

Would Nuclear War Between the US and Russia End Human Civilization?



VOICES FOR PEACE SERIES

The United States and Russia possess some 88% of the world's 12,120 nuclear weapons—5177 and 5459, respectively. If a nuclear war happened between these two countries—involving most of their deployed strategic nuclear weapons—the end result would likely be the death of hundreds of millions of people in the two countries and eventually $\frac{3}{4}$ of the world's 8.25 billion people—effectively ending human civilization.

A US-Russia Nuclear War:

A LIKELY SCENARIO:

The fire-storms caused by this type of nuclear war would loft approximately 150 million tons (330.6 billion lbs.) of soot into the upper atmosphere, where it would linger for more than a decade.

Upwards of 75-125 million people—and perhaps many more—in the United States would likely die in the first 48-72 hours.

The soot would block out sunlight, dropping temperatures across the globe an average of 18 degrees F. In the interior regions of North America and Eurasia, the temperatures would drop by 45 to 50 degrees F. (planet Earth has not experienced sustained cold temperatures like this for 18,000 years, since the last ice age.).

Under these conditions, the ecosystems that have evolved since the end of that ice age would collapse, food production would essentially stop, and the vast majority of the human race would starve.

While this would not necessarily mean the extinction of our species, it would mean the end of modern civilization. No civilization in history has ever survived a shock of this magnitude, and there is no reason to believe that the complex, fragile system that we all depend on would do any better.

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“LIMITED WAR” WOULD LIKELY HAVE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES

A study published in the journal *Nature/Food* in 2022 showed that in the first two years after this war, three-quarters of the human race, some 6 billion people, would starve. The study only looked at the first two years; the famine would continue beyond that, and we don't know what the ultimate death toll would be.

The same study showed that even a “limited” nuclear war, as might take place between India and Pakistan, would cause enough climate disruption to trigger a global famine that could kill a quarter of humanity, 2 billion people, in the first two years. That would include 130 million people in the United States. **B**

References for this work can be found at bit.ly/bftb-references

*All life depends on the
sun. Sun equals life.
Plants require sunlight to
grow. Animals need
plants for food. This
includes Homo sapiens
on the ground, birds in
the air, worms in the soil,
and fish in the sea. The
Sun's energy drives
Earth's ecosystem, the
complex biological sys-
tem of interacting
organisms in which we
all live.*

*Annie Jacobsen
Nuclear War: A Scenario pg. 283-284*



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Back from the Brink is a national grassroots campaign of committed individuals, organizations, and elected officials advocating for common-sense policies to prevent nuclear war and abolish nuclear weapons from the planet.