

Summary of Supportive Responses to Possible U.S. Nuclear Reductions

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Fumbling the Nuclear Football

By James Traub, Foreign Policy

In the first major foreign-policy speech of his tenure, President Barack Obama told a wildly cheering audience in Prague that the United States would commit itself to "a world without nuclear weapons" and then described in detail the "trajectory" required to get there. In the almost three years since that euphoric moment, the Obama White House has done what it so often does -- forthrightly acknowledge the complexity of its visionary goal, issue nuanced documents that compromise that goal even while reaffirming it, and accept half-measures, then quarter-measures, in the face of utterly unreasonable partisan opposition, surrendering more than planned to get less than expected.

Obama now has the chance -- perhaps his last chance -- to finally make good on his Prague pledge. He has ordered a review of the U.S. strategic arsenal, to be delivered to him in the coming weeks. The president must decide how many nuclear weapons the United States really needs. Arms control advocates think that this time, finally, Obama will grasp the nettle and accept that the country needs far fewer deployed warheads than the 1,760 or so it now has. I hope he does. But the mottled history of the last three years should give any disarmament advocate pause.

According to the extraordinarily ambitious strategy Obama laid out in Prague, the United States would adopt a new policy to "reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy," pursue arms reduction in treaty negotiations with Russia, pass the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the so-called Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty to control the production of enriched uranium and plutonium, and strengthen the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Of all these measures, the only one wholly within Obama's own powers was the new policy statement, to be embodied in a document called the Nuclear Posture Review. I followed this debate closely throughout 2009; then, administration officials told me that the document would furnish a clear "narrative" of a fundamental, directional change toward eliminating nuclear weapons. Advocates inside the administration hoped that the new document would change "declaratory policy" to stipulate that the United States would only use nukes against a nuclear threat rather than, for example, against a rogue state or a terrorist group that it feared might obtain weapons of mass destruction (as current policy now foresees); that it would end the terrifying but archaic Cold War requirement that hundreds of warheads be available for launch "on warning"; and that it would eliminate one leg of the nuclear "triad" of bombers, missiles, and subs (probably bombers). None of those things happened. As I noted at the time, even Sam Nunn, the hawkish former U.S. senator, said that he was "disappointed" with Obama's caution and specified that the unwillingness to "de-alert" the nuclear force "went beyond what I thought was rational."

The Nuclear Posture Review, published in April 2010, was blunted by skeptics in the Pentagon and perhaps the White House, as well as by opposition in the nuclear laboratories. The disarmament negotiations over the New START agreement, however, faced external resistance -- first from the Russians, who dragged out the talks over months, delaying Obama's planned trajectory, and then

from Senate Republicans, many of whom treated the modest agreement to limit each side to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads as a radical act of unilateral disarmament. To win them over, the administration had to promise to make exorbitant investments in the nuclear labs in Los Alamos and elsewhere.

We live with that decision today: The Energy Department's 2013 budget includes a 5 percent increase for refurbishment of the equipment that produces warheads and their nuclear "pits," upkeep of the weapons themselves, and training for nuclear scientists and the like, at a time when discretionary spending is frozen. Over the next decade, the United States is now projected to spend over \$180 billion on nuclear modernization.

The administration had been prepared to offer such a deal for Republican acceptance of much tougher agreements, including the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But once it had to pay that price for New START, there was no currency left for the future; in any case, Republicans weren't about to accept anything beyond the nuclear reductions agreement. Opposition from Pakistan and several other states then took the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty off the table. Spirited American diplomacy did salvage a consensus document at the 2010 conference reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. There, as elsewhere, the Obama administration has taken what the market will give and has very good excuses for what it hasn't achieved. But a transformational president doesn't wish to be judged by the quality of the rationales he can furnish.

