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Do Not as I Say and Not as I Do: The Problem of Tritium

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The United States (US) Department of Energy (DOE) has been planning to use civilian nuclear reactors for a military purpose--to manufacture tritium help trigger the power of nuclear warheads. In that nuclear deterrence is largely predicated on possessing nuclear weapons that will work and on the will to use them if necessary, the DOE initiative may add to US security. However, the new propaganda opportunities available to other governments and non-state actors possessing or seeking to possess nuclear weapons may detract from US security. The opportunities? That there is no need to comply with the long-time US Government (USG) insistence to clearly separate civilian and military nuclear activities, that any and all US civilian reactors may be engaged in military activities contributing to nuclear proliferation, that the USG has a sense of entitlement absolving it alone from nonproliferation demands that it deems inconvenient but that it expects others to obey. A second security concern is that the quest for greater reliance on nuclear power as a cleaner approach to hydrocarbon-based energy will be perceived as more dangerous by citizens in countries with civilian nuclear reactors or with plans to build them. According to reporter Matthew Wald, tritium decays at a rate of 5.5% per year. At what rate is US credibility on nuclear proliferation decaying courtesy of DOE plans? Perhaps one might ask children whose consternation, rage, and rebellion towards parents whose words and actions contradict their directives may suggest how political entities may react in the international community. (See Fried, C.B., & Aronson, E. (1995.) *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 925-933; Jackson, C., & Henriksen, L. (1997.) Do as I say: Parent smoking, antismoking socialization, and smoking onset among children. *Addictive Behaviors*, 22, 107-114; Stone, J., Wiegand, A.W., Cooper, J., & Aronson, E. (1997.) When exemplification fails: Hypocrisy and the motive for self-integrity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72, 54-65; Wald, M.L. (August 11, 1997.) U.S. to put civilian reactor to military use. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>.) (Keywords: Tritium, Nuclear Energy, Nuclear Weapons, United States, Department of Energy, Nonproliferation, Security)