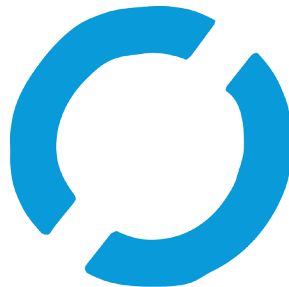


**NUCLEAR CRISIS GROUP**

# **Urgent Steps to De-Escalate Nuclear Flashpoints**

June 2017



**GLOBAL  
ZERO**

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A WORLD WITHOUT  
NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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## OVERVIEW

In response to the alarming and continued rise of geopolitical tensions involving nuclear-armed states and their allies, Global Zero has launched the Nuclear Crisis Group (NCG), consisting of national security experts and former senior officials from ten countries, including the United States, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea, India and Pakistan. The Group began its work in May 2017 by reviewing the situation in potential nuclear flashpoints and concluded that the risks of nuclear weapons use — intentional or otherwise — are unacceptably and unnecessarily high and require urgent leadership and global action. The Group then developed and unanimously endorsed a set of steps for national governments to pursue to reduce nuclear risks.

These recommended steps, found below, center on improving direct communications among states where conflict can quickly escalate to the nuclear level. This includes immediately starting direct, bilateral US-DPRK *discussions* that could proceed in parallel to efforts to restart denuclearization *negotiations* through the Six-Party process. To address the nuclear risks between Washington and Moscow, the Nuclear Crisis Group welcomes the decision by US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to resume strategic stability talks and urges the two states to begin that process quickly and reduce the risk of miscalculation and escalation. All of these steps, outlined below, are achievable with sufficient political will, and the Group is prepared to provide our public support in these efforts.

## FINDINGS OF THE NUCLEAR CRISIS GROUP

The Nuclear Crisis Group assesses that the risk of nuclear weapons use, intended or otherwise, is unacceptably high and that all states must take constructive steps to reduce these risks.

The only way to eliminate fully the risks of nuclear weapons use is through their abolition. To achieve this, states with nuclear capabilities need, at a minimum, to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons in their national defense plans, cease expansion of their nuclear arsenals, and reduce the number of weapons. All states must also take pragmatic steps to avoid any use of nuclear weapons — intentional, accidental or otherwise — and avoid conventional conflicts that could escalate to nuclear use.

Nuclear Crisis Group members affirm that any use of nuclear weapons would have disastrous global consequences and could further degrade the barrier to subsequent nuclear use. NCG members support the removal of all battlefield and tactical nuclear weapons to central storage to reduce the risks of miscalculation and unauthorized or unintended use. They further agreed that all states must take action to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to ensure adequate security of all nuclear-weapon usable materials.

States with nuclear capabilities must also pursue policies and dialogues that enable them to adopt no-

first-use postures. Enhanced nuclear risk reduction also requires increasing the means to communicate in a crisis and adopting defense postures that increase warning time.

Lastly, all states with nuclear capabilities should also consider establishing a formal dialogue to prevent cyber-based interference in nuclear operations, command-and-control and early-warning capabilities. The growth and uncertainties surrounding national offensive cyber capabilities must be walled off from nuclear operations and early warning to protect against a new and dangerous potential source of instability and crisis manipulation.

Models here could include preliminary work to define what constitutes cyber offense and what areas of nuclear command-and-control and early warning should be fully protected to prevent increasing risks of nuclear use.

***“The Nuclear Crisis Group assesses that the risk of nuclear weapons use, intended or otherwise, is unacceptably high.”***

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Ultimate resolution of nuclear risks on the Korean Peninsula will take many years, but the risk of escalation to nuclear use in the region is now unacceptably high. Resolving all outstanding disputes will require both formal *negotiations* in the Six-Party context, as well as direct US-DPRK *discussions* (prior to or within the Six-Party context). Both multilateral negotiations and bilateral discussions should start soon, with each party stating its expectations. To reduce immediate nuclear risks, the United States and North Korea should resume bilateral discussions immediately without preconditions.



The ultimate goal of formal talks must be the complete denuclearization of the peninsula. Toward that goal, parties will have to achieve key steps, including the cessation by North Korea of nuclear weapons tests, missile flight tests, and production of weapon-usable fissile material under international verification. To achieve the goal of denuclearization, parties will also need to determine when to expand dialogue to pursue goals, including a permanent peace regime and a normalized bilateral relationship between North Korea and the United States. Steps toward this goal likely include the suspension, reduction and eventual cessation of US military exercises in South Korea and the easing and eventual elimination of multilateral and US sanctions on North Korea.

