

# **Beginning and End of the Bomb**

Lama Library–Kapiolani Community College

5 March–11 May, 2018

The false alarm in Hawaii of an incoming missile on 13 January 2018 is a reminder of the threat posed by nuclear weapons. It is also a reminder that we all need to become better informed about the origins, history, and possible solutions to this existential threat. The goal of the “Beginning and End of the Bomb” exhibit is to illustrate the role of nuclear weapons since 1945 and to stimulate critical thinking about reducing the threat in the future.

The exhibit originated in 1995 as “Fifty Years with the Bomb” to mark the 50th anniversary of the development and use of nuclear weapons during World War II. It included sections on the first nuclear test in New Mexico in July 1945, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, newspaper reports near war’s end, and nuclear tests on the U.S. mainland, in the Pacific, and near Hawaii. The final section looked to the next fifty years and presented different perspectives. The current exhibit includes most of these materials plus some new features. In particular, it includes an interactive simulation of the effects of a nuclear explosion on Oahu.

Nuclear weapons have not been used in warfare since 1945 but remain a source of contention. India, Pakistan, and North Korea have done nuclear tests since 1998. The U.S. alleged evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to justify invasion in 2003. About the same time, North Korea expelled international inspectors and withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In 2006, North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. Concerns about uranium enrichment and other aspects of Iran’s nuclear program led to several United Nations resolutions and, in 2015, to an international agreement restricting Iran’s nuclear program. This agreement is in doubt after President Trump declined to certify Iran’s compliance in October 2017. Concerns about North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile threats have heightened tensions in Hawaii and elsewhere.

Efforts to end the threat of nuclear weapons started with the first U.N. General Assembly resolution in 1946. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty signed in 1968 attempted to stop the spread of nuclear weapons to countries that didn't already have them. It also required that five nuclear powers pursue negotiations on nuclear disarmament. Since 1990 the U.S. and Russia have reduced the size of their nuclear arsenals significantly. Their most recent agreement is the New START Treaty signed in 2010. However, thousands of weapons remain on alert. International action on nuclear disarmament produced a draft Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons submitted to the U.N. General Assembly in July 2017 and opened for signature in September.

While the "beginning" of the bomb is clear, the "end" is not. Efforts to bring about nuclear disarmament continue but so do modernizations of existing arsenals. Many important questions remain. Can this threat be ended? Will it continue indefinitely? Will nuclear weapons be used by countries or terrorists? What can people in Hawaii do? We hope this exhibit will be the catalyst for informed dialogue on these questions.

The booklet for the original 1995 exhibit can be found in the Archival Electronic Publications page in the Resources section of Academic Programs on the website of the Matsunaga Institute for Peace & Conflict Resolution—<http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu>. The Matsunaga Institute is the main sponsor of the exhibit. It has been shown previously at UH–Manoa, UH–Maui, UH–Hilo, Windward Community College, and on Kauai.

Exhibit personnel:

Brien Hallett, Professor at the UH Manoa Matsunaga Institute  
Michael Jones, retired from UH Manoa Physics Department  
Laura Ruby, retired from UH Manoa Department of Art and Art History

David Behlke, KCC Koa Gallery Director  
Susan Kazama, KCC Interim Vice Chancellor