

MASSIVE Escalation: USA Plans Nuke Attack, Prepares Troops | Steven Starr

Steven Starr, former director of the University of Missouri's Clinical Laboratory Science Program and senior scientist at Physicians for Social Responsibility, examines rising nuclear risks. He discusses tactical weapons, missile stockpiles, Israel and Iran, Europe's confrontation with Russia, launch-on-warning dangers, and the human cost of a full nuclear war, including EMP effects, firestorms, nuclear winter, and famine. Links: Steven Starr — Nuclear Famine: <https://nuclearfamine.org> Steven Starr — An EMP Attack on the U.S. Power Grids and Critical National Infrastructure: <https://www.unz.com/article/an-emp-attack-on-the-u-s-power-grids-and-critical-national-infrastructure/> Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Merch: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00 Introduction: Rising Nuclear Risks 01:59 Missile Shortages and Tactical Nukes 08:48 Tactical Weapons, Fallout and History 11:01 Israel, Iran and Europe's Escalation 18:45 What Full-Scale Nuclear War Would Do 23:16 No-First-Use and Accidental Nuclear War 32:50 Cold War Lessons and the Nuclear Umbrella 38:33 Public Opinion, Propaganda and NATO 41:07 Escalation, Military Decline and Diplomacy

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today with an update by the always brilliant Professor Stephen Starr, a professor and former director of the University of Missouri's Clinical Laboratory Science Program and a senior scientist at Physicians for Social Responsibility. Stephen, welcome back.

#Steven Starr

It's good to be with you again, Pascal.

#Pascal

Thank you very much for doing this, because once more you have prepared a PowerPoint presentation to walk us through where we are as we speak on this 20th of August, 2026, in terms of the nuclear threats and the escalation threats in the different war theaters that we see going on. Please take it away.

#Steven Starr

Okay. Well, I like to use audiovisual because I think it helps. It's better than just words. You know, I don't know. I think most of your audience is probably concerned by the social posts that Trump has

been putting out in the last several months. But a couple of them struck me. And just a few days ago, former Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene posted, and she said, "They're discussing using nuclear weapons on Iran in strategy meetings. Yes, you read that correctly. It's real. I'm not speculating. I know." And I looked at Trump's Truth Social posts, and I found these two. If you look at the one over here, he's got his finger on the red button, and there's even a nuclear cloud in this one here.

So he's clearly thinking about using nuclear weapons, and that worries me. And it's not just Trump. The U.S. is fast running out of conventional weapons. And if you listen to Larry Johnson or go to his Sonar 21 website, you can see it documented. I have some information from that, and he's made it clear that we can't replace these. We manufacture them at a very slow rate, and in order to replace them, we have to get rare earths from China that are not available anymore. So what is the U.S. going to do? Well, we still have lots of nuclear weapons, and the Pentagon wants expanding options for nuclear weapons. You know, what does that mean, expanding options?

I guess it means they want to be able to use them more easily. In other words, the U.S. is lowering the threshold for the use of its nuclear weapons in conflict. The nuclear doctrine is being revised to call for the use of tactical or so-called low-yield nuclear weapons early in a conflict with a peer or a near-peer opponent. In other words, somebody who has nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons will be used to escalate to de-escalate, to force the opponent to stand down. Now, that's an esoteric concept that I'm pretty sure the Russians don't subscribe to, although some may say that they have the same concept themselves.

But either way, it's pretty risky to shoot off a bunch of nukes and hope your opponent will back down or surrender. And in fact, in all previous war games, once tactical nuclear weapons were used, this always led to a full-scale nuclear war. Right now, the U.S. has only enough long-range precision-guided weapons to fight Russia for three to four weeks. These include the Tomahawk missiles. You know, we used 30% to 50% of the total Tomahawk inventory in the 40-day war with Iran. Half of them. What, are we making 50 of those a year right now? 50% of these air-launched cruise missiles, 50% to 60% of the ATACMS were fired. We're not even making ATACMS anymore. I mean, we really are almost out of missiles.

So let's say we have 2,000 Tomahawk missiles left. You know, those aren't just for CENTCOM in the Middle East. They're all supposed to go for the Pacific and the Atlantic, you know. So the Pentagon is looking at this and going, "Whoa, that's why Trump's announcing we're not going to have any more attacks on Iran." The U.S. has used up most of its air defense missiles. And, you know, if you listen to Theodore Postol, who I'm a big fan of, we wrote an article together in the Bulletin about the effects of an 800-kiloton weapon. But he's shown very conclusively that Patriot missiles only have a 3% intercept rate. So even if we had any left... I guess we got about 1,000 to 2,000 left.

