

ORDERS FOR WEDNESDAY, JULY
23, 2025

Mr. HUSTED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, July 23; that following the prayer and pledge, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the morning hour be deemed expired, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, morning business be closed, and the Senate resume consideration of the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 121, H.R. 3944, postcloture; that the postcloture time expire at 2 p.m. and the Senate vote on the motion to proceed; further, notwithstanding rule XXII, the cloture motions filed on Monday, July 21, ripen following the vote on the motion to proceed to H.R. 3944; finally, that at 11 a.m., the Senate execute the order with respect to the Roth and Hurley nominations in the order listed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. HUSTED. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order following the remarks of Senator WELCH.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Vermont.

NEW START TREATY

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, on February 13, President Trump said something that few expected to hear. He said:

There's no reason for us to be building brand-new nuclear weapons. We already have so many. You could destroy the world 50 times over, 100 times over. And here we are building new nuclear weapons.

We're all spending a lot of money that we could be spending on other things that are actually, hopefully, much more productive.

I could not agree more with what President Trump said. It is why I want to speak today about the soon-to-expire New START treaty and the very real possibility of a new nuclear arms race, something that neither the President, the Vice President, nor any other senior official has even mentioned, but it is looming.

It is important to step back a moment and understand how we got to this point. There is no better way to begin than with J. Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who led the team of physicists and engineers who built the first atomic bomb. Oppenheimer, as you know, directed the Manhattan Project's Los Alamos Laboratory in a way that—it was widely believed then and is to this day—no one else could have done.

The use of the atomic bomb against Japan marked the end of the Second World War. It also demonstrated to the world that a war between two nuclear

powers would be cataclysmic for both and potentially apocalyptic for the entire world.

After the war ended, Oppenheimer and many of the scientists who participated in the Manhattan Project, knowing the dangers, spent much of the remainder of their lives warning the world of the danger of a nuclear arms race, and they advocated for international controls on nuclear weapons.

In 1954, unfortunately, at the height of the McCarthy era, Oppenheimer himself was targeted for his advocacy by the Atomic Energy Commission. No evidence was ever produced that Oppenheimer was a security risk or that he was anything other than a loyal American, and the Commissioners acknowledged as much. Nevertheless, the physicist who just 9 years before had been heralded as a hero for his role in ending the war in the Pacific had his security clearance revoked, and it effectively ended his brilliant scientific career.

The flawed AEC decision remained in effect for 68 years until my predecessor, Senator Patrick Leahy, along with 42 of his Senate colleagues—Democrats and Republicans—petitioned then-Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm to vacate the AEC's flawed decision. And they were supported by distinguished members of the U.S. scientific community, including the Director and former Directors of the Los Alamos National Laboratory.

On December 16, 2022, Secretary Granholm vacated the AEC's decision, thanks to Senator Leahy's multiyear effort. Her thoughtful decision recognized that the abuse of power used to discredit Oppenheimer should not remain a historical precedent. In doing so, Secretary Granholm reaffirmed the government's responsibility to encourage unrestrained, unthreatened scientific discourse.

So, Mr. President, today, unfortunately, Robert Oppenheimer's worst fear is becoming a reality. Hundreds of our nuclear warheads are literally ready to launch on missiles that can obliterate targets that are thousands of miles away in a mere 30 minutes. And we also, as the Presiding Officer knows, have hundreds of nuclear bombs in this country and others.

Now Vladimir Putin is recklessly threatening to use tactical nuclear weapons against Ukraine. That is the equivalent of a Hiroshima bomb. That is what we would call it today. China is expanding its arsenal of more than 600 nuclear weapons. North Korea is expanding its arsenal of nuclear warheads and ballistic missiles. And it may be only a matter of time before terrorists obtain the enriched uranium to build a crude nuclear bomb.

Unlike the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, many of today's thousands of nuclear weapons are many more times powerful. And that decision to start a nuclear war can be made by a single individual—the President—with no re-

quirement that he first consult with anyone. A single use of a tactical nuclear weapon, either by accident or design, could trigger a flurry of escalating responses with far more powerful strategic weapons that would cause incalculable loss of life, widespread radiation poisoning, and destruction on a scale unlike anything seen in human history. The number of people killed immediately is estimated to be in the tens or even hundreds of millions, and many more would later die from famine.

There is little doubt that a nuclear war would pose an existential threat to civilization as we know it. So I believe we must all, regardless of political affiliation, reaffirm what both Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev said 39 years ago:

A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

Yet here in Congress, despite the warnings of organizations like the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the Arms Control Association, one rarely hears a word spoken among us about this existential threat. We have become far too complacent because for 80 years, as Robert Oppenheimer and others hoped after revealing to the world the immense destructive power of an atomic bomb, the inevitability of mutually assured destruction itself has deterred the use of those nuclear weapons.

