

CORRESPONDING WITH A PRESIDENT

A university president responds to concerns of a community group



Mr. Randy Boyd, President
University of Tennessee

February 11, 2021

Dear President Boyd,

On January 22, 2021, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force and became part of the canon of international law. According to Article 1 of the Treaty, states party to the Treaty are prohibited under any circumstances from any of the following activities:

- (a) Develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;
- (b) Transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly;
- (c) Receive the transfer of or control over nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices directly or indirectly;
- (d) Use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices;
- (e) Assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Treaty;
- (f) Seek or receive any assistance, in any way, from anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Treaty;
- (g) Allow any stationing, installation or deployment of any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in its territory or at any place under its jurisdiction or control.

Because the United States has neither signed nor ratified the Treaty, it does not have the force of law in this country. But the Treaty was approved by 122 nations in 2017, and has since been signed by eight nations and ratified by fifty-two. It is a clear reflection of the frustration and impatience of non-nuclear states with nuclear weapons states that have failed to fulfill the promise they made "to good faith" in the Non-Proliferation Treaty on 1970 to use



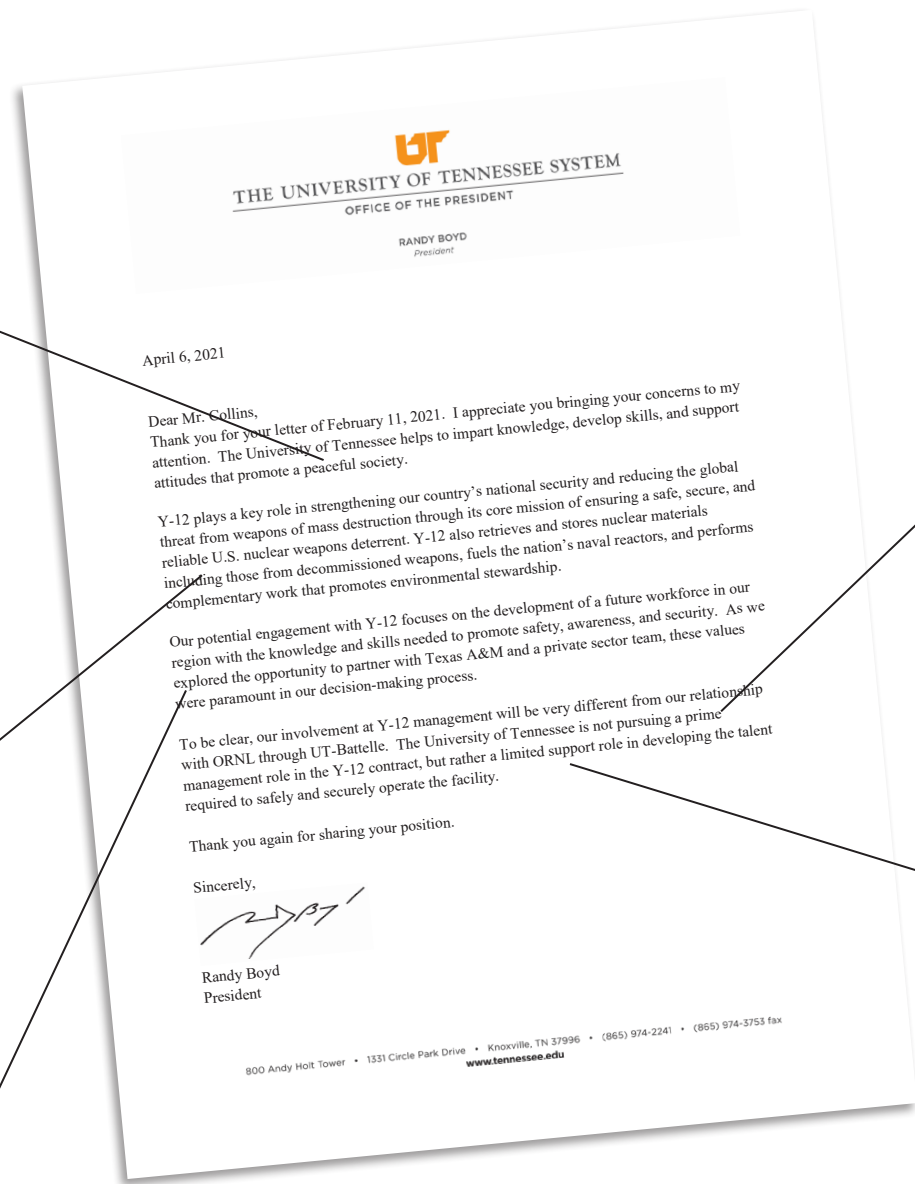
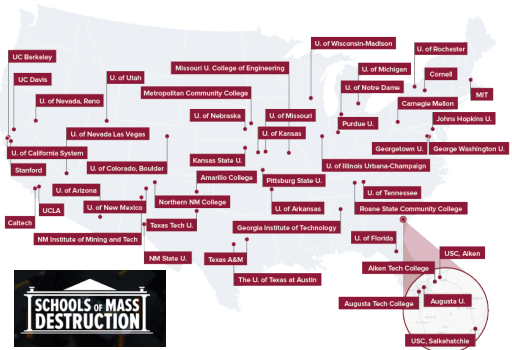
On February 11, 2021, the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance wrote a letter to Randy Boyd, President of the University of Tennessee System addressing a December 9, 2020 report in the Knoxville *News-Sentinel* that the University of Tennessee plans to team with the Texas A&M University to bid on the Management and Operations contract for the Y-12 Nuclear Weapons Complex in Oak Ridge, TN and the Pantex Nuclear Weapons Assembly Plant in Amarillo, TX. These two nuclear bomb manufacturing sites are covered in one "M&O" contract. On April 6, OREPA received a response from President Boyd. In the letter, Boyd says several things that do not match the actions and statements reported in the *News-Sentinel* article. He starts by saying the University