They don't work very well. And that doesn't bode well for fending off a nuclear attack on the United States. So what are tactical nuclear weapons? They're defined as weapons that have less than one

kiloton. A kilo means 1,000, so a kiloton means 1,000 tons of TNT explosive equivalent. So one kiloton to 100 kilotons, 100,000 tons of TNT explosive. And I made a little image here. This is a superimposed explosion over New York City, central New York. The 0.3-kiloton explosive power is what we find in our B61-12 nuclear weapons that we've deployed to Europe. They're gravity bombs. The 10-kiloton, I wanted to just show this going up, and 90-kiloton. The Russians have 90- and 100-kiloton, what they call tactical nuclear weapons.

And the green zone shows where the immediate lethal radiation would be produced from the detonation of the bomb. And the fire zone, which is where nuclear firestorms take place, is in the yellow zone. You can see considerably bigger with the larger weapons. None of these are considered small because a nuclear bomb explodes with the heat of the sun. We used to have lots of tactical nuclear weapons. We had thousands of them in the 1960s and '70s. This is a video of a test in Nevada. A 280-millimeter nuclear shell was fired. It landed 6.2 miles away, and it was a 15-kiloton explosion. Now, if you were in Japan, you might have seen something like that if you were six miles away.

But this is Hiroshima after a 15-kiloton bomb six months later. And what it does, it just sets everything on fire. That fire zone creates a firestorm that no one gets out of alive. So what does the U.S. have for tactical nuclear weapons? Well, we have the B61 tactical nuclear bombs, and about 200 of those are stored at five NATO member states: Belgium, Italy, Turkey, Germany, and the Netherlands. Here's an image of an F-35A fighter carrying the B61s. And you can see the tactical weapons stored in a bunker there somewhere in Europe. These are, they call them dial-a-yield bombs, or variable yields, and they can be set to explode with a range of explosive power. The B61-12 is 0.3 kilotons, or 300 tons of TNT, to 50 kilotons.

Now, 300 tons of TNT is an awful lot, but, you know, historically, that is a very small nuclear explosion because our largest conventional weapons explode now with 20 to 40 tons of TNT. So it kind of blurs the line between conventional and nuclear. It makes the generals think, oh, it's just a bigger bomb. We also have 200 air-launched cruise missiles that are armed with, I think it's a W80 thermonuclear warhead that has a variable yield of 5 to 150 kilotons. Now, these are actually classified as strategic nuclear weapons because they can be used with a 150-kiloton yield, and they're carried by the B-52 bombers. But technically, you know, if you wanted to, you could dial them down to 5 kilotons and fly them over Iran. Let's hope not. Well, Russia has—that's a matter of debate.

These are not very well-known numbers, but Hans Kristensen estimates that Russia has 1,794 tactical nuclear weapons, and their explosive power ranges from 1 to 100 kilotons. And you can see there's all variety. It is similar to what we had in the 1960s. There's, you know, land-attack cruise missiles, bombers, gravity bombs, anti-ballistic missiles, you name it. They might even have artillery and mortar shells that are nuclear weapons. Now, if you use a tactical nuclear weapon, it's going to create a lot of radioactive fallout. This is a video of a 1970 underground test in Nevada. It was a 10-kiloton warhead that was actually buried 900 feet deep. You can't get one that deep when you drop

it out of a plane. But it vented, and you wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere near that cloud. It would have been lethal.

#Pascal

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#Steven Starr

So we have a history of having a lot of tactical nuclear weapons. In Europe, we had 7,300 tactical nukes deployed in 1971. At that time, the Soviet Union had 12,500. And NATO did war games back in those days, and they started doing war games in the late '50s. And this is one called Able Archer that was held in 1983. It actually almost started a nuclear war because the Russians saw it. The game was real because we had people from the cabinet participating, the vice president, I believe. They had to stand it down at some point, but what happened was, once they introduced nuclear weapons, it just became a nuclear holocaust. And this led to the change in thinking because, you know, they said, "Well, this is suicide." And we eventually got rid of these weapons.

You know, in 1991, there were presidential nuclear initiatives that got rid of a lot of them, almost all of them in the U.S. and the Soviet Union. This slide shows fallout in Germany following an attack with 171 nuclear weapons, and you could just see the lethal radiation from the fallout alone covered half of Germany. So that, you know, this led these people to think, we don't need these anymore, and we got rid of most of them. We took them all off our—the first President Bush took them off all the surface ships. No tactical nuclear weapons. We got rid of short-range rockets, atomic demolition munitions, all of them. We got rid of them. But now they want to use them again. I think it's more attractive. Anyway, this compares a 10-kiloton detonation.

You saw that earlier in another slide, to an 800-kiloton nuclear detonation, which is a strategic nuclear weapon. Russia probably has 350 of these 800-kiloton warheads at launch-ready status. And, you know, on an average weather day, that big red circle creates a firestorm that nobody's going to survive in. So you don't even have to worry about blasts. It's just a fire. It's horrible. And worse, it produces smoke. Well, Trump is followed by a nuclear briefcase, and it's automated. You can see down here the officer's carrying it. It's a communication device that allows him to give a permission order for a nuclear strike in one minute or less. He has a range of options. He can order a strike with one weapon or a thousand weapons. Now, once that permission order is given, it has to be carried out.

