



“Ukraine: Is Nuclear Conflict Likely?” Nuclear War Could Be Near, According to Nobel Laureate

Description

The United States and Russia are dangerously close to stumbling into a war over Ukraine that could go nuclear and kill hundreds of millions of people in a single day, a Nobel laureate who is one of the world's leading experts on the dangers of nuclear weapons warned in Washington this week.

“It’s an incredibly dangerous situation. ... If there’s a nuclear war tonight, that’s the Northern Hemisphere (of the entire world) gone, Dr. Helen Caldicott told a National Press Club Newsmakers news conference on Wednesday. She was speaking on the topic: **“Ukraine: Is Nuclear Conflict Likely?”**”

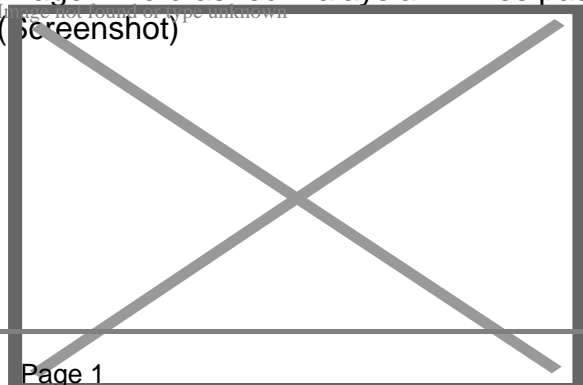
Caldicott is an Australian physician who founded the International Physicians against Nuclear War, a group that under her leadership won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. She is the former president of the Nuclear Policy Research Institute based in Washington

The expansion of NATO to Russia’s borders is “very, very dangerous,” Caldicott said.

“There is no way a war between the United States and Russia could start and not go nuclear. ... The United States and Russia have enormous stockpiles of these weapons. Together they have 94 percent of all the 16,300 nuclear weapons in the world.”

“We are in a very fallible, very dangerous situation operated by mere mortals,” she warned. “The nuclear weapons, are sitting there, thousands of them. They are ready to be used.”

Image: The crashed Malaysia Airlines passenger plane sits near the village of Rozsypne, Ukraine.
(Screenshot)



policymakers for their actions in forward positioning U.S. and NATO military units in countries of Eastern Europe in response to Russian support of breakaway separatists in the provinces of eastern Ukraine. On —, the U.S. government announced the deployment of the Ironhorse Brigade, an elite armored cavalry unit of the U.S. Army to the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, along the historic invasion route from the West to St. Petersburg.

“Do they really want a nuclear war with Russia?” she asked “The only war that you can have with Russia is a nuclear war. ... You don’t provoke paranoid countries armed with nuclear weapons.”

Caldicott said U.S. policymakers appeared oblivious to rising Russian fears as successive U.S. presidents and their administrations continued to break the security guarantees that President George Herbert walker Bush and his secretary of state James A. Baker had given to last Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at the end of the Cold War.

“The United States has broken the guarantees it gave to Gorbachev before the breakup of the Soviet Union when it promised not to expand NATO to Russia’s borders,” Caldicott said.

“Imagine if the roles were reversed and if Russia (provoked a coup in Ottawa and) took over Canada. What would the U.S. reaction be?” Caldicott asked.

“(In 1962) we nearly had a nuclear world war over Cuba and Ukraine is a lot bigger (and more important) than Cuba,” she said.

Caldicott said she disagreed with the widespread criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin over his support for Eastern Ukrainian separatists.

“Putin ... I think he is being very restrained at the moment,” she said. “... Putin is trying to defend himself. He has the support of most Russians. The Russians are a proud and patriotic people.”

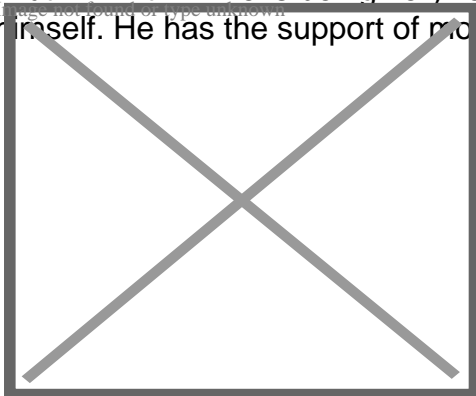


Image: Dr. Helen Caldicott (Wikipedia)

Caldicott also warned that another flare up of the civil war in Ukraine could threaten catastrophic meltdowns of the many nuclear power stations in the country, risking millions of lives.

“Ukraine has 15 large nuclear power plants,” she said.

“Any conventional weapon going into any one of them would set off a meltdown on the

scale of Chernobyl in 1986. The most recent studies have shown that more than a million people have died from the after-effects of the Chernobyl melt-down.”

“Nuclear reactors are cancer factories and nuclear bomb factories; each reactor makes 500 pounds of plutonium a year (It’s made when a U238 (Uranium 238) atom captures a neutron) It takes only 10 pounds of plutonium to make a nuclear weapon.”

“Japan has got 40 tons of plutonium in its stockpiles. That means Japan could become a major nuclear military power in a matter of weeks if it wanted to,”

she added.

Even a limited nuclear exchange would have devastating economic and environmental consequences on the world, Caldicott warned.

“If a single thermonuclear weapon, or hydrogen bomb, is exploded into space it would knock out all electronic communications in at least six Westernized states for months,” she said.

But such a nuclear exchange, once initiated, would certainly get out of control rapidly, she added.

“The United States and Russia (between them) have 94 percent of the 16,400 nuclear weapons in the world,” she added. “Albert Einstein was right: The splitting of the atom changed everything, it changed all reality – except for the way men think,”

Caldicott said.

Caldicott was scathingly critical of the mainstream U.S. media for ignoring the real risks of a nuclear exchange.

“The mass media has a huge role to play. **The media is being absolutely irresponsible,**” she said. “Mr. Jefferson said a well-informed public was essential to the successful functioning of a democracy. But this democracy is thoroughly ill-informed.”

“We all practice psychic numbing. We are lemmings. We are all into manic denial,” she added.

“The real issue facing us is the continuation of life on the planet. There is a complete lack of knowledge among the general public and their leaders about this threat,” Caldicott added.

Caldicott expressed sympathy for U.S. President Barack Obama but said he had been “overwhelmed” by the crises facing him. “We’ve got a good man, but the pressures have overwhelmed him. Obama has been overwhelmed by the pressures,” she said.

“I pity Obama, he’s got so much on his plate,” she said.

Caldicott noted that the world had just passed the centenary of the start of World War I, but the forces and problems that caused it remained the same today.

“You know how the First World War started 100 years ago: One person shot an archduke. The pride of the leaders and generals of the great nations did the rest: They went to war,” she said. “Human

fallibility was a major cause then. It is just as common today. All kinds of things can cause very dangerous (developments) in the world.”

By Martin Sieff

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