



The End of Nuclear Warfighting: Moving to a Deterrence-Only Posture

Fact Sheet

Report embargoed until Tuesday, September 18th at 10:00am EST

The U.S. should adopt a deterrence-only nuclear policy. Current U.S. nuclear policy is built to enable nuclear warfighting. A vestige of the Cold War, this deterrence-plus-warfighting policy goes beyond legitimate goals of credible national security and risks stimulating a nuclear arms race. With **U.S. conventional and cyber forces as de-escalatory options – able to assume some traditionally-nuclear attack assignments** – the U.S. can adopt a deterrence-only approach that includes:

- Reducing from a triad of land, air, and sea-based nuclear force to a **monad of five new Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines** (SSBNs) backed by a small reserve fleet of 40 strategic bombers;
- **Reducing the U.S. stockpile of operationally deployed nuclear warheads by two-thirds to 650** with a reserve force of 450 nuclear warheads;
- **Adopting a No-First-Use policy**, prohibiting any initial use or threat of use of nuclear weapons for any purpose;
- **Modernizing nuclear command, control, and communications (C3)** to ensure performance and survivability. Failure to strengthen these networks would weaken presidential control over nuclear forces and perpetuate an unacceptably high risk of miscalculation and launch on false warning;
- **De-alerting and phasing out the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile force** over the next 10 years and canceling plans for the Ground-based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) replacement;
- **Placing SSBNs on “modified-alert” status**, increasing launch readiness from minutes to 24-72 hours; and
- **Withdrawing B61 tactical nuclear weapons from Europe**, placing them in central storage in the United States

Shifting to a deterrence-only policy:

- ensures nuclear deterrence vis-a-vis Russia, China, and North Korea while greatly reducing the pressure to initiate a preemptive strike, the risk of launch on false warning, and the likelihood of rapid escalation to all-out nuclear war;
- puts the complex responsible for nuclear weapons maintenance and production on a sustainable footing;
- allows billions saved from unnecessary nuclear weapon modernization programs to be reallocated to more pressing security needs; and
- advances the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and phased, verifiable disarmament.