



When it comes to our national security, there's been a lot of tough talk on the campaign trail recently—but no real serious discussion about how to confront the complicated global challenges we face as a nation today. For instance, the United States and Russia each currently maintain nearly 1,000 nuclear missiles on hair-trigger alert, ready to be fired in minutes. Over the years there have been numerous close calls that have nearly led to a nuclear disaster—and current global tensions only increase the likelihood of mistakes, misunderstandings, and miscalculations. In fact, some senior military officials have said that the most likely nuclear war is an accidental one. How do presidential candidates intend to reduce these very real and urgent risks? It's time we have a real national discussion about how to reduce the risks posed by nuclear weapons.—Katy

Science in Action

Share Our New Video on Hair Trigger Nuclear Absurdity

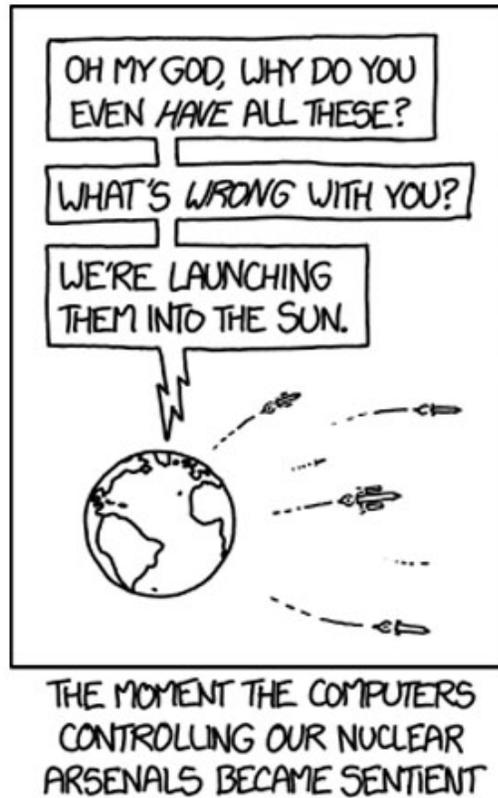
It's unsettling that life as we know it could forever change in a blink of an eye—all because the United States and Russia each keep nearly 1,000 nuclear missiles on hair-trigger alert, ready for immediate launch. What's especially alarming is how close to nuclear disaster we've come in the past because of some computer malfunction,



Take Action >

human error, or other false alarm. Our new video pulls back the curtain on the absurdity of this risky nuclear weapons policy. [Share the video today to help ignite a greatly needed national discussion about nuclear weapons.](#)

Cartoon of the Month



xkcd.com



Got Science?

Five Years After Fukushima, US Nuclear Safety Upgrades Lagging

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Ask a Scientist

A supporter in Tiverton, RI, asks "If we don't keep nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert, how will we be protected in the event of an attack? Other countries will take advantage of that. They would view it as a weakness and see us as being vulnerable."

The United States is vulnerable to a nuclear attack, whether or not its missiles are on high alert. By keeping land-based missiles on alert, the United States could launch them before they were destroyed by an incoming attack, but that would only protect the missiles, not the country or its people. If we wanted to retaliate, the United States has hundreds of other nuclear weapons on submarines that are not vulnerable to an attack. These



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missiles also act as a deterrent to any country considering attacking us, so removing land-based missiles from high alert would truly make Americans safer. [READ MORE](#)

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Do you have a question for UCS scientists? Submit your question today.

This Just In

Will China make a dangerous shift on nuclear weapons?

Unlike the United States and Russia, China's relatively small nuclear arsenal is currently not on hair-trigger alert—but that may soon change. Recent excerpts and quotes from Chinese military sources suggest pressure is building within China to change its nuclear posture toward a policy of launch-on-warning and hair-trigger alert. As our new report shows, such a change could significantly increase the risk of a nuclear exchange or accident—a dangerous shift that the United States could help avert. [READ MORE](#)



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Links for You

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- > *Reducing the Risk of Nuclear War*
- > *Bad Math on New Nuclear Weapons*

Buzz from the Blog: THE EQUATION — Connect with our experts

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Top Tweets

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- > *Fundamental shift needed to "uplift all rights for all people while preserving environment" <http://j.mp/1TQSGnH> via @NAACP #ActOnClimate*
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