

U.S. ‘Nuclear Umbrella’ is a Death Wish

Some recent headlines speak volumes of thoughtless mush.

“Europe Is Ready to Shelter Under France’s Nuclear Umbrella” (*Foreign Policy*); “Can Europe Build Its Own Nuclear Umbrella?” (FirstPost); “France has a nuclear umbrella. Could its European allies fit under it?” (BBC); “To many in Europe, Trump has punched holes in NATO’s nuclear umbrella” (CNN); “Canada’s allies are wondering if they can still shelter under the U.S. nuclear umbrella” (CBS).

The phrase “nuclear umbrella” is designed to evoke the image of an impenetrable shield of protection. In the comforting euphemism of diplomats, the phrase means a promise to “defend” compliant non-nuclear states using nuclear weapons. In military circles, it is one government’s threat to attack a third country with nuclear weapons on behalf of an ally that has no nukes.

The practice of holding a “nuclear umbrella” for allies is sometimes called “extended deterrence.” It’s been offered by the United States to nuclear-free European countries, along with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and others.

CNN reported that Polish President Andrzej Duda, on March 13, called on President Trump to deploy U.S. nuclear weapons in Poland, much like it does in Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. CBS News reported on May 7 that current talk of the “nuclear umbrella” is “driven by Trump’s threats not to protect allies that don’t meet his expectations.”

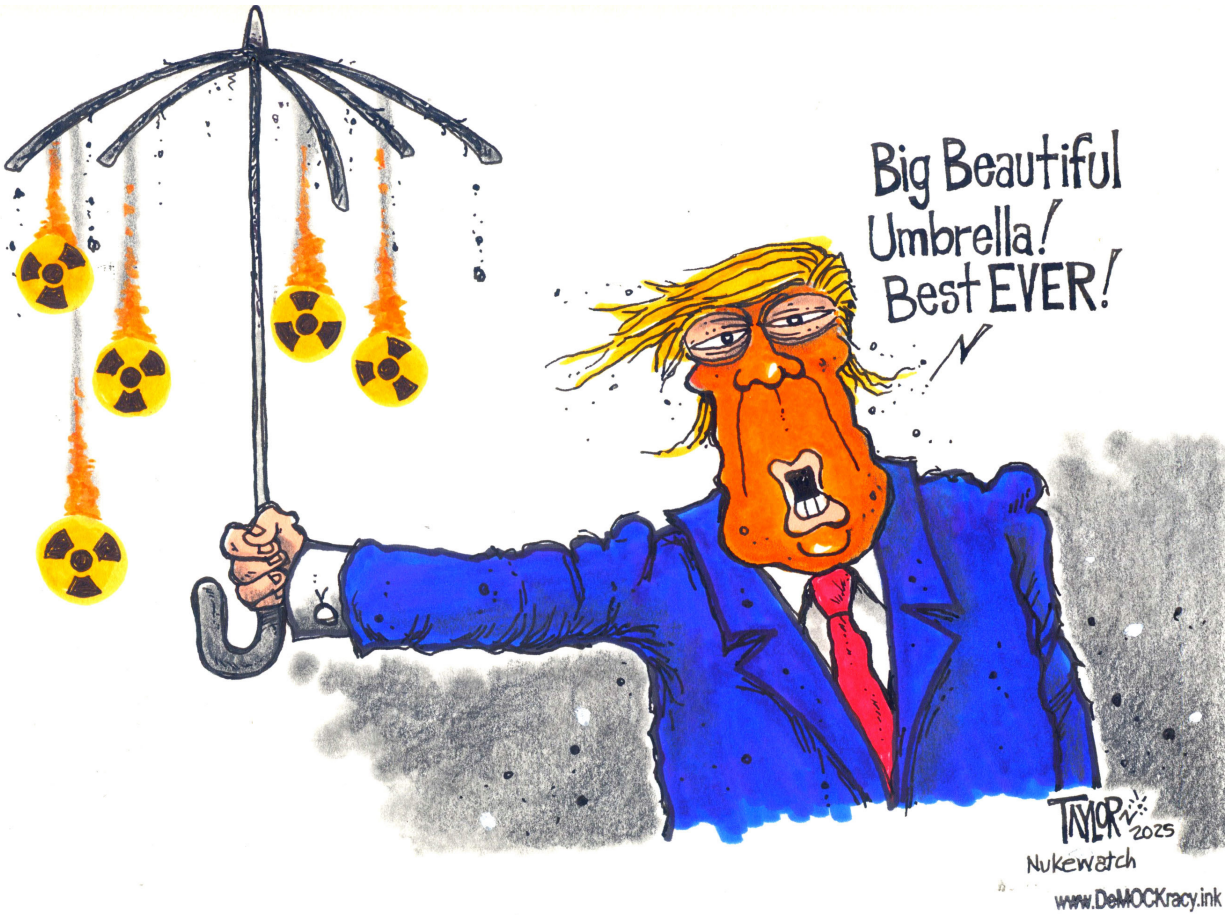
The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace reported recently that Europeans “seriously worry about whether Washington will continue to extend nuclear deterrence — sometimes referred to as a nuclear ‘umbrella’ — to the continent.” The “Europeans” the CEIP refers to are only those who have no understanding of nuclear weapons.

