

Trump's Bellicose Statements Regarding the Use of Nuclear Weapons: Seeking Clarity on U.S Position

Recently, Elizabeth Way, a member of WMCND referred to Donald Trump's statement that he would stand by 'no first use' of nuclear weapons.

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*Other listeners were not so sure. But In November, the [Los Angeles Times](#) editorial board, after expressing alarm at President Trump's bellicose statements and impulsive governing style, reminded readers that in a pre-election televised debate with **Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump** said:*

"I would certainly not do first strike. I think that once the nuclear alternative happens, it's over. At the same time, we have to be prepared. I can't take anything off the table."

On the other hand, while disregarding the president's off the cuff remarks about the button – a search finds ([Non-Proliferation Review, 2/2018](#)) that the United States has long embraced *calculated ambiguity* over the conditions under which it might use nuclear weapons against adversaries.

The LA Times also drew attention to legislation introduced by two congressional Democrats that would prohibit the president — any president — from launching a nuclear first strike without a declaration of war by Congress explicitly endorsing such an attack.



The most recent, in November 2017, was the [No First Use bill](#), sponsored by [Rep. Adam Smith \(D-WA, image on the right\)](#), Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee, expressed in one sentence

“To make it the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first”.

GovTrack.us explains that the bill is in the first stage of the legislative process. It was introduced into Congress on November 15, 2017. It will typically be considered by committee next before it is possibly sent on to the House or Senate as a whole and its progress tracked on their site.

Most readers, whatever their position on No First Use, will agree with the Los Angeles Times editorial board, which – though preferring a position of ambiguity – writes:

“We shudder to think about the human consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, even in self-defense, which is why we support arms-control agreements and efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. We also believe that, as a general matter, Congress needs to be more assertive in exercising oversight over the use of military force”.

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