Now, however, the market may have shifted in Obama's favor. Thanks chiefly to the killing of Osama bin Laden, Obama is no longer under the onus of proving his toughness on national security issues. Voters preoccupied with the economy don't care that much about foreign threats. And with half a trillion dollars in Pentagon budget cuts scheduled for the next decade, senior military officials are engaged in triage, and they will be prepared to get rid of weapons they never expect to use in order to preserve ones, like aircraft carriers and new-generation fighters, they believe they need. It is possible, in short, that the very economic crisis that has bedeviled Obama's entire presidency will afford him the opportunity to achieve the historic change he has sought.

Obama has asked the Pentagon to provide him with options for reducing the number of warheads below the 1,550 stipulated in the New START agreement. Administration officials won't talk about the highly secret document now apparently moving through the interagency process; none of the congressional staffers or arms control experts I talked to had seen it or heard a reliable account of its contents. A Feb. 14 Associated Press article made the startling claim that the administration was considering options ranging from a low of 300 weapons to a high of 1,100. This is almost certainly wrong, or misleading. One expert I spoke to said that he would be "staggered beyond belief if the president were seriously considering going to 300" -- a figure that would put U.S. forces at about the level of France. And Gen. Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, pointedly told a House committee that "the status quo" -- 1,550 -- "is always an option and one that is in play." (The view inside the arms control world is that a Republican staffer leaked the story in order to give conservatives a target to attack.)

What is the "right" number of warheads? (See today's article by Joseph Cirincione.) Of course, the "right" number depends on the threats that can be deterred only by the reciprocal threat of a nuclear attack. At a recent panel discussion, Morton Halperin of the Open Society Foundations

sarcastically asked whether we believe the Russians will wake up and say, "Oh, it's Easter Sunday; the Americans are at rest. We can launch a surprise attack, and it will be successful." The answer, save perhaps to some Republican members of Congress who haven't yet acknowledged the end of the Soviet Union, is obvious. The country's targeting strategy, which foresees the simultaneous obliteration of 250 industrial centers across Russia and China, is a grotesque relic of the Cold War. Obama has the chance to finally put it to rest.

The numbers matter, but the underlying doctrine matters just as much. In a recent article, arms control expert Hans Kristensen listed the policy choices Obama could make to justify a smaller nuclear force: He could, among other things, reduce the category of targets or "the number and diversity of strike options," change the declared mission to one of responding only to nuclear threats, take warheads off high-alert status, eliminate one leg of the triad -- or do all of the above. In short, Obama now has the opportunity to review the decisions he made in the Nuclear Posture Review and thus make the sharp break with the Cold War that he vowed to do in Prague. He has, in short, a second chance.

Will he take it? Republican hawks have already begun to warn of the "reckless lunacy" of deep cuts. Obama could take any number of exit ramps from the transformational highway, for example by insisting that any additional cuts be negotiated with the Russians in a new treaty -- which the Senate would almost certainly reject. He might postpone the decision until after the election -- which would be fine, so long as he wins. But he must choose between making perfectly reasonable excuses for the half-measures he adopts and taking the risks that come with historic change.

Getting to Zero

By Joe Cirincione, Ploughshares Fund

If Obama does cut the U.S. nuclear arsenal by 80 percent, it won't endanger national security. It also won't be enough.

U.S. President Barack Obama's conservative opponents in the media and on Capitol Hill whacked him hard this week after someone leaked details of a classified Pentagon-led review of options for reducing the U.S. nuclear arsenal by as much as 80 percent. The Associated Press story published late Tuesday, Feb. 14, claimed that the review contained "at least three options for lower total numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons cutting to around 1,000 to 1,100, 700 to 800, or 300 to 400."

"Can you believe that the American people will stand by for this ... so clearly putting the nation's defense at risk?" said Liz Cheney on Fox News. Radio host Rush Limbaugh called it "downright scary" and a shift in the balance of power toward Russia "by design." Equating reducing nuclear weapons with reducing American power, Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.) said, "The idea that making ourselves weaker will somehow lead to increased global security and stability is ridiculous."

The administration has responded with a procedural defense. "This was all part of a nuclear posture review mandated by law," Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told the House Armed Services Committee on Wednesday. "There are a number of options. One is to maintain the status quo. It is a process of discussion within the national security team."