of Tennessee "helps to impart knowledge...and support attitudes that promote a peaceful society." Boyd does not explain how being responsible for the manufacture of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, weapons that have been declared illegal under international law because of their potential to eliminate life on the planet if they are ever used, and because their past use and testing has caused devastating human and environmental suffering, is part of "a peaceful society."

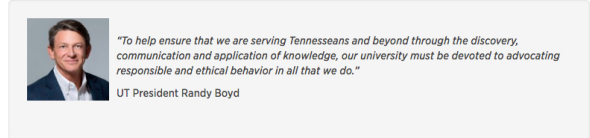
Boyd quotes the mission of Y-12 directly from the Y-12 web site. In repeating the National Nuclear Security Administration's laundry list of Y-12 missions, he fails to note that the production of nuclear weapons components dominates the work at Y-12, commands the vast majority of the annual budget, and when necessary pushes all other work off the table. What's more, the prioritization of weapons production work over other work means that rather than "promote environmental stewardship," Y-12's classified work on weapons production inhibits and undermines environmental remediation efforts.



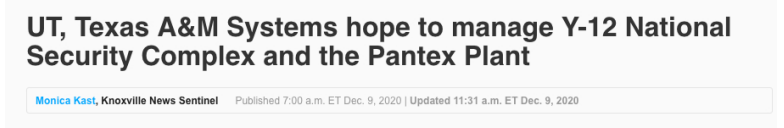
Boyd's third paragraph summarizes the University's current relationship with Y-12, a relationship established in 2011 in a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Energy. This work, before the announcement of the contract bid, was already enough to win the University of Tennessee a spot on the Schools of Mass Destruction map prepared by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.



In the fourth and final paragraph, Boyd disavows the *News-Sentinel* article and his own quote in that article with a bit of diversionary language. "The University of Tennessee is not pursuing a *prime management role* in the Y-12 contract," he writes, "but rather a limited support role." (emphasis added) Without further information on the collection of institutions and corporations that may be partnering to tender a bid for the Y-12 contract, we have no way of knowing how true this statement may be. But it does not in any way challenge our original concern—the University of Tennessee has no business being involved in the manufacture of thermonuclear weapons of mass destruction. Such activity violates the University's own Code of Conduct. Lending an ironic touch to this is the gray box appearing on the front web page of UT's Code of Conduct. The box contains a photo of Boyd and a statement in quotation marks attributed to him: "To help ensure that we are serving Tennesseans and beyond through the discovery, communication and application of knowledge, *our university must be devoted to advocating responsible and ethical behavior in all that we do.*" [emphasis added]



In short, Boyd's response to OREPA's concerns is a non-response, and it appears to be duplicitous in that it denies his clear statement in the December 9 *News-Sentinel* article headlined *UT, Texas A&M Systems hope to manage Y-12 National Security Complex and the Pantex Plant*. That article says, "If the bid is accepted, the schools would join a team that would manage and operate both Department of Energy facilities, which manufacture, store and monitor the nation's nuclear weapons." Rather than disavow a role in managing



Y-12, Boyd is quoted in the article touting UT's experience in M&O contracting— "Partnering with Texas A&M to explore ways in which our university systems can further serve the U.S. Department of Energy at Y-12 and Pantex is a no-brainer," said UT System President Randy Boyd, "Both institutions bring experience in (managing and operating) contracting, broad workforce and talent development programs, and a commitment to serve our students, states and the nation."

OREPA's letter to Boyd cited the text of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that entered into force on January 22, 2021—the Treaty declares it illegal to develop, test, manufacture, possess, use or threaten to use, or to assist in any way any of those prohibited activities. OREPA also noted the release on January 22, 2021, of a statement in support of the Treaty signed by more than 170 faith communities, including mainline denominations in the United States, that declares unequivocally that nuclear weapons are immoral. Boyd's response made no mention of either the Treaty or the faith communities' statement.