And so let's hope that somebody on the receiving end says, "Wait a minute." But, you know, he believes that's his power. I think he's quite consumed with it. He's also paranoid. You know, if you look on the left, this is a video that Iran released a while back. It shows Trump on the golf course

with a shadow of a drone above him. This is a photo taken in the last few weeks of Trump playing golf, and he's got an Avenger air defense system that can shoot down drones and concertina wire. That's not your normal round of golf. And again, I want to point to his two social posts. I don't think they indicate mental stability. I mean, it's not funny. You know, if he posted this once in a while, it would be one thing, but he goes on a binge with these. And look at these images, you know.

#Pascal

There was Atlas there. I mean, Trump shouldering the world as Atlas. Yeah, Atlas Shrugs. The space Trump, basically emperor of the universe. It's insane, right?

#Steven Starr

But he also has some religious things going on. He has a picture of himself as a pope, and also as a savior, I believe. He's healing there. He's got... You know, I mean, that was when it first got my attention. I found a picture of him in the Oval Office at a prayer session. They're laying on of hands. They have their hands on the president, a holy man praying. So this doesn't help anybody that's a megalomaniac narcissist. So, yes, he's thinking about nuclear weapons. And Bibi Netanyahu is also thinking about nuclear weapons. You know, Israel has 90 to 400 nuclear weapons, and that number is a matter of debate. But, you know, they were estimated to have hundreds of nuclear weapons 20 years ago, and I seriously doubt if they have less than that now. They don't admit it.

They don't publicize it, so it's hard to get any pictures or anything. But we do have pictures of their missiles. The one on the far right, the Jericho 3, see that big circle there? That shows the range of that missile. You know, they could hit Moscow, London, Paris, any city in Europe. And the shorter-range missiles are good for the Middle East. And Israel has five or six—they may have a new sub now—diesel Dolphin subs, and each sub can carry 16 cruise missiles, and they can be armed with a 200-kiloton warhead with a range of 1,500 kilometers, or 930 miles. So this is a second-strike capability, that you would call that. Uh, you know, they're like Tomahawk missiles. They would launch, and I mean, I really worry about that because Israel has been committing genocide with our assistance.

They couldn't do it without us. But, you know, I don't think they have any qualms about killing lots of people. This is a calculation that was done in a book called Nuclear War Between Israel and Iran: Lethality Beyond the Pale. That may have been an article, I'm not sure, but it was from 2013. And they calculated that 22 Israeli thermonuclear weapons detonated in Iranian cities would kill 17 million people. And these were the fallout patterns from 500-kiloton detonations over Tehran. There's a guy named Robert Green, who's a former British naval commander.

He wrote a book about—he's written several books on deterrence. And he talked about that sometime back. Israel supposedly threatened Moscow with a nuclear strike. I mean, a lot of this goes on behind our backs. We don't hear about much of this at all. We have to listen to shows like

yours, Pascal. But, you know, Iran—Dr. Theodore Postol has calculated that Iran has enough highly enriched uranium to make 10 nuclear weapons. And he created this image that shows three 15-kiloton nuclear weapons that would kill 300,000 to 400,000 people in Tel Aviv. Shows the area there. The red is where the flash from the fireball, the fire zone, would be, and then there's heavy fallout, black rain, just like they had in Hiroshima. Meanwhile, Europe is preparing for war with Russia.

I mean, this is equally disturbing, although we're not really hearing so much about it here. It's just, you know, August 15th, 800 drones made in the United Kingdom struck deep into Russia. What if the United States had an attack with 800 large drones? Look at the size of that drone. And the British are bragging about this. They talked about it in their newspapers, you know, where they're proud of it. Well, Russia, of course, has threatened consequences, though they haven't named them. But there's a lot of calls for Putin to take serious action on this. I mean, how long can this go on? The Russian Ministry of Defense has published a target list of drone manufacturers in Europe, and it included all the countries listed there.

Germany, the UK, Latvia, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Finland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, and Israel. They're all targets now. Meanwhile, the U.S. has got 51 new military bases in Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. We're busy. And Finland has just moved to allow U.S. and French nuclear weapons on Finnish military bases. You know, how do you think Russia's going to feel about that? Worse, 10 European nations have agreed to host French nuclear weapons. That would include Finland, but it also includes Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Poland, Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Norway. I can't believe it. Well, let's look at this chart. You know, Russia has 4,300 strategic nuclear weapons.

#Steven Starr

Huh.