Officials have thus far not discussed the strategic basis of any new policy. But it's worth asking, would it really be so crazy to reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal to 300 deployed weapons?

First, a few numbers. There are an estimated 20,500 nuclear weapons in the world. The United States and Russia hold over 95 percent of them, or about 19,500 weapons. (The United States has about 5,000 weapons in its active stockpile, with 1,790 counted under the New START treaty as deployed strategic weapons, plus about 3,500 weapons waiting to be dismantled.) The other seven nuclear-armed states together account for about 1,000 weapons, with only one -- France -- having more than 300. North Korea, a potential adversary, has fewer than 10. China, the only other conceivable adversary, has about 200, only 30 to 40 of which are on missiles capable of hitting the continental United States.

Since 1986, global arsenals have declined from their Cold War peak of some 65,000 weapons, reflecting changing global threats. Historically, Republicans have taken the initiative on making some of the biggest nuclear cuts. Ronald Reagan, working with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, cut intermediate-range weapons held by the United States and the Soviet Union by 100 percent, retiring thousands of missiles. George H.W. Bush reduced the total stockpile by 50 percent, thanks primarily to his unilateral decision to retire all the nuclear weapons deployed by the Army and the Navy's surface fleet. George W. Bush also intended to make unilateral reductions, but was convinced by Congress to negotiate a treaty with the Russians instead. By the time he left office, Bush, like his father, had cut the total stockpile by another 50 percent.

"I don't recall too many Republicans complaining or fretting about those reductions, the latter of which took place during a period when we were fighting two wars, when North Korea conducted two nuclear tests, and when Iran expanded its nuclear operations," Stephen Schwartz of the Monterey Institute of International Studies told me.

Today, there is widespread consensus among policymakers and experts on both sides of the aisle on the need to refocus U.S. nuclear policy from the permanent maintenance of an immense nuclear arsenal with multiple missions to the reduction and eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons. It is based on a growing bipartisan consensus of former security and military officials. George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn are the leading proponents of this shift, embodied in their series of *Wall Street Journal* editorials calling for "a world without nuclear weapons."

The four have garnered the support of a large majority of the still-living former U.S. secretaries of state, defense secretaries, and national security advisors, including James Baker, Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, Frank Carlucci, and Melvin Laird. "Twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the most important characteristic of the nuclear problem is not the size of the arsenals," Carlucci and Perry wrote in a 2010 report, "but a fundamental change in the relative risks and benefits of their continuing existence."

Reflecting this consensus, the April 2010 Nuclear Posture Review -- a congressionally mandated study on the purpose, structure, and size of the nuclear arsenal -- unequivocally concluded: "The massive nuclear arsenal we inherited from the Cold War era of bipolar military confrontation is poorly suited to address the challenges posed by suicidal terrorists and unfriendly regimes seeking nuclear weapons." James Miller, acting undersecretary of defense for policy, reflected the Pentagon consensus with his Feb. 15 comment: "I do believe that there are steps that we can take to further strengthen our deterrence posture and assurance of allies, and ... I believe we can do so with lower numbers."

How low? Recommendations for right-sizing the arsenal vary. Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) has proposed cutting back to 1,220 deployed strategic warheads. The Cato Institute argues that 500 warheads are sufficient. A 2010 study by Air Force analysts concluded that "America's nuclear security can rest easily on a relatively small number of counterforce and countervalue weapons totaling just over 300."

Even here, it is difficult to image a military mission that would require the United States to use 300 hydrogen bombs, each 10 to 80 times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. During all the years when the United States and the Soviet Union built up their arsenals to tens of thousands of weapons and then brought them down to thousands, China has felt secure with a deterrent force of just dozens. Analysts are now looking at this minimum deterrent strategy to see whether it indeed reflects military needs more accurately than the current U.S. and Russian postures.

As former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy wrote 43 years ago in *Foreign Affairs*:

[A] decision that would bring even one hydrogen bomb on one city of one's own country would be recognized in advance as a catastrophic blunder; ten bombs on ten cities would be a disaster beyond history; and a hundred bombs on a hundred cities are unthinkable.

