

Theodore Postol

If Nuclear Bombs Drop on Germany

This is the presentation by Dr. Theodore Postol to the International Peace Coalition meeting, No. 67, Friday, Sept. 13, 2024. A Professor Emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he is one of the world's leading experts on nuclear weapons and the effects of their use. It is slightly edited, and subheads have been added. The video is [here](#).



Ted Postol

Schiller Institute

will run on Sunday, an interview in which I talked about the danger of escalation, and some of the activities the United States has been involved in which are clearly aimed at fighting and winning a nuclear war.

There is a disconnect at the top levels of the U.S. government between reality and their misperceptions of things. This has gotten completely out of control, and Blinken's recent statements just further confirm my greatest fears that the people

The fact that [American Secretary of State Antony] Blinken would say anything that suggests he would consider the use of tactical nuclear weapons somehow acceptable, in Europe or anywhere else—it's just hard for me to understand if he has any idea of what he's talking about.... And this attitude, this cavalier attitude toward something that I think knowledgeable people who have worked on these issues would tell you, would, with overwhelming likelihood, result in the destruction of modern civilization as we know it—to minimize embarrassment to the Biden Administration for a political problem they have—is beyond my belief.

It's beyond belief to me, that anybody could be both so ignorant and so reckless; I don't know how else to state this. I realize it's very strong language, but it's just hard to comprehend that anybody could be so reckless; especially someone who is in a position where decisions he makes, have serious consequences for the security of the modern world. It's that bad.

Now, it seems to me that the Russians are really very appropriately— incidentally, I just got off a Zoom talk with a Russian television program that

in and near the White House have, actually, no idea what they're doing.

NATO's War in Ukraine

The facts are simple. The West—and it's really the United States that leads NATO—has lost the war in Ukraine. The Russian military advances are now absolutely unstoppable. Unless the Russians were to arbitrarily decide to put down their weapons and run away, the war is absolutely lost. It's actually been lost for a longer time. The incursion into [Russia's border region] Kursk, that was made by the Ukrainian government, has accelerated the disastrous military defeat of Ukraine.

What the Ukrainians did was, they pulled their most capable and experienced forces from their eastern front and put them into this incursion into Kursk. Now the incursion has failed. We know that in all likelihood, the objectives of the incursion were to take the nuclear facility in the city of Kurchatov, which is west of the city of Kursk, and to take over that reactor facility in an operation



Department of State/Chuck Kennedy

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has indicated he would consider it acceptable to use tactical nuclear weapons.

that would be a kind of nuclear blackmail operation, similar to what might have occurred if the Ukrainian government was able to retake the nuclear reactors at Zaporozhye. It's pretty clear. The Russian government states that it has captured documents—and I think this is almost certainly correct—that indicate that this was the initial plan of the Kursk invasion.

This military operation had to succeed within a few days of its beginning. In other words, it could not succeed unless it caught the Russians completely by surprise and took advantage of this surprise, and was able to take this nuclear facility almost immediately. The Russians reacted very quickly, and stopped the incursion. The initial incursion involved maybe 10-12,000 of the most capable Ukrainian forces. These forces were equipped with the most capable equipment, that was taken from the eastern front defensive area for this Kursk incursion.

So, for example, there were first-line air-defense systems that were brought in along with the forces; presumably to try to prevent the Russian Air Force from working freely to destroy their ground forces. The Russian Air Force very quickly destroyed at least two Patriot units—these are first-line air-defense units—a bunch of BUK first-line air defense units, and immediately left these Ukrainian forces naked to the strikes of the Russian Air Force.... The Russians, up to about now, have caused about 10,000 casualties. This force was originally 11-12,000. It may have been reinforced; I don't have the data on reinforcements. But the reinforcements are not large, because the Russians have used their Air Force to cut off reinforcement efforts for the Ukrainian forces in Kursk. So, this incursion is collapsing as we talk, into a major, major catastrophe for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

The eastern defensive areas have lost their most capable, experienced fighting forces. The forces that have been left on the eastern defensive areas are largely forces containing recent conscripts; people who have been taken against their will, put into the army, have very minimal training. They don't want to be there; they are dropping their weapons and running, in many of the situations. They're surrendering in many of the situations. They're being killed at a very high rate by the Russians in many of the situations. We are very close to a complete collapse of the Ukrainian defensive forces in Donbass. This has all been accelerated by the Kursk incursion.