#Steven Starr

That are deployed and reserved, ready to use. Together, France and the UK have 400. But even more important, the UK, the EU, and NATO and the US have no air defense system capable of shooting down Russian hypersonic missiles armed with nuclear warheads. So why would you want to start a war with Russia? I mean, it's suicidal, literally. And the latest headline I just saw the other day: Germany has now agreed to buy U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles and Typhon launchers to build a national strike force. And this is capable of hitting Moscow. So, you know, Germany is not the favorite country for the Soviet Union or Russia.

The Soviet Union lost 27 million people killed in World War II. And their biggest secular holiday is Victory Day, when the people all come out in the streets with pictures of the family members that died in the Great Patriotic War. The last thing they want to see is Germany remilitarizing. And I seriously doubt they're going to wait for Germany to get Tomahawk missiles, and maybe armed with

nuclear warheads, or whatever Germany is deciding to do. And we're all hoping that Merz is going to get kicked out and there's going to be new leaders in Europe. But meanwhile, this is going on. So I got one more thing I want to show. This is a couple of years old, but I think it's the best summation I can provide.

#Speaker 1

What would happen if there was a full-scale nuclear war between Russia and the United States? Based on non-classified data, the aftermath might go something like this. When one side launches nuclear missiles, the other side detects them and fires back before impact. U.S. submarine-launched ballistic missiles from west of Norway start striking Russia after about 10 minutes, and Russian ones from north of Canada start hitting the U.S. a few minutes later. The very first strikes are high-altitude EMP attacks, frying electronics and power grids by creating an electromagnetic pulse of tens of thousands of volts per meter. The next strikes target command and control, as well as nuclear launch facilities.

Land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles take about half an hour to arrive. Major cities are targeted, both because they contain military facilities and to stymie the enemy's post-war recovery. Some cruise missiles take hours to reach their targets. Each impact creates a fireball about as hot as the core of the sun, followed by a radioactive mushroom cloud. These intense explosions vaporize people nearby and cause fires and blindness further away. The fireball expansion then causes a blast wave that damages buildings, crushing nearby ones. The United Kingdom and France have nuclear capabilities and are obliged by NATO's Article 5 to defend the U.S. So Russia hits them too.

Firestorms engulf many cities, where storm-level winds fan the flames, igniting anything that can burn, melting glass and some metals, and turning asphalt into flammable hot liquid. But the explosions, the electromagnetic pulse, and the radioactivity aren't the worst part. Nuclear winter is, caused by the black carbon smoke from the nuclear firestorms. The Hiroshima atomic bomb caused such a firestorm. But today's hydrogen bombs are much more powerful. A large city like Moscow, with almost 50 times more people, can create much more smoke. And a firestorm sends plumes of black smoke up into the stratosphere, far above any rain clouds that would otherwise wash out the smoke.

This black smoke gets heated by sunlight, lofting it like a hot air balloon for up to a decade. High-altitude jet streams are so fast that it takes only a few days for the smoke to spread across much of the Northern Hemisphere. In the meantime, Earth gets freezing cold, even during the summer, with farmland in Kansas cooling by about 20 degrees Centigrade, or 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and other regions cooling almost twice as much. A recent scientific paper estimates that over 5 billion people could starve to death, including around 99% of those in the United States, Europe, Russia, and China. We obviously don't know how many people will survive a nuclear war. But if it's even remotely as bad as scientists think, then it has no winners, merely losers.

#Steven Starr

I've been trying to say for a long time that there's no political or national goals that are worth risking the destruction of most life on Earth. We really need to stop these wars from escalating. We certainly need to prevent the use of nuclear weapons in any conflict. We need to start trying to stop being a supreme ruler and start coexisting with other countries. And, you know, the days of the colonial empires—we've had 500 years of Western rule—and they're coming to an end. And I don't think the political elites are happy to accept that, but, you know, it's time to do it. If they want us to fight a war, Glenn Deason just published an article today about World War III is coming, and I'm afraid he's right, but I can't accept that. So that's why I'm doing this show, and that's why I'm talking to you. Thank you.

#Pascal

Thank you, Stephen. We got that. So please feel free to close your presentation now so that we can see and maybe talk a little bit again. These presentations are very useful, just to see how close we are to this. And what worried me so badly the last week is that it seems the Congress is now talking about, or the subcommittees are talking about, lowering the nuclear threshold—first strike or first-use nuclear, first-use threshold, I mean—just to say that until recently, the United States was the only country to not have a no-first-use nuclear policy. All the others, including China and Russia—maybe not Israel, because Israel doesn't admit to its own weapons—but the others all had a policy to say, like, we will never use it first. Russia then kind of changed that because the United States refuses to rule out using it first. And now it seems that the U.S. is discussing officially to have a policy that would allow first use at even lower, you know, non-existence-threatening scenarios. Do we know anything about this?

