

JOINT STATEMENT BY FORMER NUCLEAR LAUNCH OFFICERS

Scores of leaders and experts from both political parties have questioned whether Donald Trump has the experience, temperament and judgment to have his finger on the proverbial “Red Button.” We share their concern – and we see the issue from a unique perspective.

We are former nuclear launch control officers, or “missileers.” We sat nuclear alert in underground missile launch centers. It was our job to turn keys to fire nuclear-armed missiles if the president so ordered us. Once we began alert duty, we took orders from the president and no one else.

Only the president can order a nuclear launch. That order cannot be vetoed and once the missiles have been launched, they cannot be called back. The consequences of miscalculation, impulsive decision-making or poor judgment on the part of the president could be catastrophic.

The pressures the system places on that one person are staggering and require enormous composure, judgment, restraint and diplomatic skill. Donald Trump does not have these leadership qualities. On the contrary, he has shown himself time and again to be easily baited and quick to lash out, dismissive of expert consultation and ill-informed of even basic military and international affairs – including, most especially, nuclear weapons.

Donald Trump should not be the nation’s commander-in-chief. He should not be entrusted with the nuclear launch codes. He should not have his finger on the button.

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