



Open Letter to President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, TUESDAY, JUNE 27, 2017

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

The President
The Kremlin
Moscow, Russia

Dear President Putin and President Trump,

The chasm between Russia and the West appears to be wider now than at any point since the Cold War. In the absence of new initiatives, the knot of distrust is being tightened, choking off the ability of governments to discuss, let alone advance, steps essential for improving the security of all people living in the Euro-Atlantic region.

Your first meeting in Hamburg will be a unique opportunity to underscore that, despite significant differences, the United States, Russia, and Europe can and must work together on areas of existential common interest -- chief among them reducing nuclear and other military risks, and preventing catastrophic terrorist attacks.

The starting point could be a new Presidential Joint Declaration by the United States and the Russian Federation declaring that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This would make clear again that leaders recognize their responsibility to work together to prevent nuclear catastrophe, and would be positively received by global leaders and publics.

A second step could be to increase military-to-military communication through a new NATO-Russia Military Crisis Management Group. Restarting bilateral military-to-military dialogue between the United States and Russia, essential throughout the Cold War, should be an immediate and urgent priority. The focus of these initiatives should be on reducing risks of a catastrophic mistake or accident by restoring communication and increasing transparency and trust.

A third step could be to collaborate to prevent ISIS and other terrorist groups from acquiring nuclear and radiological materials through a joint initiative to prevent WMD terrorism. There is an urgent need to cooperate on securing vulnerable radioactive materials that could be used to produce a “dirty bomb.” Such materials are widely available in more than 150 countries and are often found in facilities, such as hospitals and universities, that are poorly secured.

Fourth, discussions are imperative for reaching at least informal understandings on cyber dangers related to interference in strategic warning systems and nuclear command and control. This should be urgently addressed to prevent war by mistake. That there are no clear “rules of the road” in the strategic nuclear cyber world is alarming.

Russia, the United States, and Europe are confronting a range of significant issues today. But none should distract from urgently pursuing practical steps now that can stop the downward spiral in relations and reduce real dangers. The steps we have identified here are a good place to begin. We respectfully urge you to start now in Hamburg.



Des Browne, a former British defense secretary, is Chair of the European Leadership Network



Wolfgang Ischinger, former German Ambassador to the United States, is Chairman of the Munich Security Conference and Professor for Security Policy and Diplomatic Practice at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin



Igor S. Ivanov, former Russian Foreign Minister and Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation from 2004 to 2007, is President of the Russian International Affairs Council



Sam Nunn, a former US senator and chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is Co-Chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative