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BACKGROUND

Perhaps the most critical challenge in sustaining the US nuclear deterrent after the end of the Cold War is maintaining the human infrastructure to support US nuclear capabilities. For a host of reasons - ranging from the increased role of conventional forces in the post-Cold War era to the global campaign to "de-legitimate" nuclear weapons - the attractiveness of the nuclear field has declined markedly for younger generations. Expertise on everything nuclear (policy, operations, technology, design, production, and so on) increasingly resides in senior officials who have retired or are about to retire, and the number of people in the pipeline is shockingly small.

PURPOSE

CSIS has become convinced that unless the nuclear community acts now to preserve the human capital associated with the US nuclear deterrent, sustaining these capabilities will become increasingly difficult in a future that will continue to demand a strong nuclear presence in US national security. CSIS has therefore launched the Project on Nuclear Issues (PONI) to address this challenge.

The targeted audience for this initiative includes young professionals from key elements of the nuclear community--uniformed military, defense civilians, industry personnel, national labs, defense contractors, and members of the policy and academic community. PONI works to accomplish this goal through its conference series, the Nuclear Scholars Initiative, and regular networking events for its members.

The goals of the project are twofold. First, PONI aims to build and sustain a networked community of young nuclear professionals by offering incentives and venues for interaction, scholarly research, and policy-relevant analysis. In so doing, PONI seeks to break down the isolation that the next generation of nuclear experts may experience within their respective fields.

Second, PONI works to contribute to the debate and leadership on nuclear issues by generating new ideas and discussion among both its members and the public-at-large. Through bringing together professionals from across the nuclear community, PONI works to stimulate innovative thinking about nuclear issues and then bring those ideas to the attention of senior leaders.

NUCLEAR SCHOLARS INITIATIVE

Perhaps the most critical challenge in sustaining the US nuclear deterrent after the end of the Cold War is

maintaining the human infrastructure to support US nuclear capabilities. Preserving human capital associated with the US nuclear deterrent is critical to sustaining these capabilities in a future that will continue to demand a strong nuclear presence in US national security. In light of these challenges, the Nuclear Scholars Initiative aims to build and sustain a network of young nuclear professionals by offering incentives and venues for interaction, scholarly research, and policy-relevant analysis.

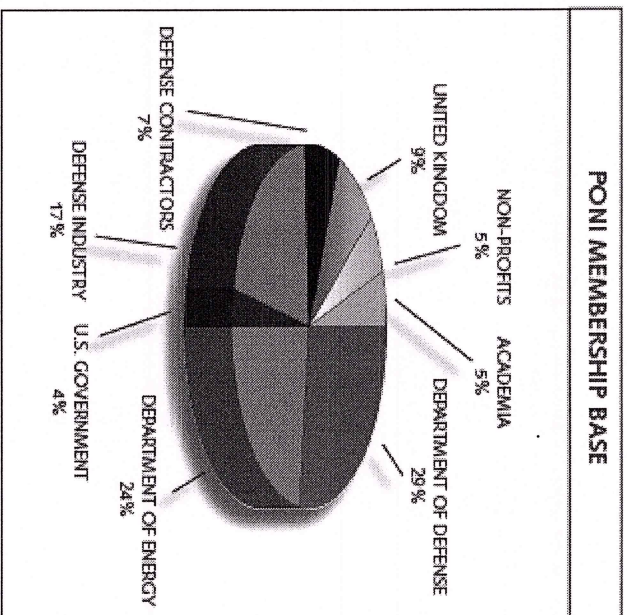
Participants of the program attend sessions that explore nuclear issues at CSIS in Washington, DC every six weeks. During these sessions, scholars and officials from all parts of the nuclear community give presentations and engage participants in open discussions on relevant issues. Over the duration of these sessions, scholars prepare a research paper on the Strategic Nuclear Force, to be presented to a panel of distinguished nuclear professionals.

PONI MEMBERSHIP

Members to the Project on Nuclear Issues are officials and scholars associated with all areas of the nuclear complex. Since the launch of the project in June 2003, membership has grown from 20 to over 600 including a transatlantic dimension of UK nuclear weapons personnel. Through this network various experts contribute to the debate and leadership on nuclear issues by generating new ideas and discussion.

PONI membership provides access to upcoming PONI events, recent PONI publications, conference presentations and reports, and information on new developments in nuclear issues. PONI holds a number of events throughout the year in an ongoing effort to create a networked community of nuclear experts while contributing to the debate on nuclear issues. An annual conference series consisting of three regional conferences and a final conference at U.S. Strategic Command in Omaha provides a research agenda for PONI members to pursue. The regional conferences build up to the annual conference, where PONI members deliver presentations on strategic nuclear issues to a number of senior experts from across the nuclear community.

PONI also publishes a bi-weekly news brief distributed to all members. Also, members are asked to contribute to a quarterly newsletter that showcases articles from members and young professionals from within the nuclear community. E-mail poni@csis.org for further information on project membership.



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