

This Day in History... December 8, 1953

Eisenhower's Atoms for Peace

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Eight years earlier, World War II came to a close with the detonation of two atomic weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan. With the war concluded, America's top scientists and leaders knew that nuclear weapons and energy would have a tremendous impact on the future.

Connecticut Senator Brien McMahon (1903-1952) served as chairman of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. McMahon also authored the McMahon Act for the control of atomic energy, which resulted in the establishment of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1946. The AEC directed the development and use of atomic energy for both military and civilian purposes.

In August 1953, the Russians detonated their first hydrogen bomb, causing concern in America. President Eisenhower wanted to make Americans aware of the risks and benefits of nuclear technology, hoping to slow the nuclear arms race.

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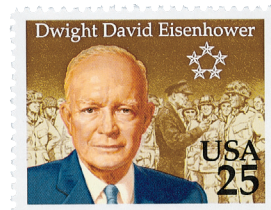


The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was created in 1957 as a direct result of Eisenhower's speech.

Eisenhower proposed a program called Atoms for Peace, in which nations would donate atomic power to the United Nations, in order to find peaceful uses for it. The "Atoms for Peace" speech aimed to remove the fear of nuclear attack by showing alternate uses for the technology. He also proposed nations should "begin now and continue to make joint contributions from their stockpiles of normal uranium and fissionable materials to an International Atomic Energy Agency."

The entire world was captivated by the proposal. Soviet ambassadors met with US officials in Washington, DC, and at a "Big Four" meeting the following January. As a result, the International Atomic Energy Agency was created.

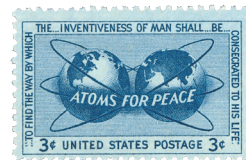
The Atoms for Peace plan removed the veil of secrecy that had surrounded atomic development and opened research to civilians



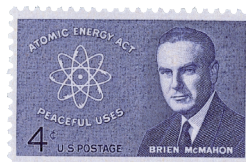
Between 1957 and 1969, 22 people (including Eisenhower) received the Atoms for Peace Award.

and countries that did not possess nuclear technology. The program also created regulations for the use of nuclear power and kept additional nations from developing weapons. It also led the way for treaties regulating nuclear weapons. Under the program, the US exported highly enriched uranium to 30 countries to be used in reactors and for research.

In 1962, the Nevada Test Site (now called the Nevada National Security Site) was also used to develop peaceful uses for nuclear energy. Since the 1992 nuclear test prohibition, the Department of Energy has used the site for testing hazardous chemical spills, emergency response training, conventional weapons testing, waste management, and environmental technology.



Atoms for Peace stamp includes a portion of Eisenhower's speech around the border.



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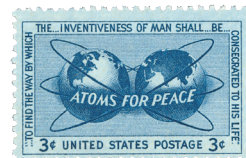
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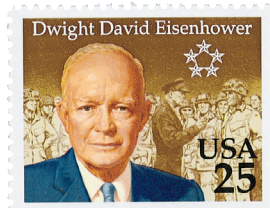
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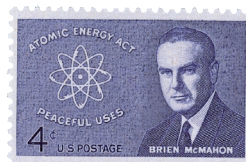
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