Bundy's views did not prevail then, but the options that the Pentagon and the White House national security staff are reportedly preparing for the president's consideration are well within the mainstream of today's strategic thinking. It is those defending the existing nuclear complex and arguing for its expansion who occupy fringe.

Sound strategy is about matching resources to threats. The debate under way at the Pentagon, State Department, and White House could result in a smarter nuclear strategy, one that keeps us safe and is cost-effective too. Cutting the nuclear force to even 1,000 weapons would save hundreds of billions of dollars that could be devoted to the equipment that U.S. troops need to fight terrorists, not Soviets. It's about time we buried yesterday's threats and focused on those of the here and now.

[Noted Nuclear Historian, Richard Rhodes, on Recent Report on Nuclear Reductions](#)

By Richard Rhodes

Dear President Obama:

I am the author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, which won a Pulitzer Prize, and three other narratives of the Nuclear Age, most recently *The Twilight of the Bombs*. I write to urge you to reduce the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal to 300 weapons (or fewer), as a recent AP news story reports you are considering.

I understand that your advisers might perceive this option to be a difficult choice in an election year. Certainly you will be attacked by members of the Republican Party as “weak on defense” or worse. That has been a standard attack against Democratic Presidents for at least the past 50 years. I hope it will not dissuade you.

For most of the past three decades, I have researched and analyzed the history of U.S. nuclear policy. I’ve concluded that a major driver of the nuclear arms race, and a major sustainer of our current disastrously high levels of nuclear weapons, has been domestic politics—the “weak on defense” argument, that is. You are in a position dramatically to change that paradigm.

One argument your advisers may not have considered: there is a level of nuclear war above which the world climatic effects would be holocaustal. It’s shockingly low. The same group of scientists who discovered nuclear winter in 1983 (minus Carl Sagan, of course) have now investigated the climatic effect of a “small” regional nuclear war, such as one between India and Pakistan. They found to their horror that even 100 Hiroshima-scale (15-kiloton) atomic bombs, exploded over cities, would produce a worldwide average annual drop in temperature of 2 – 3 degrees, sufficient to cause mass starvation throughout the world among those peoples who live already on the thin margin—20 million prompt deaths in India and Pakistan from mass fires, 2 billion delayed deaths from starvation. This, to me, means that the only morally justifiable level of world nuclear arsenals must be fewer than 100 15-kiloton weapons.

We are, of course, far on the other side of that ceiling. You could certainly cite it, however, as part of your justification for a reduction of the U.S. strategic arsenal to 300 weapons or fewer. If you do order such a reduction, I predict confidently that you will be hailed as a world leader of historic stature, will trigger an avalanche of similar reductions from other nuclear powers, will put the U.S. in a far better way to demanding that Iran cease its military nuclear activities, and will be reelected to a second term by an overwhelming majority.

[Here](#) is a link to a report on the regional nuclear war scenario in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. [Full discussion](#)

With best wishes,
(signed) Richard Rhodes

The Dawn of Nuclear Sanity?

By John Isaacs, Council for a Livable World

There are signs that nuclear sanity is slowly gaining a foothold. Proposals are being considered by the Obama Administration that could pave the way for deep cuts in the number of U.S. nuclear weapons.

Despite howls of protest from the Jack D. Rippers of "Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" fame that any reductions in nuclear weapons undermines American security, the United States has in fact reduced its nuclear stockpiles significantly since the 1960s when America deployed more than 30,000 nuclear weapons – and the Soviets even more.

And the United States has remained more than secure from nuclear attack.

Despite those reductions and the end of the Cold War more than 20 years ago, the United States still maintains about 5,000 active nuclear weapons in its stockpile plus another 4,500 intact but slated for disassembly.

Almost every one of these weapons is many times the size of the two small nuclear bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Now stop and think about that fact: two small atom bombs pulverized two cities while the United States still maintains 5,000 far more destructive weapons

Recently, an Associated Press piece by Robert Burns suggested that the Obama Administration is considering at least three options to reduce the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons: 1,000 to 1,100; 700 to 800, and 300 to 400.

