

Why Are We Still Going Nuclear?

Presentation by Alfred Meyer

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[Partial Transcript courtesy EON]

Dave Kraft – Host - Nuclear Energy Information Service – NEIS.org

[\(00:00\)](#):

Welcome to the June 29, 2023 night with the experts here sponsored by Nuclear Energy Information Service based in Chicago. We do this every month on the last Thursday of each month where we bring an expert in and you and the audience will have an opportunity to get into conversation, ask questions, get into dialogue with each other on the particular topics that we have for that month. And this month, I am really, really excited to have an old friend and colleague join us. Alfred Meyer, who I've known for many, many years, has been an activist on a lot of fronts, both the nuclear weapons front and the nuclear power front.

[\(00:41\)](#):

In his resume, he's been associated with groups like Physicians for Social Responsibility, both in Wisconsin and nationally, the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability. He's been working with Peace Action and the Manhattan Project. Manhattan Project for a nuclear-free, and also has been involved with an organization. It's kind of near and dear to my heart, the Friends of Chernobyl Centers in the United States.

[\(01:12\)](#):

So tonight we're going to examine, I hope, the connections between nuclear power and nuclear weapons. It's something that have, after all these years, has been a real sore point for me that these two movements, which have such importance in terms of their issue and in terms of what's at stake, have not been able to really unify. And I'm hoping we get into that a little bit tonight. So without further ado, I will turn it over to Alfred and we will get started here in just a moment, so. All right, Alfred, the show is yours.

Alfred Meyer (01:57):

Thank you very much, Dave. And I want to start out tonight by thanking you, Dave, and NEIS, Nuclear Energy Information Service out of Chicago for the decades of wonderful work you've done and the effort you've made to educate people about the nuclear threats. And it is just a real honor to be part of this program. I also just want to pay homage to one of my mentors, Dr. Patterson, who died in 2014 unexpectedly, but a great pioneer and a worker against nuclear threats. And he actually, I found out just recently, had been scheduled to be the very first speaker the night with the experts. So I feel a special, very personal reverence really, for Jeff.

(02:51):

And I just want to mention one thing, one idea that Jeff shared with me as he shared with so many others, is that this nuclear enterprise is an unplanned, out of controlled human experiment about irradiating the biosphere. And then we aren't finding out what it's doing, but we are doing it to ourselves. So this is a grave threat to the fate of humanity. And the other thing that Jeff talked about that he and Dave came up with was the idea of SCAM, secrecy, coverup, and minimization. And this is how the nuclear establishment handles our concerns. And I think it's very important for us to try to understand what that nuclear establishment is, and to come to an understanding about how it works and how we can work to influence it.

[\(04:05\)](#):

And I'd like to say that this nuclear enterprise, even from Marie Curry's earliest discoveries of this magical power in this rock, there's been this huge hope for this really magical elixir for mankind that will give us unlimited energy and solve all the problems of agriculture and medicine and so many other things. And this is what the nuclear splitting of the atom has been billed as. A 1954 National Geographic article suggested that the US taxpayer up to 1954 had spent about \$12B as in boy, billion dollars on the nuclear enterprise, both for defense and peaceful purposes. And that they reckoned at that point it was probably the industry with the highest rate of investment of any in the United States. So this is a huge, vast enterprise.

[\(05:16\)](#):

And even before the atomic bomb was dropped in early 1944, Leslie Groves, the head of the Manhattan Project, called together the leading advertising experts of the day and put them to work about what they would say once the bomb was dropped, and the secret of the Manhattan Project was made public and would have to be explained somehow. And what they wanted to do was somehow make people like it, explain enough to satisfy people so that they'd really support it, but not give away any military secrets or any scientific secrets that have military applications. At the same time, the story is promoted that the reason we won the Second World War was because of the nuclear weapons, that we would've lost a million people in the invasion of Japan. But in fact, Japan was, well, we were deep in negotiations for their surrender. So that really is not very accurate either.

