

Mapping the Nuclear World

Introduction

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the public began to fear that a terrorist group might acquire a nuclear weapon. Americans, who had not worried about nuclear weapons for a generation, began to pay attention to this danger. But the threat of nuclear weapons is not new. And while the threat of nuclear terrorism is a deep concern, the role of nuclear weapons in international politics and security is more complex than only the threat from terrorists. In fact, nuclear weapons pose many risks and challenges for the United States and the world. Nuclear weapons are linked to our most complex and challenging foreign policy problems.

Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons (the spread of these weapons is known as proliferation) is a top priority for the United States. The United States has identified Iran and North Korea as two states that represent a threat to U.S. security because of their nuclear weapons programs. Tensions with Iran and North Korea are high.

Finally, the tens of thousands of weapons produced during the Cold War remain ready for use in the United States and Russia—an issue that some experts worry more about than the threat of nuclear terrorism. Russia and the United States have approximately 26,300 warheads of the approximately 27,600 nuclear weapons in the world. Not all are deployed with military units and ready for use. Some are kept in storage. The United States has 5,735 nuclear weapons that are deployed and ready to be used. Russia has approximately 7,200 nuclear weapons deployed and ready to be used. Both the U.S. and Russian arsenals are capable of destroying humanity.

In this lesson, you will be asked to map the nuclear world. You will analyze maps and data in order to draw conclusions about the status of nuclear weapons stockpiles today.

“Mapping the Nuclear World” is excerpted from *The Challenge of Nuclear Weapons*, a one-week curriculum unit published by the Choices Program at Brown University.

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Map Analysis Questions

Instructions: Look carefully at the map before answering each question.

1. How many non-NPT (states that are not parties to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty) nuclear weapons states are there? What are they? Circle them on your map.
2. How many weapons do each of these non-NPT states have?
3. According to the map, what is an abstaining country? How many abstaining countries are there?
4. What states have had nuclear weapons and have given them up?
5. What states have given up nuclear weapons programs and research?
6. How many nuclear weapons does the United States have? How many does Russia have? What percent of the world's total nuclear weapons are Russian or U.S. weapons?