

Fear of a Nuclear Strike

Why in news?

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The Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the US has held a formal hearing recently on the question of “authority to order the use of nuclear weapons”

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What is the cause?

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- The intimate fear of a nuclear strike that stalked America during the Cold War has been revived again due to some recent developments.

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- North Korea is increasingly advancing its nuclear capabilities despite drawing condemnation from the world countries.

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- Apart from this, the US President's remarks that North Korea would be totally destroyed increases the fear of a possible nuclear confrontation.

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What is the concern?

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- The U.S. is estimated to have 7,000 nuclear warheads and the President has the sole power to authorise their use.

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- Once the President takes the decision, a nuclear warhead could be heading to its target in few minutes.

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- Being in charge of the ‘nuclear button’ is considered to be the most consequential of all presidential powers.

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- And whether Donald Trump could be trusted with that responsibility is being raised.

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- Notably, the concentration of the nuking power in the hands of the President was conceived to eliminate the possibility of a rogue General launching a weapon without authorisation.

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- Now, the question is that if the Generals had the power to stop a President gone rogue.
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What do the regulations say?

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- The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review says the U.S. could consider the “use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances”.
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- This is essentially to defend its vital interests or that of its allies and partners.
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- Authorisation of war falls under congressional powers, but if an attack against America is “imminent”, the Commander-in-Chief has the powers to act.
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- But Generals can refuse to obey illegal orders.
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- However, it is uncertain if a General can question the legality of the presidential directive on a nuclear strike.
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- The question is also with distinguishing an imminent threat.
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- Some Democratic lawmakers are arguing for legislative restrictions on the power.
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- However, some have warned that such measures will undermine America’s nuclear deterrence capability.
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Source: The Hindu

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