#Steven Starr

Well, no first use has been pushed for a long time. And China was the one I would think of first because they, for a long time, didn't even have their nuclear warheads coupled to their missiles. They were stored separately. But, you know, if you look at what's been going on, the U.S. seems to have its endless wars going for so long that it's just changed everyone's perspective. You know, I don't have to elaborate on all the broken treaties and everything else, but... You know, look at North Korea. I think they have like 50 or 60 nuclear weapons. I think Trump just announced he's really good friends with Kim.

And yeah, but, you know, what's the lesson there? It's like, well, don't they have nuclear weapons? I think we're going to see a lot of nuclear proliferation coming out of this Iran war and everything else. And that's another unfortunate side effect. But I don't know. You know, trying to push for no first use right now is trying to talk to non-agreement-capable people in Europe and Washington. So

it's—I used to, I mean, I advocated for all these things for a long time. I used to like no launch on warning. There's all sorts of things you can do to prevent launch-ready nuclear weapons, taking them off high-alert status so that you, you know.

Launch on warning means that you have to have missiles capable of launching within, you know, two to 15 minutes once you see electronic warning, you know, satellite signals, an attack coming in. But, you know, if you have a false warning of attack, you can start a nuclear war by accident. And we've had close calls like that before, but they were never followed through because the officers involved always thought, no, this can't be, it's got to be a mistake. But if we get to the point where now we're— they may not be so forgiving. I mean, we're at the point now where a mistake could even start a nuclear war.

#Pascal

Of course. But on the other hand, we do see the U.S. now planning, or potentially planning, to use tactical nuclear weapons in Iran and just roll the dice and say, "Let's see if we can get away with this. One small 0.3-kiloton tactical nuke, just to test the waters." I mean, I can see how this would go through the minds of some of these military planners at the moment in Washington.

#Steven Starr

I don't know what they would use. You know, you would think that if they were going to do it, they would use one weapon as a demonstration. But I don't know. I mean, Iran's missile cities were actually built to withstand nuclear attacks. They've been dug out from all the conventional attacks, thousands of them for the whole course of the war. Yeah. I worry more about Israel, Israel launching a massive attack. Not just one weapon, but hitting 100 weapons on Iran. That would be the most horrible thing. But I'm pretty sure Iran would retaliate with nuclear weapons. They need to stop these people. They need to stop Netanyahu. They need to stop Merz. The British need to be... The British seem to relish the idea that they're bragging about hitting Russia with their drones. I mean, it's crazy.

#Pascal

It is crazy. The unfortunate thing is that it seems that this kind of logic at the moment is very much welcome in these political circles in Europe, right? As in, oh, we can show strength. We can show that we are supporting the good side, and the bad side, because they're the bad side, they cannot hit us back because we are the good guys, right? That seems to be this mentality, that you're actually invincible because you have this shield of history, right? Because Churchill won, Britain won the First World War. The good guys always win, right? And because we're the good guys, we will come out on top of this. But it seems lunatic to me too.

I just wonder how long it will go on, because so far the Russians have decided that they stick to their policy of maximum restraint, of not—of not doing the same to NATO, what NATO did to them, which is salami-slicing the Ukraine war into Russia. But they seem to not salami-slice into Europe, although it is, in my view, quite ominous that in the last four or five weeks, we had two ammunition factories in Europe blow up, one in Italy, one in Bulgaria. And you know what we didn't see, what I find most ominous about this? European media, Western media, is not speculating about this having been done by Russia. Whenever there's a drone somewhere over an airfield, immediately everybody calls it was the Russians. This time, nobody calls out the Russians. It's like, I wonder why that is.

#Steven Starr

Well, all the rules seem to be disappearing. If there were any before, they certainly aren't in effect now. You know, Glenn Diesen said something the other day that I thought was really important. He said that the European elites are equating nuclear deterrence with Russian nuclear blackmail. And we can't tolerate Russian nuclear blackmail. But, you know—and nuclear deterrence, I mean, I'm not an advocate of deterrence because all it takes is a single failure of deterrence to bring on a nuclear war. But that's what all the nuclear weapons states stand by. You know, we have our arsenals to deter. They call nuclear weapons the deterrent. They get a lot of euphemisms and things.

But, you know, when the Europeans get to the point where they shrug off Russian nuclear weapons because they believe that the Russians would never use them against us, all it takes is for Putin to be deposed and have a new leader come in, like Medvedev or someone who's a hardliner, and look out. I'm holding my breath now because I know there's a huge amount of public opinion in Russia that's— you know, Russia stopped exporting diesel fuel, so that's a pretty clear sign that these drone attacks have had a serious, some significant effect on hitting their refineries. You know, I know there's a lot of arguments. I kind of watched Scott Ritter and Dr. Phil Doctorow argue about this, and I think it's unfortunate they get personal on it, but it's— we're trying to figure out what's going on. We can't count on mainstream media to tell us a damn thing except propaganda anymore. That's why I listen to your show and some of these things.