The article was not clear whether these reductions would be part of a negotiated treaty or unilateral, although Joint Chiefs Chairman Martin Dempsey on February 15 suggested that the reductions would be negotiated.

It is also clear that these numbers are proposals being drafted in the Pentagon for presentation to the President as alternatives, and are far from being adopted. In fact, one of the options under consideration is to keep U.S. nuclear forces at the levels agreed to in the New START treaty. However, the maintenance of 1,550 nuclear weapons in perpetuity doesn't make fiscal or strategic sense.

Could 1,000 or 500 or even 300 nuclear bombs serve as an adequate deterrent force to prevent a nuclear attack on the United States and its allies? Most assuredly.

Today, the Chinese have an estimated 240 nuclear weapons, of which 40 – 50 could be launched by long range missiles to hit the United States. The Chinese feel secure with their nuclear deterrent which is a small fraction of the American and Russian forces.

In 2010, two Air Force analysts at the Air War College and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, along with an active duty Air Force planner, calculated that the country could meet its conceivable national defense and military concerns with only 311 deployed strategic nuclear weapons.

These analysts pointed out that instead of focusing on simple numbers, it is more relevant to examine the size and explosive power of that remaining nuclear force:

This may seem a trifling number compared with the arsenals built up in the cold war, but 311 warheads would provide the equivalent of 1,900 megatons of explosive power, or nine-and-a-half times the amount that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argued in 1965 could incapacitate the Soviet Union by destroying “one-quarter to one-third of its population and about two-thirds of its industrial capacity.”

Any of the numbers suggested in the Associate Press story could easily deter a nuclear attack by an adversary present or future.

It should also be noted that nuclear weapons have proved useless in the many conflicts in which the United States has been involved from Vietnam and Iraq to Afghanistan and Libya.

Some of the complaints about reductions ignore one of the most important features of the current security environment: the federal budget crunch and the need for the Pentagon to shrink its military budget to conform to congressionally mandated cuts to defense spending. The less the Pentagon needs to spend to build or maintain nuclear weapons, the more it has for conventional weapons that are needed to address 21st century threats and security priorities.

Thus when Rep. Mike Turner (D-OH), Chairman of the House Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee, says: “The administration reviews are all being done to support further U.S. reductions. This is concerning,” he needs to explain what conventional capacity he would give up to maintain a larger nuclear force. He should also recognize that the fewer nuclear weapons there are on the planet, the more secure the U.S. will be, given its overwhelming conventional dominance.

Proposals to reduce or even eliminate nuclear weapons have been studied many times before. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan, so much revered by many Republicans today, came close at the Reykjavik Summit to an agreement with Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

An obvious but important fact about the politics of nuclear weapons is that Republicans seem to oppose only nuclear reductions (bilateral or otherwise) proposed by Democratic Presidents.

For example, in 1991, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, President George H.W. Bush announced that the U.S. would dramatically reduce its arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons, which led the Soviet Union to take similar steps, dramatically increasing U.S. security.

Furthermore, the George W. Bush administration announced in 2004 that it planned to unilaterally reduce the U.S. nuclear stockpile by “nearly 50 percent” by 2012. This reduction was achieved in December 2007, five years early, at which point the administration also stated that an additional 15 percent reduction would be completed by 2012.

The Republicans who are so noisy in their opposition today were silent then.

The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review stated that the fundamental role of nuclear weapons is to deter a nuclear attack on the U.S. and its allies rather than fighting and winning a nuclear war. Reductions of nuclear weapons in line with that policy would enable the military to increase its focus on the threats of today rather than the threats of the Cold War.

That Review provided a realistic appraisal that in today's world, the strategic landscape has changed even while the view of the Cold Warriors has not and that nuclear security in the 21st century means preventing countries from developing nuclear weapons and terrorists from getting their hands on them.

While considering these options, the Obama Administration, in its just-presented budget for Fiscal Year 2013, made two other recommendations that are realistic in the current budget and threat environment. It delayed by two years construction of the highly expensive new generation of nuclear weapons submarines that are estimated to cost \$350 billion over the sub's lifetimes.

