

## Restricting the First Use of Nuclear Weapons

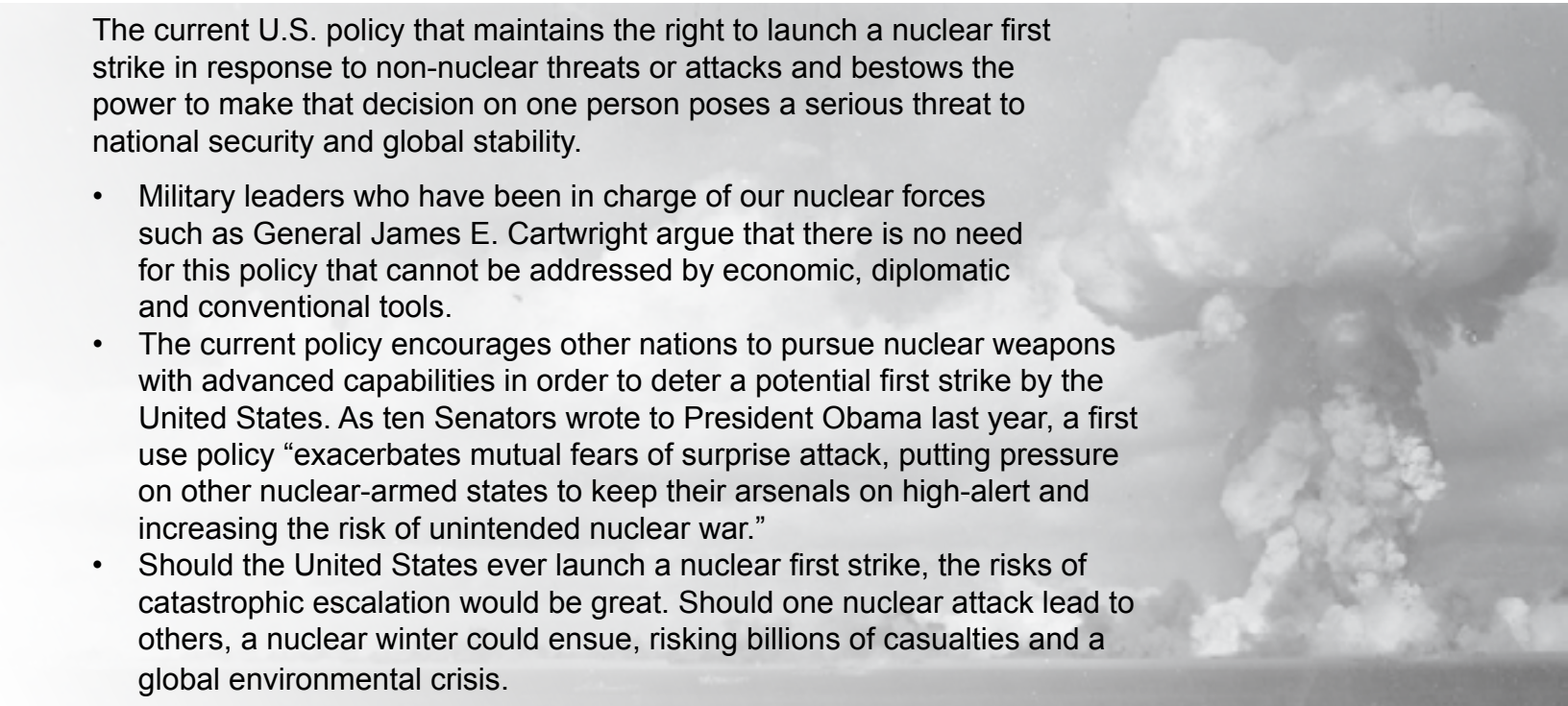
### The U.S. First Use Policy is a Security Liability

The current U.S. policy that maintains the right to launch a nuclear first strike in response to non-nuclear threats or attacks and bestows the power to make that decision on one person poses a serious threat to national security and global stability.

- Military leaders who have been in charge of our nuclear forces such as General James E. Cartwright argue that there is no need for this policy that cannot be addressed by economic, diplomatic and conventional tools.
- The current policy encourages other nations to pursue nuclear weapons with advanced capabilities in order to deter a potential first strike by the United States. As ten Senators wrote to President Obama last year, a first use policy “exacerbates mutual fears of surprise attack, putting pressure on other nuclear-armed states to keep their arsenals on high-alert and increasing the risk of unintended nuclear war.”
- Should the United States ever launch a nuclear first strike, the risks of catastrophic escalation would be great. Should one nuclear attack lead to others, a nuclear winter could ensue, risking billions of casualties and a global environmental crisis.

### Revoking the President’s Authority to Launch a Nuclear First Strike Without Congress Weighing In Would Promote Stability and Nonproliferation

- The nuclear states are currently reverting to a cycle of escalation unrivaled since the Cold War. With the U.S. and Russia both working to upgrade their nuclear arsenals and create new capabilities designed to make nuclear weapons more usable, the risk of nuclear war is higher than it’s been in decades.
- Congress intervening to reassure the world that the U.S. will not launch a nuclear first strike on the whim of one individual would necessarily and dramatically reduce the risks of nuclear proliferation and nuclear war.



## No President Should be Able to Unilaterally Launch a Nuclear First Strike, Especially Trump

Changes to the command and control structure of our nuclear arsenal are long overdue, but President Trump's professed unpredictability, his dearth of understanding of nuclear weapons policy and the extreme risks associated with the use of nuclear weapons make congressional intervention even more urgent.



- According to MSNBC's Joe Scarborough, President Trump once repeatedly questioned an aide about nuclear weapons, asking, "If we have them, why can't we use them?"
- President Trump tweeted, "The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses on nukes." When asked to clarify that position, he said, "Let it be an arms race."
- In no small part because of President Trump's statements about nuclear weapons, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists recently moved the infamous doomsday clock from 3 minutes to 2 and a half minutes to midnight, midnight representing nuclear catastrophe.

### Get Involved

- **Contact your Senators and your Representative** and let them know your thoughts on this issue
  - Call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 to get connected with their offices.
  - Lookup your members of Congress online to find out how to contact them by email.
- **Write and submit letters to the editor** in response to articles on this topic
  - Letters to the editor can be a powerful way to educate the public and influence public opinion.
  - Find an article that you want to correct, critique, add to, or reinforce and try to keep your letter short and to the point.
  - Check the papers guidelines for submitting letters to the editor, and follow them.
  - Local papers will be easier to get placed in, but if you're feeling ambitious, you can always write a letter to major papers like the New York Times.
- **Attend congressional town halls, rallies, protests**, and any gathering designed to raise public awareness and scrutiny of the issue