alberta, University Orientation Days, discussing university life with high school or college transfer students and their parents, and many others.

Tours and other events will be scheduled for

weekdays, evenings and weekends, but leaders will not be required to conduct tours at times that conflict with classes, exams, etc. In fact leaders may choose to work as much or as little as they wish.

If you would like to become a tour leader, you may obtain an application form from the Office of the Registrar (either 303 Arts Building or 2nd Floor Administration Building) or the front desk in Lister Hall. Complete the form and return it to the Office of the Registrar, 303 Arts Building, by Friday, October 2.

A list of finalists will be compiled from all applicants received by the deadline. All finalists will be interviewed during the week of October 5, with successful leaders chosen from among the finalists.

For more information contact Bev Glover in Room 306 Arts Building, or call 432-5088.