

# **THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS OF THE** **UNITED STATES NAVY** **1945 – 2013**

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## Part 1: The Early Days

This article is a general history with some operational details on all the nuclear weapons that have appeared in the inventories and aboard the ships of the US Navy since the end of WWII. While there is much material on shipboard weapons from the days of sail to yesterday, little is covered concerning the feared (and often overlooked) arena of the nuclear arsenal that came to be after 1945. The fact that not much is known about the nuclear weapons program because of deep security classifications doesn't help matters either. (Attached to this article is a table for a quick reference on the entire nuclear arsenal of the United States for those who may be interested. I make no claims that it is all-inclusive and comprehensive. For those with an interest in how the navy trained itself up for the nuclear weapons role, there are some good articles on the subject on the Navy Nuclear Weapons Association website. For weapons in general, the prime source is Chuck Hansen's "Swords of Armageddon" publication available on a very expensive CD.)

Since the incredible shock delivered to the world in the skies over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no weapon has been so historically significant, reviled, and generally the subject of so much hysteria and myth over the potential fate of mankind than have nuclear weapons, and this includes chemical and biological threats that have the potential to create similar death tolls. The looming presence of potential total nuclear destruction has colored the politics of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to an incalculable degree and has significantly altered history even with the weapons never having actually been used again. The potential of nuclear weapons by the thousands deployed or locked away in secret bunkers around the world thousands of miles from any actual conflict has touched all our lives in many ways.

Before July of 1945, only the Good Lord had held the keys to the potential destruction of mankind. While saying a lot about God's obvious forbearance, not much thought was given to the possibility of something like that actually happening, except by the extreme religious zealots who pointed (futilely) at every portent such as rock and roll and short skirts as the preamble to human dissolution. With the early morning flash of light in the New Mexico desert in July of 1945, suddenly the Good Lord, in what some would consider a Promethean gesture of considerable humor and insight, handed one of the keys to humanity, possibility with a view to seeing how well mankind handled such power, considering the endless propensity of humans for declaring their intent to reach god-like levels of benign and enlightened consciousness toward their fellow man on the one hand, while on the other hand continuously slaughtering each other by the tens of thousands on the flimsiest of pretexts, and for thousands of years to boot. Sort of like the adage of putting your money where your mouth is. Some wake-up call, what?

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