***“To reduce immediate nuclear risks, the United States and North Korea should resume bilateral discussions immediately without preconditions.”***

In addition to pursuing these interlinked objectives, the following steps should be considered and pursued by all parties to reduce the risks of nuclear use in the region as they pursue a more comprehensive agreement.

Immediate Steps:

- Refrain from nuclear threats and adopt nuclear no-first-use statements;
- Suspend flights by US strategic bombers and visits by strategic submarines in return for key commensurate restraints by North Korea;
- Resume humanitarian assistance to North Korea;
- Agree not to adopt new sanctions on North Korea;
- Fully and consistently implement communication links between DPRK and ROK military leaders;
- Refrain from provocative military actions that could escalate to nuclear conflict; and
- Reaffirm the September 19, 2005 Six-Party joint statement on denuclearization as part of multilateral negotiations.

Follow-on Steps:

- Pursue a permanent peace regime and end production/separation of plutonium and highly-enriched uranium under verification;
- Expand and enhance Track II discussions by North Korea, the United States, and other regional states;
- Agree to a non-nuclear deployment pledge for the Korean Peninsula from the United States, and North and South Korea;
- Create UN-endorsed multilateral security guarantees for North and South Korea from China and the United States;
- Implement progressive sanctions relief and economic assistance in parallel with progress in denuclearization;
- Suspend US-ROK joint military drills, establish US-DPRK diplomatic relations, and complete economic and energy assistance at the time North Korea’s denuclearization is fully implemented and verified (by the five parties in the Six-Party Talks and the IAEA); and
- Pursue negotiations to establish Northeast Asia as a nuclear-weapons-free zone.

## US/NATO-RUSSIA

Crisis instability between the United States and Russia remains unacceptably high. There is growing concern that military and doctrinal moves by NATO and Russia could provoke a conflict with nuclear ramifications.

Immediate Steps:

- Urgently resume effective US-Russia and NATO-Russia high-level dialogues and military-to-military discussions;
- Rapidly launch US-Russia strategic stability talks focusing on potential dangers flowing from existing and potential nuclear deployments, doctrines and modernization programs;
- Agree to New START extension no later than the first Trump-Putin meeting in July;
- Initiate immediate and intensive discussions to resolve Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty compliance concerns, including use of the Special Verification Commission;
- Fully implement, strengthen existing and pursue new accident-prevention agreements related to aviation and incidents at sea beginning with the Baltics and Black Sea regions;
- Agree to limits and be more transparent on exercises (i.e., better prior notification, limit scale), preferably by modernizing the Vienna Document and constraining certain exercises, such as strategic bomber flight profiles, integration of nuclear elements in conventional exercises, and large, quick deployment military exercises near national borders;
- United States, Russia and NATO states commit not to issue public threats of nuclear first use;
- Reinvigorate European conventional arms control efforts, including limitation of forward-deployments of conventional weapons, stabilization of the Open Skies Treaty, replacement of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, and modernization of the Vienna Document; and
- Implement existing agreements for a Joint Data Exchange Center as a first step to expanding nuclear discussions to other nuclear states.



***“Immediate Step: United States, Russia and NATO states commit not to issue public threats of nuclear first use.”***

## URGENT STEPS TO DE-ESCALATE NUCLEAR FLASHPOINTS

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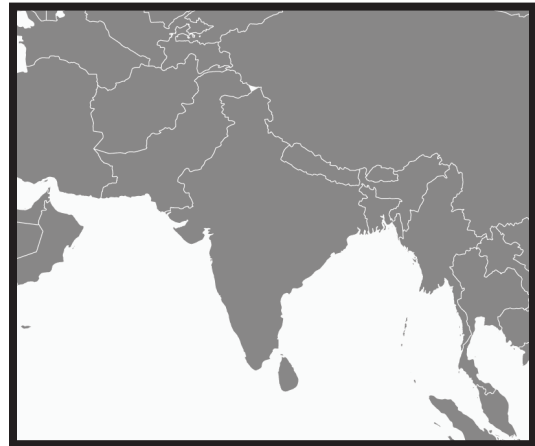
### Follow-on Steps:

- Examine and define the conditions under which the states could adopt bilateral or multilateral nuclear no-first-use agreements;
- Pursue a phased de-alerting program of all land-based nuclear-armed missiles;
- Agree to place all tactical nuclear weapons into central storage under verification; and
- Broaden future arms control discussions to include additional nuclear reductions, as well as missile defense and precision-strike weapons, and include other nuclear weapon states as participants or observers.

