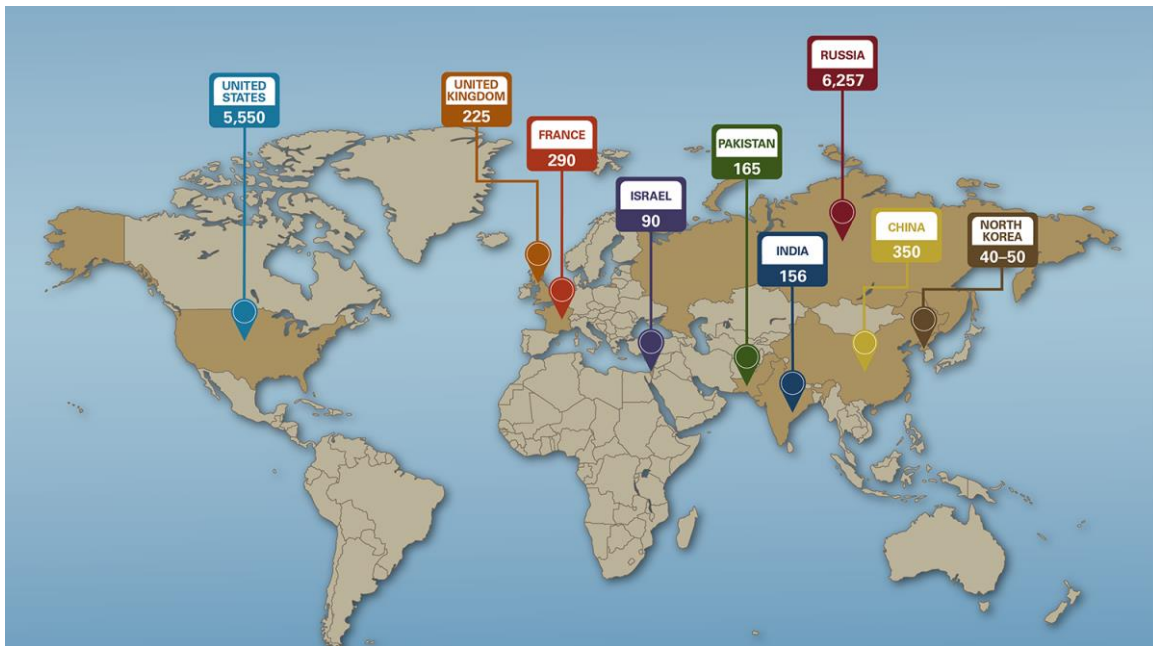


Who Has Nuclear Weapons? What Should I Know?



Nuclear Strategy

- Eight nations have nuclear weapons: the first five are the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, and China, who are also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Three other nations have developed nuclear weapons: India, Pakistan and North Korea. Israel is also widely believed to have nuclear weapons.
- Use of nuclear weapons outside of testing has been limited to the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 to conclude World War II, when the United States was still the only nation to possess nuclear technology. With this exception, the world has not seen the use of conventional nuclear weapons against an enemy target.
- Terror-states like North Korea and Iran pursue the development of nuclear weapons as a means to increase their power and threaten their perceived enemies.
- Leaders of these nations may not be rational actors and should never be trusted with attaining nuclear capabilities. The risk that they misuse them on a suicide mission or give them to terrorists who are willing to and target Americans or our allies is far too high.

Important Nuclear Terms:

Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD): The doctrine of MAD has prevented nuclear attacks between nuclear powers, which would cause the destruction of both nations if both nations were able to maintain sufficient nuclear capabilities. **Example:** if Russia decided to escalate existing conflicts and fire a nuclear weapon at the United States or any U.S. ally under our “nuclear umbrella”, the weapon might destroy its initial target if not intercepted.

- However, the United States’ policy is to respond in kind and fire a nuclear bomb at Russia. It, too, will destroy the Russian target. Therefore, while Russia fired a nuke and destroyed its intended target, they were also destroyed in the process.

- Rational nations have always refrained from firing nukes because they guarantee their own destruction in the process.

Nuclear Umbrella: The Nuclear umbrella is a guarantee by a nuclear nation to defend a non-nuclear state.

- As a nuclear nation, the United States guarantees the following nations' protection under our umbrella: all NATO allies, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand.
- The Nuclear Umbrella ensures the consolidation of nuclear weapons into few hands. Rather than each nation possessing their own nuclear weapons that leaves more room for mistakes, the United States' shoulders the responsibility and guarantees safe handling.

Nuclear Triad: [The Nuclear Triad](#) is the delivery system for nuclear weapons—which is by 1) **Land**, 2) **Air**, and 3) **Sea**.

- We can fire ballistic missiles (ICMBs) to anywhere in the world— from land locations on U.S. soil, from the sky in manned Air Force planes, or from the sea in undetectable nuclear submarines. ICMBs provide **responsiveness**, Bombers provide **flexibility**, and submarines provide **survivability**.
- Having three delivery methods sustains deterrence against opposing strikes. Enemy nations know that we can strike in multiple ways should they attack.

Second Strike Capability: A second strike capability is a country's assured capacity to respond to a nuclear attack with a powerful nuclear retaliation against the attacker. Attacking nations must weigh the calculus that they too, will be hit by a second strike, and are more deterred from firing.