

CALIFORNIA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION AVOIDING ACCIDENTAL NUCLEAR WAR

Resolution 108-00

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Whereas, the medical community, represented by organized medicine, has long realized that nuclear weapons pose a unique threat to human survival and that it is a legitimate concern of physicians (AMA Policy 520.999) and;

Whereas, the medical community including the AMA has played a key role in educating the public to the dangers of nuclear weapons and in advocating measures to prevent nuclear war, and a medical organization (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) has won a Nobel Prize for drawing public attention to these dangers; and

Whereas, some 30,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world's arsenals, more than 5,000 of which, in the US and Russian arsenals, remain on hair-trigger alert; and security at nuclear installations in some countries may be insufficient to prevent theft of nuclear weapons and their sale to terrorists, raising the danger of accidental or unauthorized launch; and

Whereas, a study from April 1998 published in the New England Journal of Medicine reported that even a limited accidental firing of such weapons could kill 6,838,000 people promptly and lead to an all out nuclear war; [1] and

Whereas, leading US and international military experts such as Admiral Stansfield Turner(ret), former Director of Central Intelligence, General George Lee Butler(ret) former commander of all U.S. strategic nuclear forces, and Sam Nunn, former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, have for nearly 3 years been calling for urgent steps to take these weapons off hair-trigger alert; [2] and,

Whereas, resolutions supporting taking nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert have been passed by the Massachusetts Medical Society and the American Public Health Association, with the AMA in 1999 calling for the President of the United States to take the necessary steps to minimize the accidental deployment of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; therefore be it

RESOLVED: That CMA endorse the efforts of the American Medical Association to prevent accidental nuclear Explosions and accidental nuclear war, and that the CMA write to California's Congressional delegation urging them to support these efforts; and be it

RESOLVED: That CMA send and urge each state medical association to send a letter to President Clinton and Congressional leaders asking that the President urgently develop policies with other countries to minimize the accidental explosion of nuclear weapons.

REFERENCES

1. Forrow L, et al. Accidental Nuclear War: A Post-Cold War Assessment. N Eng J. Med. 1998, 338(18):1328-1329.
2. Ibid.