

*The Simons Foundation Award for
Distinguished Global Leadership in the
Service of Peace and Disarmament*

Dinner in Honour of Bruce G. Blair, Ph.D.

Award Presentation

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The Simons Foundation Award for Distinguished Global Leadership in the Service of Peace and Disarmament is presented to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution in shaping a more peaceful and just world.

We chose the First Nations symbol of *The Shaper* as its Award – a work of art by Susan Point, renowned Salish sculptor who works primarily with glass.

She created a Special Edition for The Simons Foundation – a human figure holding up the Earth. The Thunderbirds support the human figure whose hands they shape. The Earth, in turn, has a body which supports both the Thunderbirds and the human figure. Inside the Earth are two Thunder Lizards.

This work, Susan Point says, conveys the notion that all life is inter-related and that the human being – ‘The Shaper’ of this world – must always be guided by this fact if he or she is to be a good caretaker of life and the planet.

She says that humans “mold and make.... The Thunderbird is their protector, the most powerful of all spirits in our Salish legacy. Many legends,” she says, “tell of how the Thunderbird has saved ‘the people’ from natural disaster.”

We chose *The Shaper* as our Award because our definition of a Distinguished Global Leader is a person who **shapes and creates** the environment; a person whose leadership skills involve foresight and imagination; a leader who creates the blueprint, the guidelines; who develops and advances the path to a safer, more just, humane world.

Bruce G. Blair most truly deserves this Award – a man with insider experience and technical knowledge of nuclear weapons systems, who became convinced “that the use of nuclear weapons was inevitable if they were not eliminated completely,”¹ and that the consequences to humanity would be so devastating that the world would never recover.

Bruce – I believe - is the foremost global authority on nuclear security, a specialist in nuclear forces and their command and control systems, and expert on United States and Russian security policies.

He is a rigorous researcher and scholar, an author, an activist – an indefatigable man with a mission.

Bruce’s expertise and his credibility was attained from practical knowledge of the systems from the ground up – *actually, from the underground* – where, as a nuclear launch operations officer, he was responsible for some two hundred Minuteman Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles at a United States Strategic Command Centre in Montana.

Bruce emerged from his two-year stint² haunted by the spectre of an accidental, mistaken, malicious, or deliberate launch of nuclear weapons. And he was armed with the knowledge of how it could be accomplished – the knowledge of the shortcomings of the system - how it could be

¹ Email to JAS 14 September 2018

² 1972-74

manipulated; and also the knowledge that “the time constraints imposed on the nuclear decision-making in the system ... would leave little option but to launch.”³

When he alerted his former Air Force superiors “he was met with indifference” and in some cases “hostility.”⁴

Bruce relentlessly pursued his research and promotion of findings in order to secure the nuclear weapons command and control systems. He continued to find shortcomings which included critical instances of overreach by Air Force personnel.

During his tenure as Project Director at the United States Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, he was directed by Congressional Committees to write a detailed analysis of the command-and-control systems for nuclear weapons.⁵ The Report was immediately classified at the highest level of secrecy so that neither Bruce nor the Congressional Committees which had commissioned it, could have access to it.

Bruce told me that for many years he believed that nuclear weapons served a role as a deterrent. His concern was that they be made safe – that the command and control systems be secure.

It wasn't until the late 1990s that he began to think about the possibility of a world without nuclear weapons. As he continued his research and the dissemination of his findings, his concern grew because of evidence of global proliferation of nuclear weapons programmes; because of unguarded weapons in the former Soviet Union; the emergence of cyber dangers, and attempts by terrorists to acquire nuclear weapons and nuclear material. He ultimately came to the conclusion *that nuclear weapons would be used*; and that *the world would be safe from nuclear catastrophe only with their complete elimination*.

In order to make nuclear and global affairs issues accessible to the public, Bruce created multiple media vehicles and milieus to disseminate his research and knowledge. In the early 2000s he founded the World Security Institute, and established offices in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Brussels and Cairo. He published information on the issues in Russia, China, and the Middle East in the languages of these countries. He was Executive Producer of documentaries for the cinema and television, and the Executive Producer of weekly television series. He is the author of numerous books and articles on security issues, and briefs lawmakers, and is interviewed on radio and television, on the critical issues as they emerge.

In 2007, he co-founded Global Zero which has just released a counter - an alternative - to the latest U.S. Nuclear Posture Review - a superb and important body of work which has already been much acclaimed - authored by our Awardee, and which he is in the process of promoting in the U.S. State Department, to members of the U.S. Congress and to the media. And nearing completion is the Global Zero Action Plan, a technical detailed blueprint of concrete steps for the phased total elimination of nuclear weapons by 2030.

³ Andrew Cockburn, *How to Start a Nuclear War: The Increasingly direct road to ruin*
<https://harpers.org/blog/2018/09/how-to-start-a-nuclear-war/>

⁴ -ibid-

⁵ <https://paw.princeton.edu/print/173841>

Bruce steadfastly continues to push for tighter controls – “to remove nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert posed for immediate launch”⁶ ; for a global norm for no-first-use- of nuclear weapons as steps in the path of their elimination to zero.

Bruce was a member of the U.S. Secretary of State’s International Security Advisory Board. And I must add – to top it all off – in 1999 he received the McArthur Genius Award.

Despite his status as a globally-acknowledged leading authority on nuclear security issues, Bruce remains a modest man. When I asked him to speak at a conference, he said he was happy to give his two-cents worth. Yet this man has a fortune’s worth of knowledge and experience. And I would like to invite this modest man to come forward.

Bruce!

⁶ JAS email 14 September 2018