And it has postponed by five years the Los Alamos, N.M., nuclear weapons laboratory's plutonium facility (Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Nuclear Facility).

Maybe nuclear sanity is slowing dawning.

Start Cutting U.S. Nuclear Weapons Down to 1,000

By Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Association

We may well be on the cusp of another round of deep cuts -- 50 percent or more -- to the American nuclear arsenal. While nuclear weapons occupy a unique niche in America's arsenal, they are fundamental to the nation's strategic planning. Fewer nukes can mean more money for other national security needs, or for other domestic spending. So I asked the head of the sober Arms Control Association to offer his view of what should happen. Given the fairly close links between the association and the administration, you may well find these same arguments being deployed later.

In the 20 years since the end of the Cold War, successive U.S. and Russian presidents have gradually reduced the size and salience of their enormous nuclear stockpiles, which remain by far the largest of any country. Nevertheless, the size of each country's arsenal far exceeds what is necessary to deter nuclear attack by the other or by one of the world's other nuclear-armed states.

Both sides can and should go lower.

Even under the New START treaty, approved in 2010, each country is still allowed to deploy 1,550 strategic nuclear weapons on 700 missiles and bombers until the year 2018. Under current plans, thousands of additional warheads would be held in reserve. Today, each nation's total nuclear stockpile exceeds 5,000 nuclear bombs. Unless they adjust their thinking, both countries will spend hundreds of billions of dollars to maintain and modernize these large nuclear force levels for 20 to 30 years to come.

Press reports this week confirm that President Barack Obama is poised to review the presidential nuclear "guidance" that determines U.S. nuclear war plans, the target lists, and the number of nuclear weapons and delivery systems "required" to hit them. While no decisions have been made yet, Mr. Obama will reportedly consider options developed by the Pentagon that could eventually lead to a reduction in the number of deployed nuclear weapons of 50 percent or more.

That's welcome news. A wide-range of national security and military experts believe that this review is overdue and that fundamental changes are in order.

The Obama administration's 2010 "Nuclear Posture Review Report" provides a new framework for the steps the President should now take to reduce the role and number of U.S. nuclear weapons and eliminate outdated Cold War thinking. The document states that "the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter nuclear attacks against the U.S. and our allies and partners." That is an important shift away from the Cold War-era strategy of being prepared to "prevail" in a protracted nuclear exchange with the Soviets involving thousands of city-busting nuclear bombs, and also to be prepared to use nuclear weapons against conventional military threats.

In line with this new approach, the United States (and Russia) could reduce their overall nuclear stockpiles substantially--to 1,000 warheads each-- and still retain sufficient firepower to deter nuclear attack by any current or potential adversary. Other than Russia and the United States, no other country deploys more than 300 strategic warheads. China possesses just 40 to 50 nuclear warheads on intercontinental-range missiles. Iran does not have nuclear weapons and North Korea's arsenal is limited in size and range.

And given the reality that the chance of a bolt-from-the-blue nuclear attack from Russia is near zero and far less likely today than it was during the Cold War, the nuclear force required to deter such an attack is far less than it was then. Joseph Stalin might have been willing to sacrifice tens of millions of Russians in a nuclear exchange, but Vladimir Putin would not. Just one U.S. nuclear-armed submarine could devastate an entire nation and kill millions.

A 2007 Arms Control Association report, "What Are Nuclear Weapons For?" by Stanford physicist Sidney Drell and James Goodby of the Hoover Institution concluded that the United States can and should achieve move to a smaller force of 500 deployed and 500 non-deployed strategic warheads on a mainly submarine-based "triad" of nuclear delivery systems within the next few years.

A 2010 study by three Air Force analysts in Strategic Studies Quarterly concluded that the United States could deter nuclear attack with a relatively smaller number of survivable, reliable weapons dispersed among missile silos, submarines, and airplanes." They argue that such a force might number only 311 nuclear weapons.