#Pascal

Yeah, it's difficult to piece it together, right? Because on the one hand, we do still have to consult the mainstream media in order to understand what that narrative is all about. Because, you know, they actually—I mean, we know—sorry. We know how the administration is also feeding the Washington Post and the New York Times with certain pieces that they want to have distributed and create certain narratives. On the other hand, we do know how these elite circles also within the mainstream media actually are their own bubble, and we better trace that bubble as well in order to understand how they see things developing. But the most worrisome thing is, of course, that at the moment within that world, it seems that thinking about nuclear strikes is fashionable again. It's not this, "Oh, it must never happen."

It's more a thing of, we will not be nuclearly blackmailed, as you just said. If we use nuclear threats, then that's deterrence. If the other one tries to deter us, then that's nuclear blackmail. We have two sets of attributions for everything, and no clear strategy of how to get back to a world where we don't threaten each other, even with nuclear weapons, right? And this is a fundamentally different world from where we were back in the 1980s, when the idea was we must create the security structure in order to make sure that these things will never be used and that we can phase a lot of it out bit by bit. Do you see any parallels to the current war craziness and nuclear craziness in Cold War history? I mean, could we say, like, 2026 is similar to 1956, something like this? Is there another period where we had a nuclear euphoria, let's say nuclear war euphoria, to which we are getting closer now, I would say?

#Steven Starr

Well, once the nuclear arms race began in earnest in the 1950s, after we manufactured thermonuclear weapons, by 1986 there were close to 70,000 nuclear weapons that had been manufactured.

#Steven Starr

So in a sense, and I mean, I always wondered, why would they make that many? There was a study in the 1960s that showed that 300 nuclear weapons would basically kill most of the people in the United States. So why do we wind up with 20,000 nuclear weapons that are flying around on bombers all the time and ready to go? It never made any sense to me. I think the generals sort of looked at them as bigger conventional weapons. So I guess, in a sense, that would be craziness from the earlier days. But what really worries me now is that diplomacy has gone out the window. I mean, you know, when they got rid of all the tactical nuclear weapons in 1991, Bush and Gorbachev, that was because there was a recognition that the use of these things, we wouldn't win anything.

It would just bring a whole-scale nuclear war on. And they had come to the realization through all these war games that every time we got in a conflict with NATO, with Russia, it wound up in a full-scale nuclear war. So we wound up with the SAL treaties and the START treaties. And we actually reduced the nuclear arsenals from that peak in the '80s to, you know, like 10, 12,000. Well, I think we're at 12,000 nuclear weapons right now, which is great, except that they're still fully capable of killing most of the people on the planet, which shows you what kind of overkill we had manufactured. But somehow, I don't understand why the Europeans seem to have forgotten that entire history.

How can you have leaders that think that they can fight a war with Russia and somehow prevail? They can make Russia back down. I agree that this is desperate political leaders trying to stay in power. But, you know, these things take on a life of their own. And when you combine that with drone attacks—you know, 600 drones from the UK in one night going into Russia and hitting

targets—I mean, that doesn't work for Russia, I'll tell you right now. That's why I included that information in my presentation, because I really think that's, in a sense, that's even more dangerous than what's going on in Iran.

#Pascal

It is even more dangerous because officially Iran doesn't have nuclear weapons, although Iran might have them. Ted Postol's argument is that we should assume that they have them because they have the capacity to manufacture them, everything they need. I also remember, you know, one more of these huge misunderstandings that I think is especially detrimental to the Europeans is this idea of the nuclear umbrella. And I had Ted Postol and a former German spy, Rainer Rupp, on my show, and both of them were making the point—look, and Rainer Rupp was working for NATO back in the days, passing on information to the East—that the nuclear umbrella, even during the Cold War, was always meant to be the nuclear test cage. As in, if nuclear war in Europe happens, it happens under this umbrella.

There was this silent acknowledgement that if this happens, then the two Germanys will be gone. But nuclear war will be fought there, the way that the Ukraine war is fought more or less inside Ukraine. Moscow wouldn't attack D.C., and D.C. wouldn't attack Moscow because you want to live, right? But sacrificing a couple of Germans whom you had been fighting just a couple of decades before, I mean, who cares? Yeah. And Ukrainians today, I mean, poor Ukrainians, right? I mean, you sacrifice these people. So the nuclear umbrella today, again, is the same concept. It's like, no, no, no, we would fight nuclear war in Europe, and the Europeans would die. Whether the Russians and the Americans actually die is another thing, but the Europeans would be gone for sure, or would be nuked for sure. That's another horrible implication, actually.

