

US Peace Groups Call for Biden and Congress to Adopt ‘No First Use of Nuclear Weapons’ Policy

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The U.S. “has nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert, ready to strike first and begin a nuclear war that could result in the deaths of billions of people around the globe,” warned one coalition member.

The 76th anniversary of the U.S. military’s [atomic bombing](#) of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is coming up, and in an effort to prevent such mass murder from reoccurring, a broad coalition of peace, religious, and community groups launched a [national campaign](#) on Wednesday to urge President Joe Biden and Congress to adopt a policy of “No First Use of Nuclear Weapons.”

With towns throughout the U.S. planning to hold commemorative events from August 6 through August 9 to mourn the tens of thousands of people who died or suffered in Japan as a result of the atomic bombs the U.S. military [dropped](#) on two densely built-up cities with large civilian populations in 1945, campaign organizers—who [consider](#) the no-first-use policy a “step on the road to the eventual abolition of all nuclear weapons by all nations”—are working to ensure that “such a holocaust never be allowed to happen again.”

The “[No First Use: Decrease the Danger of Nuclear War](#)” coalition [defined](#) a first-use nuclear strike as “an attack using nuclear weapons against an enemy that did not first launch a nuclear strike against the United States, its territories, or its allies.” The coalition is [pressuring](#) Biden to declare—and Congress to legislate—that the U.S. “will neither initiate nor threaten to initiate the first use of nuclear weapons.”

[According to](#) the coalition, the risk of nuclear war, which [Daniel Ellsberg](#) and others have [warned](#) would “kill billions of people and end civilization as we know it,” is increasing because the Trump and Biden administrations decided to [withdraw](#) from arms control treaties and pursue a [new Cold War](#) with Russia and China.

By holding online and in-person educational events on campuses and public venues nationwide, and by helping citizens and civic groups engage with lawmakers, the coalition seeks to achieve “a no-first-use policy for our common survival.” Such a policy, the coalition

[argued](#), would make everyone safer by reducing the likelihood of nuclear threats, false alarms, or cyberterrorist attacks escalating into full-blown missile exchanges.

Along with preventing the use of nuclear weapons through the adoption of a no-first-use policy, the coalition aims to increase support for nuclear disarmament. The presence of nuclear arsenals, the coalition [stressed](#), means that the danger of proliferation continues to exist.

Steve Gallant of Massachusetts Peace Action [said](#) Wednesday in a statement that “the United States has never agreed to a no-first-use policy and has nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert, ready to strike first and begin a nuclear war that could result in the deaths of billions of people around the globe.”

In addition to lacking a no-first-use policy, the Pentagon’s 2018 [Nuclear Posture Review](#) “actually expand[ed] the range of significant non-nuclear strategic attacks—whether they be cyber, chemical, or biological warfare—to which the U.S. may respond with the use of nuclear weapons,” the coalition [pointed out](#).

Last month, as the Biden administration began to draft its Nuclear Posture Review, a group of 21 Democratic lawmakers [urged](#) the president to reduce the nation’s nuclear stockpile and commit to a no-first-use policy.

In her book, *Thermonuclear Monarchy: Choosing Between Democracy and Doom*, Harvard University professor Elaine Scarry [points out](#) that “the president of the United States has the sole authority to order the launch of hundreds of nuclear warheads within minutes, without consultation or agreement from any other sector of U.S. government or society: not the Cabinet, nor the Congress, nor the Joint Chiefs of Staff, nor the Supreme Court.”

Zia Mian, co-director of Princeton University’s Program on Science and Global Security, [emphasized](#) Wednesday that the U.S. president holds this power despite the fact that “any threat or use of nuclear weapons in the present day constitutes a crime against humanity and a crime under international law.”

Democratic lawmakers in the House and Senate have introduced legislation to restrict first-use nuclear strikes and to [slash spending](#) on nuclear weapons.

Rep. Adam Smith (D-Wash.), chair of the House Armed Services Committee, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in April [reintroduced](#) the No First Use Act.

And in February, Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.) introduced the [Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2021](#), which would “prohibit the use of federal funds to conduct a first-use nuclear strike unless Congress expressly authorizes such a strike pursuant to a declaration of war.”

Biden has [said](#) that he supports a no-first-use policy, and the coalition implored him to sign such legislation should it reach the Oval Office.

Pamela Richard of Peace Action of Wisconsin [said](#) Wednesday that “while we urge the passage of these bills as a first step, what is needed is the universal acceptance of the recent United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, banning the

development, testing, production, stockpiling, stationing, transfer, use, and threat of use of nuclear weapons.”

“Our long-term goal,” Richard added, “is total nuclear disarmament.”

Last October, the movement to abolish nuclear weapons [celebrated](#) when Honduras became the 50th country to ratify the U.N.’s nuclear ban, pushing the agreement over the threshold required to enter into force. Despite the fact that several nuclear powers, including the U.S., the only country to ever engage in nuclear warfare, refused to sign—with the Trump administration even [urging](#) other governments to ditch the pact—the international treaty [went into effect](#) on January 22.

Nonetheless, “Congress is funding an upgrade of our nuclear weapons triad,” Cole Harrison, executive director of Massachusetts Peace Action, [noted](#) Wednesday.

A report by the Federation of American Scientists published in March [found](#) that the U.S. plans to spend up to \$264 billion on the construction and maintenance of a new nuclear missile following intense lobbying efforts by the weapons industry.

During a recent peace conference, Markey [told](#) the audience that “the risk of inadvertent nuclear war has risen to a level that is simply unacceptable.”

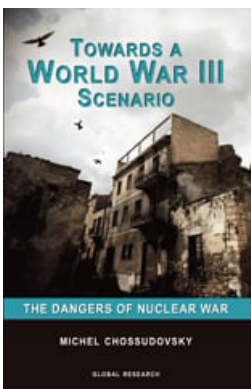
Medea Benjamin, co-founder of anti-war group CodePink, [said](#) Wednesday that “as long as the nuclear-armed nations maintain thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert, the danger that these weapons of mass destruction will be used continues to increase.”

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[“Towards a World War III Scenario: The Dangers of Nuclear War”](#)

by Michel Chossudovsky

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[Michel Chossudovsky](#) is Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa and Director of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG), which hosts the critically acclaimed website www.globalresearch.ca . He is a contributor to the Encyclopedia Britannica. His writings have been translated into more than 20 languages.

Reviews

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-John McMurtry, Professor of Philosophy, Guelph University

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Michel Chossudovsky exposes the insanity of our privatized war machine. Iran is being targeted with nuclear weapons as part of a war agenda built on distortions and lies for the purpose of private profit. The real aims are oil, financial hegemony and global control. The price could be nuclear holocaust. When weapons become the hottest export of the world’s only superpower, and diplomats work as salesmen for the defense industry, the whole world is recklessly endangered. If we must have a military, it belongs entirely in the public sector. No one should profit from mass death and destruction.

-Ellen Brown, author of ‘Web of Debt’ and president of the Public Banking Institute



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