How would a nuclear attack affect you?

It’s looking very likely that US nuclear weapons will be coming back to RAF Lakenheath, an air force base in Suffolk, run by the USA.

This is a dangerous development that will increase global tensions and put Britain on the frontline in a US/NATO and Russia war.

Having US nuclear weapons here in the UK makes a nuclear attack on us more likely. In a nuclear conflict, it is probable that Lakenheath would be targeted, followed by strikes on cities across the country.

A nuclear exchange between US/NATO and Russia would be catastrophic for the whole planet, but what would be the impact on individual towns and cities across the UK?

Fatalities
In total, if one Russian warhead, such as an SS-25 or SS-27, was dropped on the centre of London it is believed almost a million people could die.

If one hit Glasgow, there would be 326,000 casualties. On Cardiff, 196,000 people would die. And if Belfast was hit with a nuclear strike, it would result in 182,000 deaths.

Immediate range
- If a nuclear bomb was detonated, the heart of the nuclear explosion would reach a temperature of several million degrees centigrade. The resulting heat flash would vaporise all human tissue over an area of 1.5 square miles.

- At Hiroshima, within a radius of half a mile, all that was left of people caught in the open were their shadows burnt into stone.

Near the explosion
- People inside buildings up to four miles away would be killed by the blast and heat effects as buildings collapse and all inflammable material bursts into flame. Individual fires would combine to produce a fire storm as all the oxygen is consumed. As the heat rises, air is drawn in from the periphery at or near ground level. This would result in lethal, hurricane-force winds, spreading and intensifying the fire. People in underground shelters who survive the initial heat flash would die as all the oxygen is sucked out of the atmosphere.

- The immediate death rate in this area would be over 90%.

In the area
- Outside the area of total destruction there would be a gradually increasing percentage of immediate survivors. Up to seven miles away from the blast, many would suffer fatal burns or would require amputations. Others would be blinded, or would have suffered massive internal injuries. Many would be trapped in collapsed and burning buildings.
The death rate would be higher than in a normal disaster since most emergency services would be incapable of responding due to their equipment being destroyed and staff killed. The sheer scale of the casualties would overwhelm Britain’s medical resources.

Up to 11 miles away, people would be injured by broken windows and damaged buildings.

In the following days

Any survivors would be affected within a matter of days by radioactive fall-out, the level of which depends on unpredictable factors such as wind direction. The effect on people could include hair loss, bleeding from the mouth and gums, internal bleeding, diarrhoea, gangrenous ulcers, vomiting, fever, and delirium. Most die within a week.

At lower levels of exposure, there would still be many complications. Pregnant women would be likely to miscarry or give birth to babies with a range of disabilities. Damage to the immune system would be probable.

Long term effects

Radiation-induced cancers would affect many, often over twenty years later. Certain cancers in children – such as thyroid – are particularly associated with exposure to radiation. The children of those exposed to radiation are statistically more likely to be born with abnormalities and suffer from leukaemia.

Nuclear weapons cause severe damage to the climate and environment on a scale incomparable to any other weapon. It is estimated that two billion people around the world could face starvation as a result of nuclear war, as the disrupted global climate would have an overwhelming impact on food production.

No nuclear war

A single nuclear strike on any town or city would be catastrophic for the local community and environment, and the radioactive impact would spread much further. But a nuclear war would be catastrophic for all humanity, forms of life, and the entire planet.

Yet the possibility of nuclear war is the greatest for many decades. We must do everything we can to prevent nuclear attack – including stopping US nuclear weapons coming to Britain.

Join CND’s call for a world without nuclear weapons

**The effects described are based on the detonation of one 800 kiloton warhead such as the Topol SS-25 or SS-27 (currently in the Russian arsenal) being detonated. Any figures are an estimate as the situation would depend on various conditions immediately following the blast. With thanks to Alex Wellerstein’s NUKEMAP (https://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/) for some of the data.

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