What the Ukrainians have been arguing to the West, is that the fact that the Russians have not retaliated in a big way to the Kursk incursion, is some kind of indication that the Russian government is not willing to escalate—in response to this escalation on the part of the Ukrainian military forces. This is a bogus argument; it is a very dangerous argument. And it is an argument that is designed to take advantage of the outright ignorance of the political leadership—Mr. Blinken in particular—to the fact that what Ukraine wants, is an escalation that will bring NATO into direct conflict with Russia.

Now, anybody who has any intelligence at all, should know that this kind of escalation would be a devastating action, that could easily lead to nuclear weapons being used, which would then bring us over the line into a rapid, uncontrolled escalation to general nuclear use. This is the most incompetent and dangerous political decision being made by Mr. Blinken, who should be saying, “No, no, no, this is not a war that should be allowed to escalate into the destruction of Western and Northern civilization and possibly Southern civilization as well.”

This is outrageous.

U.S. ‘Tactical’ Nukes Going into Germany

I have prepared some slides, at Helga's urging, to explain a little bit about what this [American] decision to put mobile tactical nuclear weapons into Germany could mean in 2026—assuming we get there; assuming we don't have a nuclear exchange before that. I would like to say, though, that the danger is very great, so I'm not disagreeing with Helga. But I do think Putin is fortunately one of the adults in the room, and I don't know what he'll do.

I do think he will respond to this; and it will be a very costly response for the West. But I'm not sure that he will escalate to nuclear use, although there is certainly a large amount of political pressure on him to do that; just as there is a large amount of political loose talk among American political leaders about using nuclear weapons. This is insane; this shows people have no idea of what they're talking about.

In any case, I can make a few statements that might be of interest to the German public, about what the situation could look like in 2026, let alone what it could look like—I can expand very briefly to what it might look like now, too, for Germany. But let me

just start by stepping back [from] this extraordinary and dangerous, ill-considered decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons by 2026 into Germany. The German people need to understand this, because the leadership of the German government has done a tremendous disservice to the German people.

Not only have they done a disservice in terms of *endangering* Germany—in terms of the potential for nuclear war—but they have done a tremendous disservice to the German economy. Because the [September 2022] destruction of the Nord Stream pipeline is the major factor that has led to the ongoing and continuing collapse of the German industrial capabilities

over this last year. This sudden contraction of the Gross Domestic Product; the problems with Volkswagen being near to having to move manufacturing out of Germany; all of these are things that have been agreed to by the German government, that are decisions made in Washington, D.C.

I just want to point this out as well: The German government is not being served by its own political leadership; its own political leadership is accepting



European Council
It's up to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz whether long-range missiles will be allowed on German soil.

decisions in Washington that have done, and will continue to do very severe damage to Germany's industrial future, its economic future, and the economic future of all of Western Europe. It's a failure of leadership at the most fundamental level to not protect your own country from very bad decisions that are being made outside of your country—in this case, [in] Washington.

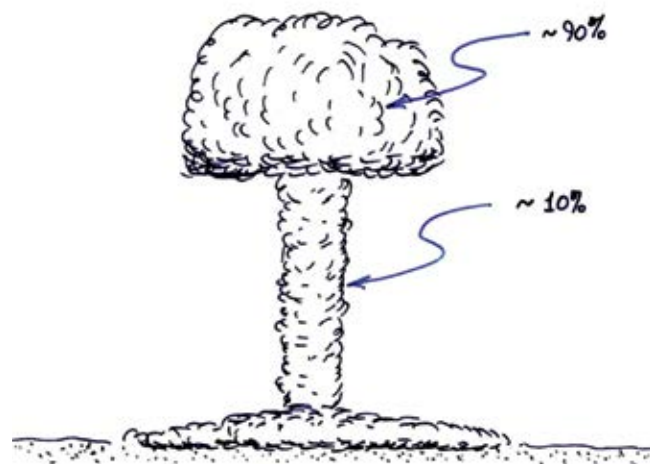
These decisions are the same kinds of decisions that have led to the destruction of Ukraine. Because Ukraine followed the lead of the Americans; it did what the Americans told it to do. Now, Ukraine has lost the war, and it's going to be further destroyed by its

attempts to prolong this war.

This is an extraordinarily serious incident, and historians—if there are historians around to write the history of this—are going to write a history that will be hard for people in the future to believe: that leadership could have failed so comprehensively in the West, led by the United States, but of course, certified and led by the leadership in Europe, which has created the near-collapse of the European economies as well as the increased danger to European countries.

