

Maine Voices: A call to prevent nuclear war

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With the largest threat to the peace of Europe since World War II ongoing, it is time to get up to date on the Biden administration's nuclear policy initiatives.

On Jan. 3, President Biden convened a meeting at the White House of the leaders of five nuclear-weapon states: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The joint statement that came out of the meeting reaffirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." To that end, the leaders of the five nuclear powers underscored that "we each intend to maintain and further strengthen our national measures to prevent unauthorized or unintended use of nuclear weapons."

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Since the early 1990s, presidents have initiated a nuclear posture review. Likely delayed because of the current crisis in Ukraine, the results of Biden's review are expected any day. The express hope of all observers is that this review will reduce the real risk of nuclear confrontation through accidental launch or miscalculated escalation and accelerate a global reduction and rapid elimination of nuclear weapons.

On Feb. 27, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered Russia's nuclear deterrence forces to be on "high alert" for potential nuclear conflict. Whether he's truly preparing for nuclear war or posturing, no one – not Russia, not America, not any of the other nuclear powers – benefits from the specter of a return to the Cold War or of another nuclear disaster in Ukraine.

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We encourage readers to support Back from the Brink: The Call to Prevent Nuclear War, which is a "national grassroots campaign seeking the abolition of nuclear weapons and a fundamental change in U.S. nuclear weapons policy."

These are the five key points of the campaign:

- Given the extraordinary destructive power of nuclear weapons, it should be the highest U.S. national security priority to seek the elimination of these weapons: not only those possessed by other countries but also those in our own arsenal.
- Renounce the option of using nuclear weapons first. The United States has never renounced the right to use nuclear weapons first. The United States should instead declare that it will never be the first to use nuclear weapons.
- End the sole, unchecked authority of any U.S. president to launch a nuclear attack. Currently, there is no check on the president's authority to order the use of nuclear weapons, either first or in response to a nuclear attack. There are practical ways to include multiple decision-makers in authorizing the use of nuclear weapons, and the United States should adopt such changes.
- Take U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert. The United States has roughly 1,700 deployed nuclear weapons and another several thousand in reserve. There is no compelling rationale for maintaining this option. The United States should remove its missiles from hair-trigger alert.
- Cancel the plan to replace the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons. Over the next 30 years, the United States plans to spend an estimated \$1.7 trillion to replace its entire nuclear arsenal and the bombers, missiles and submarines that delivers the weapons with more capable versions. Such a tremendous investment of money and effort is unnecessary.

Underscoring all of these initiatives is the one ethical and religious principle that is universally held to be "golden." This simple rule directly rebuts the U.S. policy of mutually assured destruction. By contrast, Back from the Brink calls on all of us to treat others with fairness and respect – exactly as each of us would like to be treated.

To support this campaign, go to preventnuclearwar.org, and thank you.

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