#Steven Starr

Well, I think the nuclear umbrella was always an idea that was attractive to the Americans because it kind of kept all the NATO countries. The U.S. was always the main actor in NATO. In 1949, the first commander in NATO said that NATO is to keep the Americans in, the Germans down, and the Russians out. And I think that's still... And they should have got rid of damn NATO when the Soviet Union collapsed. But they were unwilling to take Russian security concerns into consideration. Worse, they sent all their guys from Wall Street over to kind of loot Russia.

Russia had the worst depression of the 20th century. I mean, their life expectancy plummeted. It was terrible. The Russians haven't forgotten any of that. So I'm amazed that they still want to negotiate with us at all. But they need to. I mean, I don't know how to turn things around, Pascal. I wish I did. I hate to present this overwhelmingly negative evidence, but I'm really concerned that we're in a more dangerous situation than we were during the Cuban Missile Crisis right now.

#Pascal

What is the sense in the United States that you're getting also from your networks? Because you are connected also to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and other people who write in those kinds of things. What's the sense among your colleagues?

#Steven Starr

Well, I have a few colleagues that seem to be cognizant of Greg Mello. You've had him on the show before. We talk a lot. He's very active trying to stop a plutonium pit factory from being built. That's what we need, is more nuclear weapon factories, right? But honestly, I'm not impressed with... people don't want to address the whole issue of NATO. And I think part of that is a byproduct of the immense propaganda that is—that's what our news media has become. People accept them, you know, if they read The New York Times and accept that as gospel, the paper of record, then they're...

#Pascal

But how many people are left? How many people of the thinking population that actually follows this still take The New York Times at face value?

#Steven Starr

I mean, one of the people in the establishment do. They take it at more face value than probably RT. But I just, you know, that's been a problem for me for a long time. I'm trying to have a conversation. If you're starting out, for example, talking about Ukraine, well, if the person you're speaking with believes that there was no reason for Russia to attack, you know, Ukraine, it was...

#Pascal

Unprovoked.

#Steven Starr

Yeah, unprovoked aggression. Thank you. Well, I can't agree with that. I wrote an article early on that talked about 14,000 civilians in the Donbass having been killed by the Ukrainian army in about a seven- or eight-year period before the war. That wasn't reported on in the United States, but it was definitely reported on in Russia. So the Russian people are aware of it, but the Americans aren't. That's another thing that—it's really hard. If you don't have an informed society, if you have a brainwashed society, it's even worse to try to have constructive dialogues about these things.

#Pascal

Yeah, but that's what war propaganda does, right? It minimizes the risk for the self, and it maximizes the potential harm one can do to the others. And we see how it backfires with Iran, because the most instructive thing about the Iran war is, of course, that the United States lacks the conventional capabilities to pull off its war aims. That's right. Simply not there. But it seems that instead of this then leading to a reassessment of their own capabilities and kind of a mea culpa, and maybe we shouldn't have done that, it seems that the people who are responsible for that are rather thinking about this stupid concept that you also presented: escalate to de-escalate. I wonder about that one. Do you know who came up with this stupidity? It's way back, actually.

#Steven Starr

It first came about in the 20th century when they were talking about limited nuclear war. The whole concept was derided by the Russians. They said, "Well, you may want to limit it, but we're not planning on it." But it started back then. You know, we flooded Europe with thousands of tactical nuclear weapons because the Russians had a much bigger conventional army than we did. So that was the plan, is to stop them with nukes. But then they used to say a German village was three or five kilotons apart. You know, in other words, you could... So, but as I mentioned before, it finally dawned on the leaders that they were able to think back then and understand some of this, that, you know, any war that we had with those damn tactical nuclear weapons would get out of control quickly.

Right. Because it's just, here's a little bit bigger one and a little bit bigger one. And the next thing you know, the variable-yield weapons we have—they're building a B61-13 bomb that has a 360-kiloton yield. It's supposed to be for a bunker buster. I mean, we got all kinds of things going on. We're making new and better nuclear weapons all the time. And, you know, I've tried to hope that we would stop this. But when you do it in the context of deteriorating relations, with all of our—you know, the problem is the U.S. has been planning on fighting a war with Russia and China, at least with China for sure.

I know that, you know, you go back to Obama, they started moving men and equipment to the Pacific, and they started training the Marines to, you know, train with missiles to, you know, they want to block off the straits to prevent the Chinese shipping to go through. But we don't have any missiles. Then I guess we'll have to use nukes to do that, right? That's the thing. Our production, our whole society has become corrupted, particularly the military-industrial complex. It's done for profit. These weapons systems were not designed really to protect people, the country. They were designed to make a hell of a lot of money. All their missiles are handmade, basically. The Russians don't do it that way.