FIGURE 1

Spatial Distribution of Lofted Weapons' Residues from Contact Surface Burst



Courtesy of Ted Postol

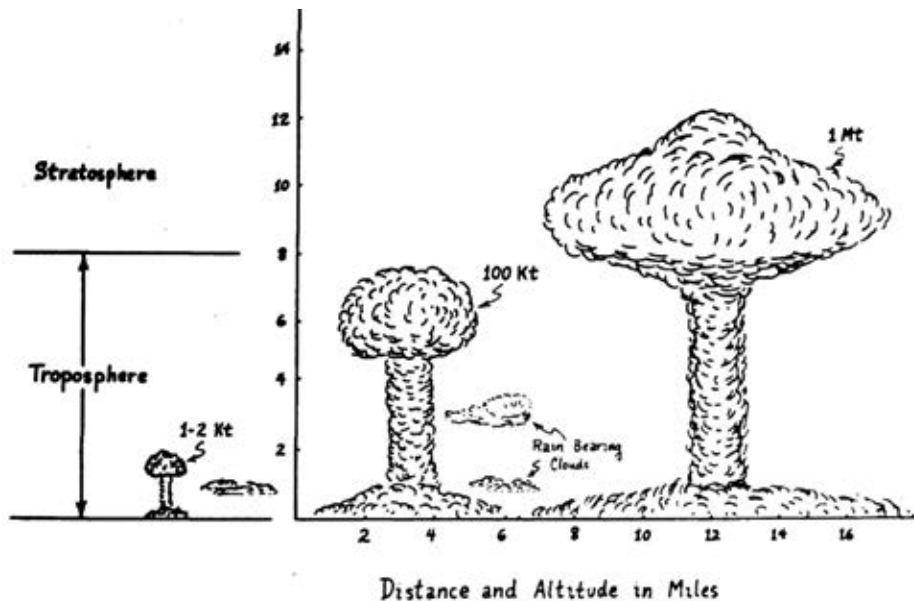
Nuclear Dust Clouds in Germany

Let me just step back and talk about the situation in Germany, if American nuclear weapons are deployed in Germany as planned and stated by Blinken and others, and agreed to by [German Chancellor Olaf] Scholz. Let me be clear: This could not happen if Mr. Scholz did not agree to it.

What I'm showing here in this particular image (Figure 1) is the dust cloud that is produced by a 100-kiloton nuclear warhead. What is shown here, is the percentage of radioactivity—and I'll explain what this means—that's in various parts of the dust cloud. The dust cloud is produced by a fireball, that creates shockwaves and nuclear residues from the nuclear materials that underwent disintegration, producing an enormous amount of energy. It creates a fireball that then buoyantly rises, bringing a large

FIGURE 2

Radioactive Nuclear Debris Clouds from Nuclear Detonations



Courtesy of Ted Postol

amount of the radioactive material, along with dust, into this crown of this mushroom cloud, where 90% of the radioactive material is placed.

Now, if you look at this nuclear dust cloud (Figure 2) relative to weapons of other yields, you will see that this cloud is enormously large—for the 100-kiloton warhead. I’ve shown a 1-megaton warhead; this is the kind of cloud that could occur if German cities are also attacked by Russian forces, which I think is a probable outcome if the nuclear weapons start to be used.