It is different today. With mercurial leaders like Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un, we cannot rely on deterrence alone. Existing nuclear arms control treaties are either no longer adhered to by Russia or the United States or they are close to expiring, and there are no negotiations currently underway or even envisioned on a new generation of international limits on nuclear weapons.

My colleague from Massachusetts Senator MARKEY and several others here have sought to counter this complacency, and I want to commend Senator MARKEY for the bill he introduced on January 20, the Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act, of which I am an original cosponsor. And last week, I also cosponsored Senator MARKEY's resolution marking the 80th anniversary of the Trinity Test and urging the United States to lead the world in reversing the nuclear arms race.

But the danger of a new nuclear arms race has received far too little attention from Congress and from the administration. This complacency cannot continue. The use of a single nuclear weapon, whether tactical or strategic, accidental or intentional, and the likely response would dwarf all the other crises that we are preoccupied with by many orders of magnitude, and by then focusing on it would be too late.

Despite our sharp differences with the Governments of Russia and China, they have as much interest in preventing an unwinnable nuclear war as we do. We and our allies must urgently seek to reinvigorate negotiations on

more effective mechanisms to prevent the development, proliferation, and use of nuclear weapons.

The New START Treaty, which entered into force in 2011, limits Russia's arsenal of nuclear weapons. The United States and Russia extended the treaty in 2021, but only for a period of 5 years, and that expires in February 2026.

Ideally, we and the Russians would agree to continue to abide by the limits of the New START while we negotiate yet another treaty to further reduce the number of nuclear weapons. But, unfortunately, last February, Putin announced the Russian Federation's suspension of New START, and there has been minimal discussion between our two countries about any further agreements.

When New START does expire, unless a new agreement is in place, there will be absolutely no limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons that the United States and Russia can deploy. The number of nuclear weapons could skyrocket to levels not seen since the 1980s, incidentally, at huge cost to the American taxpayer.

The result would be a world far more dangerous than the one we now occupy.

The United States has its share of responsibility for the collapse of nuclear arms control. During the first Trump administration, the United States withdrew from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. And during President Trump's first term, he withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement, after which Iran, as we know, accelerated its uranium enrichment program.

Today, some of President Trump's advisers have even proposed that we resume nuclear testing. We cannot do that. It would be an unmitigated disaster, subjecting countless Americans to cancer-causing radioactive fallout once again. We cannot repeat that mistake. We cannot repeat and cause that harm.

Under the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the United States,

Russia, and China have an obligation to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."

In the past, even when relations have fallen to their lowest points, the United States and Russia had decades of cooperation on this issue. Today, with Vladimir Putin firmly in control, it is hard to see a way forward.

President Trump's comments in February offer me a ray of hope. We should continue to denounce Putin's nuclear saber-rattling and Russia's suspension of its participation in New START. But the Trump administration should also do everything possible to breathe new life into talks with Russia to achieve new binding limits on Russia's arsenal. The security of both countries and our allies depends on this.

If Putin refuses to replace New START, despite it being in Russia's own national interest, there are other concrete steps that we, Russia, and China could take short of negotiating an entirely new treaty that would help reduce the risk of nuclear war, one that could be caused by false alarm, by error, or by misperceptions.

These include improving lines of communication to reduce that risk of miscommunication or misperception; creating joint early-warning centers to monitor missile launches; detargeting so that any accidental launch of a nuclear-armed missile lands in the ocean; removing all nuclear weapons from high-alert status; reducing incentives to respond quickly to a possible nuclear attack; reducing the number of deployed nuclear weapons; and renouncing first use of nuclear weapons and restricting or eliminating a President's authority to launch a nuclear weapon without congressional approval.

Mr. President, since the 1980s, thanks to negotiators in both countries, the United States and Russia curtailed an

unrestrained nuclear arms race that led to the deployment of staggering numbers of increasingly destructive weapons that could not rationally be justified for deterrence or any other purpose.

The START Treaty and New START were historic achievements—bipartisan achievements. I would like to think that President Trump was serious when he spoke of the need for the United States, Russia, and China to stop building more nuclear weapons. But even modest steps to reduce the chance of a catastrophic mistake or miscalculation resulting in the use of nuclear weapons should be among our highest national priorities.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 8 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate July 22, 2025:

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

AARON LUKAS, OF ARKANSAS, TO BE PRINCIPAL DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

BRADLEY HANSELL, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

TERRANCE COLE, OF VIRGINIA, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT.

THE JUDICIARY

JOSHUA M. DIVINE, OF MISSOURI, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN AND WESTERN DISTRICTS OF MISSOURI.

CRISTIAN M. STEVENS, OF MISSOURI, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI.