

Bipartisan US Bill Aims to Prevent A.I. from Launching Nuclear Weapons

"As we live in an increasingly digital age, we need to ensure that humans hold the power alone to command, control, and launch nuclear weapons—not robots," said co-sponsor Sen. Ed Markey.

By [Brett Wilkins](#)

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In the name of "protecting future generations from potentially devastating consequences," a bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers on Wednesday introduced legislation meant to prevent artificial intelligence from launching nuclear weapons without meaningful human control.

The [Block Nuclear Launch by Autonomous Artificial Intelligence Act](#)—introduced by Sen. [Ed Markey](#) (D-Mass.) and Reps. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.), Don Beyer (D-Va.), and Ken Buck (R-Colo.)—asserts that "any decision to launch a nuclear weapon should not be made" by AI.

The proposed legislation acknowledges that the Pentagon's [2022 Nuclear Posture Review](#) states that current U.S. policy is to "maintain a human 'in the loop' for all actions critical to informing and executing decisions by the president to initiate and terminate nuclear weapon employment."

The bill would codify that policy so that no federal funds could be used "to launch a nuclear weapon [or] select or engage targets for the purposes of launching" nukes.

"As we live in an increasingly digital age, we need to ensure that humans hold the power alone to command, control, and launch nuclear weapons—not robots," Markey asserted in a [statement](#). "We need to keep humans in the loop on making life-or-death decisions to use deadly force, especially for our most dangerous weapons."

AI is amazing and has made our lives better. It can also kill us. No matter how smart AI becomes, it can never have control over nuclear weapons.

I introduced bipartisan legislation with [@RepKenBuck](#) [@RepDonBeyer](#) and Sen

[@EdMarkey](#) to require a human to launch any nuclear weapon.
<https://t.co/GWFtldq21N>

— Ted Lieu (@tedlieu) [April 26, 2023](#)

Buck [argued](#) that “while U.S. military use of AI can be appropriate for enhancing national security purposes, use of AI for deploying nuclear weapons without a human chain of command and control is reckless, dangerous, and should be prohibited.”

According to the [2023 AI Index Report](#)—an annual assessment [published](#) earlier this month by the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence—36% of surveyed AI experts worry about the possibility that automated systems “could cause nuclear-level catastrophe.”

The report followed a February [assessment](#) by the Arms Control Association, an advocacy group, that AI and other emerging technologies including lethal autonomous weapons systems and hypersonic missiles pose a potentially existential threat that underscores the need for measures to slow the pace of weaponization.

“While we all try to grapple with the pace at which AI is accelerating, the future of AI and its role in society remains unclear,” Lieu said in a [statement](#) introducing the new bill.

“It is our job as members of Congress to have responsible foresight when it comes to protecting future generations from potentially devastating consequences,” he continued. “That’s why I’m pleased to introduce the bipartisan, bicameral Block Nuclear Launch by Autonomous AI Act, which will ensure that no matter what happens in the future, a human being has control over the employment of a nuclear weapon—not a robot.”

“AI can never be a substitute for human judgment when it comes to launching nuclear weapons,” Lieu added.

While dozens of countries [support](#) the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, none of the world’s nine nuclear powers, including the United States, have signed on, and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has [reawakened fears](#) of nuclear conflict that were largely dormant since the Cold War.

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Brett Wilkins is a staff writer for Common Dreams.

Featured image: U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jacob Puente of the 912th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron secures an AGM-183A air-launched rapid-response hypersonic air-to-ground missile to a B-52 Stratofortress bomber at Edwards Air Force Base in Kern County, California on August 6, 2020. (Photo: Giancarlo Casem/USAF)

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