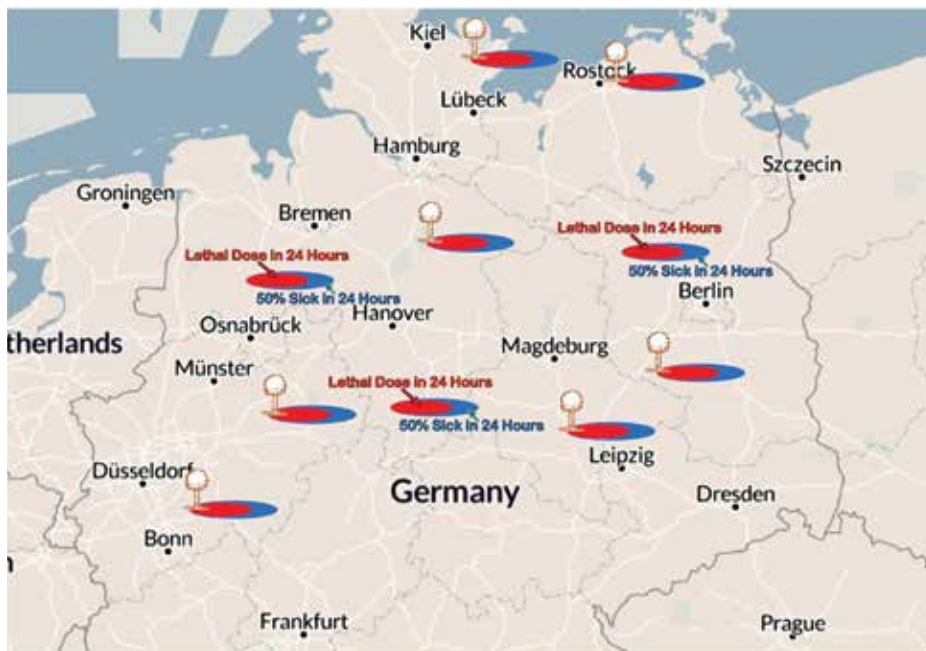
I also have here ... that there are some rainclouds next to the 100-kiloton nuclear warhead.... So, you can see this cloud rises to enormous altitudes. In this case, the altitude here is about 8-9 miles, so it’s about [12-14] km in altitude. If you look at these little marks, that are above each of the numbers showing the distances on the ground: One of those little marks would be equivalent

spread out, along with the wind moving it, onto the ground.

This map (Figure 3) was put together very quickly. It’s a notional map; people should understand this. It’s

FIGURE 3

Potential Fallout Patterns from Very Limited Russian Tactical Nuclear Missile Counterstrikes



Courtesy of Ted Postol

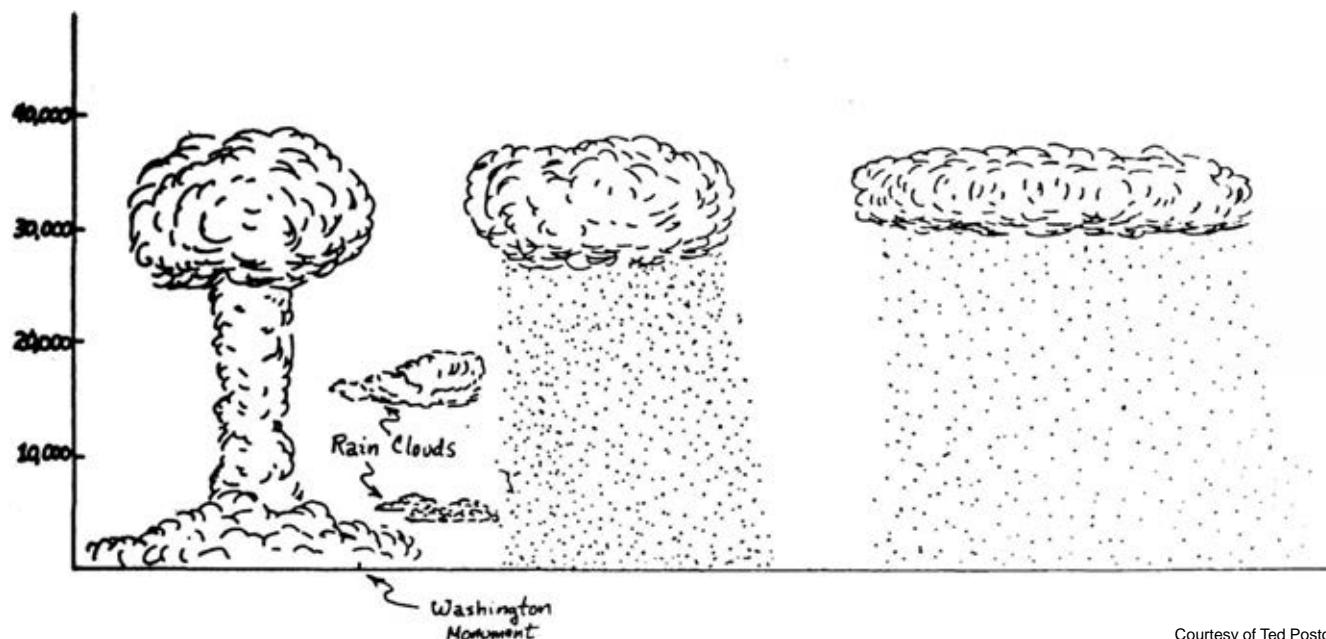
to, maybe, the size of the big microwave towers in Berlin, or the Washington Monument, if you’re in Washington. So, these clouds are enormous in their size.

