

Council for a Livable World and Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Joint Board Statement on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought the world closer to nuclear war than at any time since the Cuban missile crisis. Russia's invasion is a gross violation of the United Nations Charter, threatens world peace, is causing unspeakable suffering for millions of Ukrainians, and has resulted in Europe's biggest refugee flow since World War II.

Most worrisome, President Vladimir Putin has raised the prospect of using nuclear weapons. He put Russia's nuclear forces on special alert and has publicly hinted at the use of nuclear weapons. Rather than having only a defensive role, as stated in the January P5 statement, nuclear weapons in Putin's new formulation, are being used to avert a reaction to naked aggression against a neighbor. Russia's threats against NATO—and particularly against those countries assisting Ukraine in its lawful right of self-defense—could escalate into direct conflict between Russia and NATO, something that never happened in the Cold War.

The Ukraine War should be a wake up call about the ongoing risk of nuclear war and underline the importance of reducing the number of nuclear weapons. By declaring what is true—that we will not be the first to use nuclear weapons—the United States could further contrast our more responsible approach with Putin's reckless language, and deprive Putin of the slightest pretext to use these weapons.

We condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and express our solidarity with the millions of Ukrainians at the receiving end of Russian bombs and artillery, as well as the nearly three million Ukrainians who are now refugees in Poland and other neighboring countries. We salute the courage of the Ukrainian military and people and support efforts to assist them with defensive weapons and humanitarian assistance.

We stress the importance of doing everything possible not to have a direct military confrontation between NATO and Russia. A military confrontation between the world's two major nuclear powers could escalate in catastrophic ways. A US-Russia nuclear exchange will not help Ukraine or anyone else living on this planet.

We applaud President Biden and his administration for the skill and restraint they have shown in responding to the Russian invasion. The Russian invasion has united NATO as never before, leading to, not a military response, but sanctions on Russia that are already devastating the country's economy. Meanwhile, President Biden has wisely avoided steps that might bring the US forces into the Ukraine War while leaving Russia with no doubt about the U.S. commitment to NATO. Exercising sensible restraint, the Administration has not responded in kind to Putin's nuclear threats.

We support all efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the war. The door should always be open to diplomacy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JZ' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Jules Zacher, Board Chair of the Council for a Livable World

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter Galbraith' in a cursive script.

Ambassador Peter Galbraith, Board Chair of the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation
Former U.S. Ambassador