**Here's a question you always wanted to ask, but may have been too scared to ask.**

**Can the President of the United States initiate a Nuclear Attack on his own?**

The question has been raised periodically throughout US history. Is this possible? Curious minds want to know!

The answer is: No.

The President of the United States cannot initiate a nuclear attack on his own, either by pushing a button or just ordering the Pentagon to launch a nuclear weapon.

Here are facts about what it takes for any President to initiate a nuclear attack.

The President does not have a ‘launch attack’ button near him. The President must give an authenticated order which others would follow in order to launch a nuclear weapon.

The Presidential decision to launch a strike requires the President to work with military aides possessing the Emergency Satchell, often called "**the football**." The ‘football’ contains mandatory equipment/materials needed to order an attack, and works in conjunction with top commanders all the way down to service members working in the missile silos.

Do you want to know what the football contains? Within the football is a black book listing a menu of strike options; a three-by-five-inch card with authentication codes for the President to confirm his identity; a list of secure bunkers where the President can be sheltered; and instructions for using the Emergency Broadcast System.

One more important issue, when the President decides to initiate nuclear attack, the Commander of the Strategic Command, may question whether the order to initiate the nuclear attack is legal and proportionately appropriate. Theoretically, a discussion would ensue which would attempt to seek a legal option.

Wherever the President is, whether at the White House, in a motorcade, aboard Air Force One or on a trip overseas, the President is never far away from the aide carrying the ‘football’. The aide rides in the same elevator, stays on the same hotel floor, and is guarded by the same Secret Service agents.

For backup, there is also a ‘football’ for the Vice President in case the President is incapacitated.

Now you know everything you need to know about our President and his ‘football’.

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**Source:**

**What it actually takes to launch a nuclear strike**

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| **By** [**Zachary Cohen**](http://www.cnn.com/profiles/zachary-cohen-profile) **and** [**Brian Todd**](http://www.cnn.com/profiles/brian-todd-profile)**, *CNN,* Thu January 4, 2018** |
| [No, Trump doesn&#39;t have a big nuclear button on his desk](http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/politics/trump-nuclear-button/index.html) [**No, Trump doesn't have a big nuclear button on his desk**](http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/politics/trump-nuclear-button/index.html) |
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* Contrary to popular belief, the "nuclear football" does not contain a button
* Like his predecessors, Trump is accompanied at all times by a military aide carrying the nuclear "football"

*Washington (****CNN****)* President Donald Trump warned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Tuesday that he has a nuclear "button" on his desk at all times and boasted that the US has "much bigger & more powerful" nuclear weapons -- a stunning threat that has once again raised questions over what it takes to actually launch a nuclear warhead.

"North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the 'Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times.' Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works!" Trump tweeted.

The image of the President with his finger on a "button" that is capable of initiating a nuclear strike has been used to symbolize the speed at which the process of such an order can be carried out for decades.

Contrary to popular belief, the "nuclear football" which always accompanies a President does not contain a button but instead has the equipment and the decision-making papers that Trump would use to authenticate his orders and launch a strike.

[[](http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/politics/trump-nuclear-button/index.html)](http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/politics/trump-nuclear-button/index.html)

[**No, Trump doesn't have a big nuclear button on his desk**](http://www.cnn.com/2018/01/03/politics/trump-nuclear-button/index.html)

"The President by himself cannot press a button and cause missiles to fly. He can only give an authenticated order which others would follow and then missiles would fly," Dr. Peter Feaver, a professor of public policy and political science at Duke University, told congressional lawmakers last year.

"The system is not a button that the President can accidentally lean on against the desk and immediately cause missiles to fly as some people in the public, I think, fear it would be," Feaver testified.

He added that the decision to launch a strike requires the President to work with military aides possessing the materials he needs to order an attack, as well as personnel at all levels, from top commanders all the way down to service members working in the missile silos.

Whether he is at the White House, in a motorcade, aboard Air Force One or on a trip overseas, Trump is never more than an arm's reach away as the aide carrying the football rides in the same elevator, stays on the same [hotel](http://7769domain.com/Ad/GoIEx2/?token=cEtSdFBvUzR1WTBWNHIxclo3U1RheUFIeDk2TjFpQlk4cndOVHZmWTFzenVVV0YyVGtUcEdQSW1QUXY2SDk2TUphbTNrV1ZrNWhYTml5N0tDZjI2VzM3KzBiQ1dkNkIvaXRvRzFrWTVOUURFR1hXaXZDQmtNUGlKdlVPVG9hQ29BTFdGdWY3K1UzSHMySEUrRjlxMktFOUxwR24wdXExWDdIRThGNjZHWDFBPQ2) floor and is protected by the same Secret Service agents.

There is also a football for the vice president in case the President is incapacitated.

The Presidential Emergency Satchel, as it is formally called, contains four things, according to former White House Military Office Director Bill Gulley's book "Breaking Cover."

There is a black book listing a menu of strike options; a three-by-five-inch card with authentication codes for the President to confirm his identity; a list of secure bunkers where the President can be sheltered; and instructions for using the Emergency Broadcast System.

While the military officers who would carry out a nuclear launch are required to work in pairs, where both must concur before they can execute a nuclear launch, there is no such check on the President's actions.

"Only the President of the United States can order the employment of US nuclear weapons," according to retired Air Force Gen. Robert Kehler, who testified before congressional lawmakers last year.

Much of the nuclear launch process is classified but Kehler, who previously served as the commander of US Strategic Command under President Barack Obama, explained that there are layers of safeguards within the current system designed to ensure any order is both legal and proportionally appropriate.

"This is a system controlled by human beings ... nothing happens automatically," he said, adding that the US military does not blindly follow orders and a presidential order to employ nuclear weapons must be legal.

While the President retains constitutional authority to order some military action, Kehler explained that the nuclear decision process "includes assessment, review and consultation between the President and key civilian and military leaders, followed by transmission and implementation of any presidential decision by the forces themselves."

Gen. John Hyten, the commander of US Strategic Command, has shared what would happen if he were ordered to launch a nuclear strike.

"I provide advice to the President," Hyten said in November during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing. "He'll tell me what to do, and if it's illegal, guess what's going to happen? I'm going to say, 'Mr. President, that's illegal.' Guess what he's going to do? He's going to say, 'What would be legal?' And we'll come up with options of a mix of capabilities to respond to whatever the situation is, and that's the way it works. It's not that complicated."

CNN's Dugald McConnell contributed to this report.