[\(06:34\)](#):

So from the get-go, this nuclear experiment has really been problematic. I got interested in nuclear power and it was being sold to us as the solution to climate change. And a few years ago, I read and yet one more expert critique of why nuclear power cannot solve

climate change. I forget it might have been from the Rocky Mountain Institute. I mean, there's a whole collection of them starting really with Arjun Makhijani's book, Carbon-Free Nuclear-Free, a roadmap for US energy policy published in 2007. So it's clear that it really can't solve climate change, but that's what it's sold to us is doing. And when I finished reading this critique of it, it occurred to me the critique is spot on. It's flawless, it's irrefutable, but you know what? It doesn't do a darn bit of good. It doesn't change the trajectory of the enterprise.

[\(07:39\)](#):

And that's when I came across a report by US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz from 2017, in which he called the civilian nuclear energy was an essential enabler of national security. And in this context, I define national security as nuclear weapons and the nuclear navy, the capacity with which to deliver them. And what Mr. Moniz is saying is that the infrastructure needed to keep almost a hundred reactors on land running is of essential assistance to our enterprise of keeping almost a hundred reactors at sea operating. And that having those two big fleets of reactors gives us the capacity to work on our nuclear weapons programs. So this was Secretary Moniz saying this.

[\(08:48\)](#):

And furthermore, the Atlantic Council, which is the Washington DC think tank, very mainstream, very well regarded, generally speaking, they calculated that the civilian nuclear power contributes \$42.4B, as in boy, billion dollars annually towards our national security. So that's the value of civilian nuclear power to the military endeavor. If it weren't for the civilian programs, we'd have to appropriate another \$42.4 billion every year just to keep things running from the defense side. And Dave, how am I doing on time? I forgot to set up.

Dave Kraft [\(09:45\)](#):

You're doing fine.

Alfred Meyer (09:48):

So if it's my intention, and I want to offer this as a hypothesis, that what is really driving the entire nuclear enterprise are nuclear weapons and the nuclear navy. And the rest of any discussion is really false advertising promises, you could say, it's diversionary tactics. It doesn't have to be cheap, it doesn't have to be clean, it doesn't have to be safe. And we don't really have to worry about the waste. And it doesn't have to solve climate change because what it's doing is making nuclear weapons. So anyway, I just invite you to try out kind of that perspective as you consider nuclear things and see how it fits.

(10:44):

And I want to make a few comments about small modular nuclear reactors because I've come across some kind of interesting information, which kind of highlights what is the purpose of small modular reactors, for instance. I'm not sure how many of you are familiar with the document that President Trump issued six days after January 6, 2021. On the 12th of January, he issued a report or an executive order supporting small modular reactors for defense and space exploration. That's what they're for. And he said that to quote this, he said, "Nuclear energy is critical to United States National Security."

(11:44):

And further on, he states in this order ordering that we get going on making these new modular reactors, "The ability to use small modular reactors will help maintain and advance United States' dominance and strategic leadership across the space and terrestrial domains. Space and terrestrial domains." That's what Donald Trump thought small modular reactors were for. And maybe it's one of the times he was telling the truth, actually. But not long after Trump left office and Biden came in, Biden's been doling out money for small modular reactors right, left and center.

(12:41):

For instance, the State Department committed \$5.3 million to launch the foundational infrastructure for responsible use of small modular reactor technology programs. And this is to help countries figure out if they can use small modular reactors, if they can be our customers. In 2022, the State Department again committed \$14 million towards a front end engineering and design study about deploying a small modular reactor in Romania. Another \$14 million was coughed up by the Romanian company and NuScale power, a United States firm. And the sales pitch for this one says, "This business could be worth \$1 billion in a little while." So what a great investment.

(13:37):

At the same time, I don't know if any of you remember the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership that George Bush founded in the early 2000s. Well, I didn't know this, but it has been replaced... Pardon me, while I'm trying to find out [inaudible 00:14:04], by something called The International Framework for Nuclear Energy Cooperation, otherwise known as IFNEC. This was in 2010. This was formed as an offshoot of GNEP, and currently it has 33 participant countries in this program with an additional 31 observer countries and five international organizations. And in aggregate, there are some 72 different designs for small modular reactors being worked on in 18 different countries. So I would suggest we aren't quite at the days of being standardized with small modular reactors.

(14:58):

But Biden is selling the small modular reactors as a solution to climate change, and that's why we need him. But really the small modular reactors are for propulsion units for the nuclear navy, and they're also to develop... There was a big push to develop the entire uranium fuel chain domestically, and that is intended to include HALEU fuel, which is another scurrilous program, which is sold to us as being for solving climate change, but it's really for the military applications. So anyway, I think I'm going to stop my presentation at this point with the hopes

that some people might have some questions and comments. If I'm missing the boat on this, I want to hear it. But for all I can tell, this... Oh, I should mention one other thing. And this I really do owe Mr. Moniz a thank-you note.

