The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists’ Double Special Issue: Practical Nuclear Questions for the Presidential Candidates, and the Psychology of Doom

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CHICAGO – September 7, 2016 – The 2016 presidential race is unusual in many ways, but a silver lining of sorts has emerged: For the first time since Lyndon Johnson’s famous “Daisy” political ad during the 1964 presidential campaign, the control that the President of the United States wields over the US nuclear arsenal is under serious discussion.

In his introduction to the Bulletin’s September/October issue, editor John Mecklin writes: “The Bulletin is nonpartisan, but it does have an unapologetic bias toward science, expertise, and the long-term preservation of humanity.” To this end, Mecklin has assembled top nuclear experts to provide questions that both journalists and citizens can ask to better understand the US nuclear arsenal, the role of the president in its deployment and use, and how to determine the differences on nuclear policy between the two major presidential candidates.

Given the debates over whether the US should change its nuclear posture to “no first use,” and the questions over whether US nuclear weapons in Turkey are secure, knowing the nuclear policy positions of potential commanders-in-chief has never been more important.

Introduction: Practical nuclear questions for the candidates in an unusual presidential election
John Mecklin

How many nuclear warheads does the United States need?
Frank von Hippel

Questions for the presidential candidates on nuclear terrorism, proliferation, weapons policy, and energy
Siegfried S. Hecker

Six nuclear questions for the next president
Henry Sokolski

Should the United States begin talks to ban nuclear weapons?
Zia Mian

The nuclear Google
Sharon Squassoni

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into context and provides fact-based debates and assessments. For more than 70 years, the Bulletin has bridged the technology divide between scientific research, foreign policy, and public engagement.

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