Use of the sugar-coated word “deterrence” hides the ghastly, devastating, suicidal reality of nuclear weapons attacks, and has the additional power of teaching the public to live in fear of other countries. As one vice president of a group called “Liberal International” put it recently, “The U.S. nuclear umbrella over Europe is the ultimate defense against hostilities toward NATO countries.” The question “What would a nuclear attack achieve?” never enters the conversation.

The late Daniel Ellsberg, as an advisor to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, drafted plans for nuclear attacks. He wrote in *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*, “The plan called for a total of 40 megatons — megatons — on Moscow, about four thousand times more than the bomb over Hiroshima.” In *Things That Can and Cannot Be Said*, Ellsberg says about this plan, “Our private, top-secret estimates were that we would kill every European, a hundred million Europeans, without a single U.S. or Soviet warhead landing on West Europe. Just from the fallout of the attacks we were planning on Russia and East Europe. One hundred million.”

The self-destructive nature of nuclear war was understood by some Europeans, including Germany’s (future Chancellor) Helmut Schmidt, who warned in his 1962 book *Defense or Retaliation* that the use of U.S. nuclear weapons “will not defend Europe, but destroy it.”

Today’s editors and heads of state ought to be focused on how to eliminate nuclear umbrellas rather than hundreds of millions of compatriots, allies and friends. — *JL*



Mark Taylor creates & donates political art for Nukewatch and has more at www.DeMOCKracy.ink

President Trump to Remove Nuclear Power Guardrails

From Beyond Nuclear, May 15, 2025

On May 14, 2025, E&E News online updated reports on President Donald Trump’s four “pre-decisional” White House Executive Orders to radically alter the historic role of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) to oversee the performance of reactor design “safety reviews” and the regulatory approval of reactor siting, construction, and operation for commercial nuclear power reactors.

In President Trump’s view, the NRC’s “overly burdensome regulations” are the primary obstacle to guaranteeing the development and construction of a national “nuclear renaissance.” As a result, the White House is eyeing a “wholesale regulatory revision” of the NRC that includes mandatory “reductions in force.” Simultaneously, the White House is considering authorizing the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of Defense (DOD) to take charge of quadrupling the current domestic nuclear power capacity to 400 gigawatts by 2050. In order to achieve this goal, the draft Executive Orders outline: 1) “overhauling NRC”; 2) significantly accelerating “nuclear R&D”; 3) redefining commercial nuclear power development as critical “national security” infrastructure; and 4) dramatically expanding the U.S. “nuclear supply chain” to include ramping up domestic uranium mining, milling, enrichment, and fabrication of nuclear reactor fuel.

While no energy generation system is entirely domestically sourced, the U.S. nuclear fuel supply is predominantly sourced through foreign imports. According to the U.S. Energy Information Agency reporting in 2025, U.S. domestic uranium mines produce roughly 1% of the uranium concentrate U₃O₈ (triuranium octoxide or uranium yellowcake), needed to fuel the current U.S. reactor fleet in 2023.

Foreign imports accounted for 99% of our nation’s U₃O₈, with 48% coming from Russia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Presently, Russia is also the only commercially viable global supplier of high-assay, low enriched uranium fuel needed for proposed Small Modular Reactor designs, including Bill Gate’s TerraPower “Natrium” liquid sodium-cooled fast reactor and X-Energy’s

Xe-100 high-temperature, gas-cooled, pebble-bed reactor.

A Trump Administration Executive Order says that it will no longer recognize federal agencies as “inde-

pendent” but rather will consider all of them subject to presidential supervision and control. All “significant regulatory actions” of the NRC would be reviewed by the White House’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, or OIRA, opening the process to White House review for comments, edits, and influence. E&E News observed that the new process “obscures the public record of internal commission deliberations” and is an apparent violation of the Atomic Energy Act which clearly mandates that NRC decision-making remain independent.

The draft order to overhaul the NRC would also require the agency to reconsider its standard for radiation exposure where it now understands that there is no safe dose of radiation. Dr. Edwin Lyman, a physicist and Director of Nuclear Power Safety for the Union of Concerned Scientists, is quoted in the E&E News article, saying, “Documented scientific evidence has only indicated that [low-level radiation exposure] is more dangerous than was known decades ago, when these standards were set.” Furthermore, Dr. Lyman adds, “Evidence has emerged about the impact of the level of radiation exposure on cardiovascular disease.”

The White House draft order to reframe nuclear power deployment for “national security” sets up the DOE and the DOD to “work around the NRC-led licensing and safety review processes” by providing the Secretaries of Defense and Energy accelerated schedules to “identify military facilities at which advanced nuclear technologies can be immediately installed and deployed.” Those military base-sited nuclear power reactors could then provide transmission to the electric grid for commercial power.

It is alarming that Trump’s Executive Orders fast tracking the still theoretical and cost-prohibitive construction of unproven “Generation IV” reactors by destroying the NRC comes at precisely the wrong time.

This is the 50th Anniversary Year of the creation of the NRC, following the abolition of the Atomic Energy Commission by Congress, because of the AEC’s blatant fast-track promotion and licensing of power reactors, and its disregard for public health and safety. Today, too many of those aging and deteriorating nuclear power stations are approaching or have exceeded 50 years of harsh operating experience involving: radioactive neutron bombardment; embrittlement; cracking in base metal and weld materials; and metallic fatigue and corrosion under a combination of extreme heat, high pressure, and heavy vibration. Nobody knows better the growing level of uncertainty, the multitude of technical knowledge gaps, and innumerable shrinking reactor safety margins than those NRC nuclear engineers fired by executive order. Certainly, not Trump.