([16:06](#)):

The supply chain for the nuclear navy, according to his 2017 report, is found in a mere 44 of the 50 United States. So this makes this whole nuclear endeavor quite popular from a bipartisan standpoint. And then there was just recently a bipartisan bill introduced in Congress to support advanced reactor technology. So my point, to summarize is that I'm quite convinced I can't offer all the proof of every step of it, but that what's driving this, the bus of the nuclear enterprise is nuclear weapons and the nuclear navy and the vast, vast array of industrial enterprises, academic enterprises, scientific enterprises, the national labs.

([17:05](#)):

I mean, this is a huge vast endeavor and it gets covered up. The energy department that sounds like there are solar panels and wind turbines. No, that's 64% of their budget is nuclear weapons stuff. But anyway, I think we have to know what's driving the bus because otherwise I felt like this report I read saying nuclear power can't solve climate change, hit the bullseye. It cannot do that, but that's a false target. That's not what's driving the bus. So anyway, I look forward to some discussion about this.

Dave Kraft ([17:47](#)):

Hey, thank you, Alfred. Before I actually move into the next section of our discussion tonight, I want to give you the opportunity in the announcements that we had sent out inviting people to attend tonight. We also mentioned that you had a couple of articles published in The Progressive and I wanted to give you an opportunity to let people know

what they are and if they want, they can go back to their invites and read those articles if you want to fill us in.

Alfred Meyer ([18:14](#)):

Sure. The first one listed there is titled It's All About the Bomb. And that's a very brief summary history of how Atoms for Peace, how Eisenhower really was confronted with a military that was absolutely devoted to nuclear weapons as being the path of domination for the world, period, no discussion. And a world population that was aghast at what nuclear weapons had done, and there were many different moves through the UN and other endeavors to control nuclear weapons, to get rid of nuclear weapons. So Eisenhower was stuck with which is it? And he was actually freaked out in August of 1953 because the Russians exploded a very sophisticated hydrogen bomb. And the US knew that the Russians had a bomb program, but they didn't think it was so sophisticated.

([19:14](#)):

Eisenhower almost had a fireside chat, or I could call it a mushroom cloud chat with a population of the US saying, "We're in deep duty with these weapons." But instead he came up with this idea of Atoms for Peace. We're going to take the peaceful atom, the peaceful U235, and we're going to spread that around the world and it's going to bring untold energy, energy that's too cheap to meter. Even though the government report at that time said the biggest problem with nuclear power was the cost. But anyway, it's been promoted with false purposes.

Dave ([19:59](#)):

And you got a second one [inaudible 00:20:02].

Alfred Meyer ([20:02](#)):

So that it is all about the bomb. It really ties together the Moniz report, and there are links in the web postings where it can take you like to the

Moniz report, which I commend people to read. The other one is about the F-35 Jet fighter plane made by Lockheed Martin, which is just recently arrived in my old hometown of Madison, Wisconsin, also based in Burlington, Vermont. And it's just a pretty... Well, this is a brief history of a huge topic. And so I really can't go into... The article doesn't go into a lot of these details as things like they were going to base it in Burlington, Vermont. And the Air Force first said there are no houses nearby. And then people in Vermont said, "No, there are a thousand houses near the airport." And the Air Force said, "Okay, we'll put it someplace else."

[\(21:08\)](#):

Patrick Lehe went head over heels and turned cartwheels and got it put back in Vermont. It's worth about a \$100 million a year to the state that bases these things., And those are the only two bases in civilian settings. And at the power of the military industrial complex is exemplified by Lockheed Martin, is that even Bernie Sanders, who legitimately ransoms rails against the spending of the military industrial complex supports the F-35s in Vermont. It's that bad, folks. I mean, they really run the show and just by the by Lockheed Martin also does the US census for us. So if you happen to look at that article, my first link to Lockheed Martin takes you to pages upon pages of what they produce, all the different products, and it's a bone chilling rendition. But anyway, I want to hear from you, folks, out in the audience.