Now, what happens when a cloud like this is produced (Figure 4), is the cloud will be carried downwind by the natural ambient winds, at an altitude of maybe [12] kilometers in this particular drawing. And the dust particles of various sizes would be falling out of this cloud onto the ground. These dust clouds would have radioactive materials from the nuclear detonation attached to them. So, they would fall onto the ground as the cloud continues to drift along and

FIGURE 4

Radioactive Fallout from Wind-Driven Nuclear Debris Cloud

(altitude in feet)



a minimalist prediction, or estimate of what a *very minimal* nuclear attack by Russian tactical nuclear weapons, against German-American nuclear tactical weapons, might look like in terms of consequences for people in Germany. Let's look at one of the red oval areas. This shows you the area in which everyone would get a lethal dose of radiation, if they didn't evacuate the area immediately after a Russian tactical nuclear weapon of 75 kiloton yield was detonated on a site where the Russians believe there are German-American tactical nuclear weapons that might be launched.

So, at the left end of each oval is a nuclear detonation. There's a cloud produced and then there's a downwind area where basically everybody in this area who didn't get out of the way in 24 hours would get a lethal dose of radiation. They might die in days or weeks; if they were closer, they might die in hours. The level of radiation exposure would vary drastically.

It's also worth keeping in mind that I've assumed a constant wind speed everywhere over Germany. If the attack occurred, the direction of these oval areas, and their distance along their direction, would vary dramatically. You could have some of these things going north-south; some of them going east-west; some of them going west-east. The population would not necessarily know immediately after the attack, where the wind direction is, because communications

would be disrupted or non-existent. So, if you were in a given area, you would not know if you were in the path of a fallout cloud.

The blue region shows an area where 50% of the people would be sick from exposure to radiation if they were in the path of the fallout. So, now keeping in mind that in this particular case I have postulated ... that roughly 10 or so 75-kt tactical nuclear weapons—I used 75 kilotons because Putin made statements multiple times now, that the Russian tactical nuclear weapons that they would be using, would be 75 kilotons.... I've taken Putin at his word.

Hundreds of Nuclear Weapons on Germany

In reality, if Germany allows these tactical nuclear weapons to be deployed all over Germany, the likely scenario would be hundreds of nuclear weapons. I put 10 in here, because it's comprehensible if I show only 10. But the likelihood would in fact be hundreds of nuclear weapons. The reason it would be hundreds of nuclear weapons, is that these German-American tactical nuclear weapons would be on trucks. And those trucks would be indistinguishable from commercial trucks that are moving things like fruit and vegetables and building materials. Because the trucks are disguised to look very much like commercial vehicles, so they can be moved along open roads, and then set up in areas where they

would be able to launch the nuclear weapons.

Well, the Russians will get some intelligence, so they will have some information about where potential launch sites could be. But they will also have to guess about where many of the launch sites are, and if they're worried about their country being attacked, there's going to be no question as to what decision they are going to make. A suspect site will be attacked as well.

So, hundreds of nuclear weapons, resulting in these levels of fallout, could occur. It would be an existential catastrophe far surpassing the worst catastrophe that occurred when the Allied troops invaded Germany at the end of World War II. A much worse catastrophe, in terms of the loss of life, the level of destruction. Germany would go back to being a country that was in a worse state, by far, than what it looked like at the end of World War II.

'It's the German People's Choice'

Let me underscore: This would occur due to German leadership. Because the Germans do not have to accept these American nuclear weapons on their

soil. So, this is a German decision. German citizens have a right to determine whether or not this happens in Germany.

I put this together on very short notice, so I can do more detailed analysis for people in the future. So, people can get more information from me. I'm happy to help people become aware of the potential consequences.

I want to underscore that I am not telling people what to do here. It is the decision of the Europeans and the German people, in particular—with regard to this American decision—as to whether or not they will accept it. The people of Germany need to make sure that they express their will to the German leadership. Because Scholz should not be in a leadership position, unless the German people think that this is something they are willing to risk, because the Americans want it, and Scholz is willing to accept it.

Then, it's your choice. I'm not telling you what to do. But this is a potential consequence, of allowing these weapons to be put on German soil.

I'll stop here; thank you.

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