## SOUTH ASIA

Fundamental and unresolved issues, the conventional and doctrinal imbalance, an absence of meaningful dialogue, and the threat from extremist forces in the region all add to the unacceptably low threshold of nuclear weapons use in South Asia.

It is critical that India and Pakistan resume effective, bilateral, high-level strategic and regional stability talks to include the following efforts to reduce the risks of conflict or nuclear use.



### Immediate Steps:

- Jointly declare that both states seek to avoid use of nuclear weapons;
- Fully implement and enhance hotline agreements between national and military leadership;
- Establish bilateral norms of nuclear weapons safety and security and discuss exchanges of verifying information;
- Immediately initiate discussion on modalities and function of nuclear risk reduction centers, possibly using commercially available satellite photography provided by both or third parties;
- Discuss a broader bilateral or multilateral nuclear test moratorium;
- Enhance existing agreements on notification of nuclear theft or loss of control; and
- Expand the non-attack agreement to cover all nuclear facilities, military and civilian.

Lastly, India and Pakistan must both urgently reduce the risk of miscalculation and guard against accidental nuclear detonation or unauthorized access by committing to the non-deployment and non-assembly of land- and air-based nuclear weapons.

Follow-on Steps:

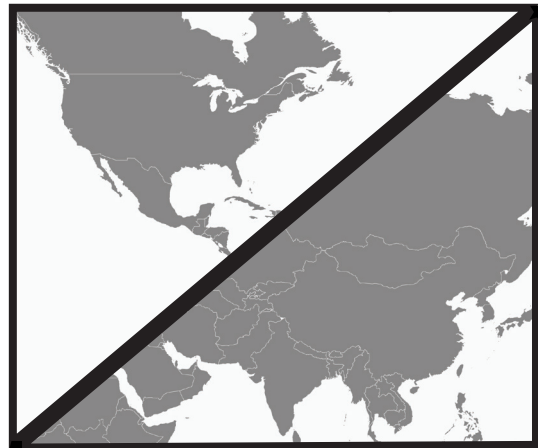
- Seriously examine and define the conditions under which the states could adopt bilateral nuclear no-first-use and no-first-attack agreements;
- Limit the size of their nuclear arsenals, adopt a bilateral nuclear material production freeze, and support a non-discriminatory and global Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty;
- Agree to limits of missile flight tests above a certain range;
- Agree to non-deployment of land-mobile systems and to maintain battlefield nuclear weapons only in storage; and
- Agree to join multilateral disarmament negotiations as soon as possible.

***“India and Pakistan must both urgently reduce the risk of miscalculation and guard against accidental nuclear detonation or unauthorized access.”***

## US-CHINA

US-China relations are improving in some areas, but the relationship remains fragile. The changing balance of forces and the deep-seated lack of trust have undermined the ability of the states to cooperate and could drag the two states into regional conflict. Conflicts could emerge as China’s growth in power and influence comes into tension with America’s global power and status. If not wisely managed on both sides, an incident in the region runs the serious risk of escalation.

China and the United States should build upon the expanding and maturing strategic dialogue in order to address issues of strategic and regional stability, including a widening dialogue on nuclear doctrine.





## URGENT STEPS TO DE-ESCALATE NUCLEAR FLASHPOINTS

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### Immediate Steps:

- Urgently expand, enhance, and empower diplomatic and military-to-military dialogues to facilitate strategic stability, nuclear doctrine, and transparency;
- Fully implement recently established bilateral agreements to avoid military accidents at sea and among aircraft in close proximity;
- Adopt a bilateral nuclear no-first-use agreement;
- Avoid military actions that could result in incidents, including medium altitude reconnaissance flights;
- Greatly enhance crisis management through more regular military-to-military engagement;
- Strengthen ballistic missile test prior-notification and enable missile defense transparency;
- Issue declaration by the US to abide by the Law of the Sea Convention in all aspects in the South China Sea, without prejudice to the same in other areas, pending ratification of the Treaty;
- ASEAN, China and other Asian state members of the Law of the Sea Convention, and the United States as committed to abide by the Convention, jointly agree to protect all ship and aircraft transits in the region on all routes regularly in use for such traffic;
- China and US reaffirm efforts to preserve stability across the Taiwan Straits, and reaffirm and implement reciprocal agreements not to militarize newly constructed islands in the South China Sea; and
- Settlement of all territorial issues through non-military means.

Simultaneously, the two sides can build on a history of positive arms control discussions by focusing first on reviving talks on anti-satellite weapon limits and norms of behavior and pursuing direct space-related dialogues, as well as later pursuing steps that would reduce nuclear force readiness such as de-alerting and de-mating.

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