



Committee on International Justice and Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3160
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP • FAX 202-541-3339

February 5, 2008

Congressman Jim McGovern
Congressman Dan Lungren
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman McGovern and Congressman Lungren:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I want to commend you for introducing the Global Security Priorities Act, a bold initiative that links long-term savings derived from reducing our nuclear arsenal to increased support for nuclear nonproliferation efforts and child survival programs. This important Resolution will send a powerful message of hope to a world longing for greater security and peace based on justice.

We bishops approach the issues of reducing nuclear arsenals and securing nuclear materials as pastors and teachers, not as military experts. In *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace* (1993), the U.S. Bishops articulate two principles of just war teaching that have profound implications for nuclear weapons:

- The principle of noncombatant immunity demands that civilians not be the object of direct attack, and that military personnel take due care to avoid and minimize indirect harm to civilians.
- The principle of proportionality in the use of force requires that efforts must be made to attain military objectives with no more force than is militarily necessary and to avoid disproportionate collateral damage to civilian life and property.

The use of nuclear weapons is rejected in Church teaching because their use cannot insure noncombatant immunity and their destructive potential and lingering radiation cannot be proportionate in any meaningful sense. Pope Benedict XVI has said, “In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims.” (January 1, 2006)

For these moral reasons, the bishops have long supported the dismantling of nuclear weapons systems, the effective securing of nuclear materials from terrorists, and a reduction in the overall number of nuclear armaments. Our goal is to prevent proliferation of these horrific weapons, and ultimately to eliminate them. The Global Security Priority Act embraces these goals and takes important steps in this direction.

By adopting deep cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, our nation can move toward meeting its obligations under the Nonproliferation Treaty and encourage other nations to do the same. The reduction of nuclear weapons and securing of nuclear materials called for in this Resolution will send a signal to the rest of the world that will strengthen our nation’s credibility and leadership on the issue of nonproliferation. Other nuclear powers will be

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less dependent on their own nuclear deterrents and non-nuclear nations will be less tempted to ignore their non-proliferation obligations.

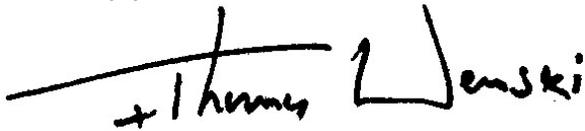
The Church's social teaching has particular relevance to the necessary struggle against terrorism. Following 9/11, our Bishops' Conference argued: "A successful campaign against terrorism will require a combination of resolve to do what is necessary to see it through, restraint to ensure that we act justly, and a long term focus on broader issues of justice and peace."

Our Conference went on to say: "Our nation must join with others in addressing policies and problems that provide fertile ground in which terrorism can thrive. Years ago, Pope Paul VI declared, 'If you want peace, work for justice.' This wisdom should not be misunderstood. No injustice legitimizes the horror we have experienced. But a more just world will be a more peaceful world. There will still be people of hate and violence, but they will have fewer allies, supporters and resources to commit their heinous acts." (November 14, 2001)

Based on the moral insight that if we want peace, we must work for justice, we commend the Resolution's commitment to "enhance child survival in the world's most needy countries" and to improve "child nutrition and educational opportunities." Through funding of such vital programs we can strengthen our nation's commitment to reduce global poverty and the desperate situations of injustice and deprivation that terrorists exploit for their own terrible purposes.

Our Conference of Bishops will work for broad and deep bipartisan support of the Global Security Priorities Act. This legislation will help our nation to contribute to greater security, justice and peace in our world through reducing nuclear armaments, securing nuclear materials, especially from terrorists, and improving child survival and nutrition among desperately poor societies.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops