



STATEMENT BY THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY LEADERSHIP GROUP,
ASIA-PACIFIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK, EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP NETWORK,
GRANDVIEW INSTITUTION, AND NUCLEAR THREAT INITIATIVE

Prepared for Presidents, Prime Ministers, Parliamentarians, and Publics

Support for Preventing the Accidental, Mistaken, or Unauthorized Use of a Nuclear Weapon: Nuclear “Fail-Safe”

Safeguards essential to preventing nuclear catastrophe for nearly eight decades are now being tested by disruptive technologies, heightened geopolitical tensions, and the erosion of arms control.

The danger that a terrible decision may be made to use nuclear weapons in a moment of crisis is growing. The incorporation of artificial intelligence into attack warning systems, threat assessments, and decision-making processes could exacerbate the risk of nuclear use. Additionally, adversaries, including non-state actors, now possess the capability to launch cyberattacks that could disrupt nuclear command and control and early-warning systems. Every nation with nuclear arms bears responsibility for reducing the risk of unintended, mistaken, or unauthorized nuclear use. Such failures would have profound consequences for global security.

Informed by a series of senior dialogues with nuclear-armed states in 2024 and 2025,¹ we call on all countries that possess nuclear weapons to strengthen their safeguards to prevent unauthorized, inadvertent, or mistaken use of a nuclear weapon, including through accidental escalation or false warning of an attack. This process could include internal nuclear “fail-safe” reviews. Such strengthened national safeguards would be effective unilateral nuclear risk-reduction measures, not requiring any negotiation, treaty, or verification. They could also motivate and inform new dialogues on arms control, nuclear risk reduction, and confidence-building measures, which are a necessity as global nuclear forces and threats grow.

¹ “Global Nuclear Fail-Safe: Meeting Summaries and Related Documents,” August 13, 2025. Available at: <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/global-nuclear-fail-safe-meeting-summaries-and-related-documents/>.

Strengthened nuclear fail-safe measures are essential to maintaining strategic stability. Preventing accidental or mistaken nuclear use is also a moral imperative, directly linked to the protection of civilian populations.

Most immediately, the five nuclear-weapons states under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) should consider making a Joint Statement in support of nuclear fail-safe connected to the NPT Review Conference beginning in April 2026, as a demonstration of their commitment to prevent the unauthorized or unintended use of nuclear weapons. Such a statement would reinforce the important January 2022 P5 declaration that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and would help reduce the risks of miscalculation and escalation in an increasingly complex security environment. It should be welcomed by all non-nuclear weapons states.

All nuclear-armed states should take immediate action to prevent a possible catastrophe. The world cannot afford to wait for more peaceful times to reduce the risks of nuclear use.

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