

## PETITION TO STUDY NUCLEAR RISK

Congress has repeatedly rejected even minor changes to our nuclear weapons strategy as too risky even though the baseline risk of our current policy is unknown. If you agree that makes no sense, please join Adm. Bobby Inman (USN, Retired; former Director of the National Security Agency), Stanford's President Emeritus Donald Kennedy, and Nobel Laureates Kenneth Arrow and Martin Perl in signing the following petition:

**We, the undersigned, urgently petition our Congressional representatives to request a study by the National Academies on the potential risks posed by nuclear weapons, both from nuclear terrorism and nuclear war. If the level of risk is found to be unacceptable, we also ask our representatives to take immediate and sustained action until the threat is reduced to an acceptable level.**

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Please return completed petitions to Prof. Martin Hellman, Stanford University, Packard 152, Stanford, CA 94305-9510. You can also email them to [petition@ee.stanford.edu](mailto:petition@ee.stanford.edu) or sign online at <http://tinyurl.com/3tdkpo9>. For more information, see "How Risky Is Nuclear Optimism?" at <http://tinyurl.com/3nnsvfj>.

## **Petition to Study Nuclear Risk Frequently Asked Questions, Page 1**

### **Why is this petition needed?**

The need for the proposed study is supported by the following facts:

- Today's nuclear arsenals total approximately 20,000 nuclear weapons, many with explosive yields ten times greater than those used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Our nuclear war-fighting plans depend on obsolete, Cold War thinking, with hundreds of our weapons still on risky, hair-trigger alert.
- Nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation have added dangerous, new dimensions to the risk.
- The risk of a nuclear terrorist attack is increased by the difficulty of keeping track of thousands of nuclear weapons. In 2007, the US Air Force lost six nuclear weapons for 36 hours, during which time they were improperly guarded. Russian nukes may be at even greater risk.
- A preliminary analysis indicates that our current nuclear posture is as risky as living in a town surrounded by thousands of nuclear power plants.
- An in-depth study is urgently needed to confirm or correct that preliminary conclusion.
- The National Academies has an outstanding reputation for providing objective, scientifically based advice to our government.

Society's complacency about our nuclear weapons strategy will not change until the risk is brought into clear focus. Congress often asks the National Academies to analyze such important issues, but has not yet done so here. Ratifying a treaty requires  $\frac{2}{3}$  approval, but a single, motivated Congressional representative could make this happen. Your signing this petition increases the chance that your representative will be the one!

### **What are the National Academies?**

The National Academies is the umbrella organization for the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine. These institutions were created by Congress to provide objective advice to the nation on matters of importance.

### **Does this petition advocate unilateral disarmament?**

No. Unilateral disarmament is neither feasible nor desirable. It is a non-issue.

### **Does this petition advocate nuclear disarmament?**

Although some supporters of the petition advocate nuclear disarmament as a long-term, multi-national goal, ours is a broader path. Some say that eliminating the nuclear threat requires disarmament, while others see working for peace or arms control as the solution. The threat has evolved over 65 years, so the solution is likely to be a long-term process, whose later stages can only be dimly envisioned from our current vantage point. Whatever the eventual solution – and it may well involve elements from more than one proposal – we are addressing a necessary first step: getting society to understand the level of risk in our current nuclear strategy.

## **Petition to Study Nuclear Risk Frequently Asked Questions, Page 2**

### **Isn't the problem too urgent to waste time on a study?**

While it might seem obvious that putting fallible human beings in charge of nuclear weapons capable of destroying civilization is a recipe for disaster, society's complacency and inaction show that view is not widespread. Before concrete action will be taken, society first must see the need to reduce the risk posed by our current nuclear strategy.

### **What can I do to help?**

Circulate this petition and return copies to Prof. Martin Hellman, Packard 152, Stanford, CA 94305-9510. You can also email them to [petition@ee.stanford.edu](mailto:petition@ee.stanford.edu), or sign online at <http://tinyurl.com/3tdkpo9>. If you can get at least two additional people to circulate the petition we have the potential to grow exponentially. Be sure to read our web page "Increasing Your Effectiveness" at <http://tinyurl.com/3wo6v7s>. It will take only a few minutes and repay that effort many times over.

### **How can I bring up this topic?**

The "elevator pitch" has become a staple in Silicon Valley's start-up culture. Here's one that can be used for our effort:

I've become concerned about what appears to be a gaping hole in our national security and hope you'll consider signing a petition to fix that. The petition has been signed by a four star admiral who was Director of the National Security Agency, as well as Stanford's President Emeritus Don Kennedy, so you know it is on a sound basis. Would you like to hear a bit more? [Wait for reply. If positive, move to part 2.]

The only study ever done of the risk from our nuclear weapons policy indicates that it is as dangerous as living in a town surrounded by thousands of nuclear power plants. Amazingly, that study was not done by our government or military – which should be concerned about such matters – but by a concerned Stanford professor who is also circulating this petition. It asks your Congressional representative to authorize an in-depth study and, if the risk is too great, to take action to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. Does that make sense to you? [Wait for reply. If positive, move to part 3.]

Great! With enough public support, a single, motivated Congressional representative can make this happen, so each signature has a real impact. Would you like to see the petition?

[Note: If you are circulating this petition in connection with an organization, after the petition is signed would be a good time to see if the signer would like to become involved in your specific effort related to this issue.]

### **How can I learn more?**

Prof. Hellman's paper in The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, "How Risky Is Nuclear Optimism?" makes a more detailed case for this petition and can be downloaded at <http://tinyurl.com/3nnsvfj>.

A related web site on Defusing the Nuclear Threat can be accessed by entering [NuclearRisk.org](http://NuclearRisk.org) into your browser's address window. The home page will take just five minutes to read, but provide you with all the essential information you need.