



DoD INSTRUCTION 5230.16

PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE FOR NUCLEAR WEAPON AND RADIOLOGICAL MATERIAL INCIDENTS

Originating Component:	Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
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Approved by:	Christopher Meagher, Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Purpose: In accordance with the authority in DoD Directive 5122.05 and the direction in DoD Directive 3150.08, this issuance establishes policy and assigns responsibilities for the prompt release of information to the public in the event of incidents involving:

- Nuclear weapons or nuclear components.
- Radioactive material.
- Nuclear weapon launch or transport vehicles (when a nuclear weapon is aboard).
- Nuclear reactors under DoD control; or during a radiological dispersal device incident.

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SECTION 1: GENERAL ISSUANCE INFORMATION

1.1. APPLICABILITY.

This issuance applies to OSD, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Defense, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

1.2. POLICY.

It is DoD policy:

a. To respond to public queries about the location of nuclear weapons with the following statement: “It is U.S. policy to neither confirm nor deny the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at any general or specific location.” This response must be provided even when such location is thought to be known or obvious.

b. To respond to public queries about information on nuclear-capable units, ships, submarines, and aircraft with the following statement: “We do not discuss the presence or absence of nuclear weapons aboard specific ships, submarines, or aircraft.”

c. To respond to public queries about why the United States has a “Neither Confirm Nor Deny” policy with the following statement: “The basis for the security requirement inherent in the U.S. policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence or absence of nuclear weapons is to deny militarily useful information to potential or actual enemies, enhance the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence, and contribute to the security of nuclear weapons, especially against the threats of sabotage and terrorism.”

d. That exceptions to the U.S. policy of neither confirming nor denying the presence or absence of nuclear weapons at any specific location may be made in the following circumstances:

(1) The DoD Incident Commander is required to confirm the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons or radiological material in the interest of public safety if the public is, or may be, in danger of radiation exposure or other danger posed by the weapon. The Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs or the DOE/NNSA Office of PA will be advised of this confirmation as soon as possible.

(2) The DoD Incident Commander may confirm or deny the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons to reduce or prevent widespread public alarm. The public affairs (PA) office of Combatant Commander with geographic areas of responsibility and the Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs will be advised before, or as soon as possible after such notification.

(3) During an overseas nuclear weapon or radiological material incident, the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ATSD(PA)) or the Combatant Commander (CCDR),

with the concurrence of the foreign government through the appropriate Chief of U.S. Mission and in the interest of public safety, may confirm the presence of nuclear weapons or radioactive nuclear components. Notification to public authorities is also required if the public is, or may be, in danger of radiation exposure or other threats posed by the weapon or its components.

e. To refer matters involving the safety of naval nuclear reactors and associated naval nuclear propulsion plants, including public information, to the Deputy Administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration's Office of Naval Reactors in accordance with Sections 2406 and 2511 of Title 50, United States Code, and Section 7158 of Title 42, United States Code.

SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1. ATSD(PA).

The ATSD(PA):

- a. In accordance with DoD Directive 5122.05, is the sole authority for the release of DoD information on behalf of the Secretary of Defense to the public in the event of DoD nuclear weapon or radiological material incidents.
- b. Delegates, when appropriate, overall PA responsibility to the Secretary of the Military Department, CCDR, or DoD Incident Commander having primary responsibility for the DoD response to a nuclear weapon or radiological material incident.
- c. Establishes communications, as appropriate, when notified of a DoD nuclear-radiological incident with the PA offices of the coordinating agency, lead Federal agency (if overseas), the Military Departments, the Unified Commands, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the Department of Energy, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Security Council, and the Department of Homeland Security.
- d. Notifies and consults with the U.S. Chief of Mission and the U.S. Department of State PA officer on nuclear weapon or radiological material incidents that occur overseas or near a U.S. border.

2.2. DIRECTOR, DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY.

Under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Director, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, incorporates PA activities into the Nuclear Weapon Accident Incident Exercise Program in accordance with DoD Instruction 3150.10.

2.3. SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF, AND CCDRS WITH U.S. NUCLEAR WEAPON RESPONSIBILITIES.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and CCDRs with U.S. nuclear weapon responsibilities:

- a. Notify the ATSD(PA) of exceptions to the policy of neither confirming nor denying.
- b. Include in their contingency planning comprehensive plans for PA operations during a DoD nuclear weapon or radiological material incident. Such plans should include adequate PA personnel and administrative, communications, and logistical support for a potential DoD initial response force.

c. Inform the ATSD(PA) on the PA aspects of military nuclear weapon, reactor, or radiological material accidents or incidents, and on the progress of nuclear weapon or radiological material incident responses.

d. Include PA activities in their Nuclear Weapon Accident Incident Exercise training events, consistent with DoD Instruction 3150.10 and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3261.01D.

e. As applicable, in consultation through the Chief of U.S. Mission in each country concerned, develop provisions for clearing contingency announcements and methods of release with host governments, when required by international agreement.

SECTION 3: PROCEDURES

3.1. Detailed PA procedures addressing nuclear weapon incidents and radiological material incidents can be found in the Nuclear Weapon Accident Response Procedures Internet Supplement to DoD Manual 3150.08 at <https://www.acq.osd.mil/ncbdp/narp/>.

3.2. Each unit and command has a response plan for their local units and areas of responsibility to respond to the appropriate nuclear assets they control.

GLOSSARY

G.1. ACRONYMS.

ACRONYM	MEANING
ATSD(PA)	Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
CCDR	Combatant Commander
PA	public affairs

G.2. DEFINITIONS.

Unless otherwise noted, these terms and their definitions are for the purpose of this issuance.

TERM	DEFINITION
chief of mission	Defined in DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.
incident	Defined in DoD Manual 3150.08.
incident commander	The general officer or flag officer designated to command the DoD response efforts at the nuclear weapon incident site.
initial response force	Defined in DoD Manual 3150.08.
nuclear weapon incident	Defined in DoD Instruction 3150.10.
public affairs	Defined in DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.
radiological dispersal device	Defined in DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms.
radiological material incident	Defined in DoD Directive 3150.08.

REFERENCES

- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3261.01D, “(U) Recapture and Recovery of Nuclear Weapons,” November 12, 2019¹
- DoD Directive 3150.08, “DoD Response to U.S. Nuclear Weapon and Radiological Material Incidents,” November 27, 2020
- DoD Directive 5122.05, “Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ATSD(PA)),” August 7, 2017
- DoD Instruction 3150.10, “DoD Response to U.S. Nuclear Weapon Incidents,” July 2, 2010, as amended
- DoD Manual 3150.08, “Nuclear Weapon Accident Response Procedures (NARP),” August 22, 2013, as amended
- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,” current edition
- United States Code, Title 42
- United States Code, Title 50

¹ Available by contacting js.pentagon.dom.mbx.joint-secretariat@mail.smil.mil.