They have a state-owned military for the most part. I mean, they have private contractors, but they have a tenth of our military budget, and yet they have a couple generations of hypersonic weapons, their electronic warfare, everything. They're ahead of us in everything. Hell, we can't even feed

our... They cut back on the logistics to the point where we can't even supply the poor sailors on the ships. You hear Larry Johnson talking about mothers calling him and their sons have lost 30 pounds, these 23-year-olds coming back from a tour. And they weren't fat to begin with. So it's unbelievable. Larry's talking about American military in crisis. This is a reflection of a totally corrupt system.

#Pascal

And a decaying system, of course, right? And an empire in retreat. So just how long do you think it will still take until this kind of realization arrives in the masses in the United States? You know, until even the New York Times is not able to gloss over it anymore and call a spade a spade. Do you have any indication for the social tensions? I think there must be quite massive social tensions by now in the U.S. on this.

#Steven Starr

Well, there are. You know, Trump has lost so much of his base. I mean, you can look at all these different figures, from Tucker Carlson to Marjorie Greene, but also just ordinary people. Because he ran on a promise to get out of foreign wars, and we're on the verge of two massive wars. He's done a very good job of eliminating weapons from the military. But in a sense, that could be good if we just retreat, because we're not prepared to go start a war anywhere. But I'm afraid that the idiots, they won't accept that. They're going to... They have to let go. If we could just coexist with people, I think these nations like Russia and China just simply wanted to trade and coexist. But all we can think of is sanctions and threats. And when we send the president's son-in-law and a real estate salesman from New York to go negotiate, that's a bad sign, too. We don't have any Ambassador Freeman. I love that guy. He's so eloquent. When we had people like that doing our diplomacy, we were in a much better place.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, unfortunately, very far away from that, which just raises this question: what to do in order to get it back? I mean, at some point, we've got to get it back in the U.S. and Europe and other places, not because Europe or so deserves saving, but because, again, these nukes would blow up the entire globe. So it seems, again, to me as if we're dealing with a chainsaw-wielding maniac, and the question is how to convince him to kind of lay down the chainsaw and go and get the help needed. I just don't have an answer for that. Yeah, I don't either. I do hold out some hope that elections can change things in Europe, as long as they don't just do like they did in Romania and say, "Well, that election doesn't count. We're..."

#Steven Starr

We have historical problems. The British have been after the Russians since the Crimean War.

#Pascal

Yep.

#Steven Starr

So I'm not optimistic about that dynamic. And if Germany wants to go ahead and build up a big arsenal of Tomahawk missiles and make their Volkswagen factories into tank factories, then they're going to be...

#Pascal

No, and the Russians, they're not going to let that happen, I believe. Karaganov and so on are gaining a lot of currency right now, and they're advocating for a preemptive attack if the Germans think about something like this. And actually, the Chinese think about the same if the Japanese ever had the idea of building nuclear weapons. I mean, we're getting closer and closer to a point where this might become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

#Steven Starr

I think Japan, you know, Biden, when he was vice president, gave an interview with a newspaper right before he got out of office and said, "Well, Japan could become a nuclear weapons state overnight." In other words, they have manufactured all the components for a nuclear weapon. They just have to assemble them. They have enough plutonium to make thousands of nuclear weapons. And they have the missile technology. They have ICBMs. China certainly thinks about that. And, you know, the worst thing the United States can do is push Japan towards a goal of becoming a nuclear weapons state. But I wonder, do they want to make Japan another Ukraine? You know, maybe they'd be glad to have Japan fight China in a war and, you know, take out China that way. There's all sorts of Machiavellian things you can think of these days because the people in charge are so evil.

#Pascal

Yeah, no, naturally. I mean, the United States perfected the art of proxy warfare to a very large degree. I mean, being able to bleed out Russia without even a single U.S. soldier officially dying is quite a feat. But, you know, this is the sad point where we are at in 2026. I would like to thank you very much, Stephen, for this overview. Is there anything that we didn't cover yet that you wanted to kind of touch on?

#Steven Starr

I don't think so. That last video in my presentation pretty much sums up what a nuclear war would be. I have written an article on EMP, which I think is a real serious danger. And the UN's review was

an EMP attack on U.S. critical infrastructure and nuclear power plants. People might want to look at that.

#Pascal

Where can people find that article, and where can they find your writing?

#Steven Starr

That's on the UN's review. I also have a website called nuclearfamine.org that details the effects of nuclear war and EMP. So people are welcome to look at that, and anybody who wants to contact me, they can probably find my address on the website. Thank you very much for having me on. I really appreciate it. It means a lot to me to be able to try to do something about all this.

#Pascal

Thank you, Stephen. It's very good to hear the, you know, the assessments from the people who studied the impacts also of this fallout. You, Ivana Hughes, others have been doing that for a long time and been shouting this for a long time. It's just unfortunate that people are not listening. But with this, thank you so much. I have to go and hunt after a fly that's driving me crazy. Don't worry, I'm supposed to run here too, you know. Stephen, thank you so much, and good night. Good night.