There are a number of changes to nuclear weapons plans President Obama should consider to move in the right direction. He could eliminate entire target categories from the current nuclear war plan, which now include a wide range of military forces, nuclear weapons infrastructure, and military and national leadership targets, and war-supporting infrastructure, mainly in Russia. These targeting assumptions were developed decades ago to deplete war-fighting assets rather than ensure there is a sufficient retaliatory capability to deter nuclear attack in the first place.

Obama should also direct war planners to discard old assumptions for how much damage must be accomplished to ensure that a target is destroyed. Current plans require hitting many targets with more than one nuclear weapon. To deter a nuclear attack, adversaries need only realize the United States is capable of reducing key targets to radioactive rubble rather than a fine dust.

The nuclear policy review also gives President Barack Obama the chance to eliminate the Cold War practice of keeping nuclear weapons ready to launch within minutes. During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama said the practice is "outdated" and "increases the risk of catastrophic accident or miscalculation." Indeed, a reliable and credible U.S. nuclear deterrent does not require the ability to retaliate immediately if U.S. nuclear forces and command and control systems can survive an attack -- and they can.

Obama can and should make it clear that the United States no longer will develop or exercise plans for rapid launches and will replace such plans with new ones that would allow the president to delay a response to a nuclear attack for days. He should invite Russia to make reciprocal changes to its nuclear posture.

Some of the administration's critics may -- incorrectly -- assert that given the risk that nuclear weapons will spread, further reductions in our arsenal would be unwise. But maintaining overpowering nuclear forces does not deter nations, such as Iran or North Korea, or terrorist actors to abandon their pursuit of these weapons. We must recognize that the other pressing security threats we face today -- terrorists, short and medium-range ballistic missiles, and cyber-attack --

simply cannot be dealt with by means of a large nuclear arsenal. And all of the United States major allies support further steps to reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles.

Maintaining an excessively large nuclear force could also push China to alter increase the size and lethality of its relatively limited long-range nuclear force. For its part, Russia will be hard pressed to deploy 1,550 strategic warheads unless it undertakes an expensive ballistic missile modernization effort. Rather than induce Russia to build up, it is in the security and financial interests of both countries to pursue further, parallel nuclear reductions.

Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. presidents have understood the logic and value of reducing nuclear overkill. During George H. W. Bush's four years in office, the total U.S. arsenal was shrunk from about 22,200 weapons to 13,700 -- a 38 percent cut. In George W. Bush's eight years, the U.S. arsenal dropped from about 10,500 weapons to just over 5,000 -- about 50 percent fewer.

Now is the right time for President Obama to provide the leadership necessary to discard dangerous Cold War-era nuclear war plans, slash costly nuclear arsenals, and redirect taxpayer dollars to more pressing U.S. security needs.

President Obama, Deterrence and Nuclear Weapons

By Stephen Pifer, Brookings

The Washington defense and security communities are abuzz with press reports regarding possible presidential decisions on U.S. nuclear weapons numbers. Administration officials say the president has not yet seen the options that the National Security Council is preparing with the Defense Department and others, let alone made a decision.

What's the background? In April 2010, the Department of Defense issued a Nuclear Posture Review. That document described how the administration planned to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy while at the same time maintaining strategic deterrence and stability, and strengthening regional deterrence. Shortly thereafter, Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which limits the United States and Russia each no more than 1550 deployed strategic warheads on no more than 700 deployed strategic missiles and bombers. The treaty entered into force in February 2011, and its implementation is well underway.

More than anything else in the U.S. arsenal, nuclear weapons are the president's weapons. He (or she) must authorize their use, in what would be one of the most momentous decisions that a president could take. The process now underway is examining alternative approaches to deterrence. It will conclude with the president deciding on guidance as to what is needed for deterrence, on how and to what end nuclear weapons would be used, should that be necessary. The Department of Defense and Strategic Command will then translate that guidance into a specific nuclear force structure and number of weapons.

Several options for what that guidance would look like, along with illustrative strategic nuclear force structures, are being prepared for the president's review. Those force structures reportedly run from something like the current structure to options that would cut the number of deployed strategic warheads to levels well below those in New START. Some observations:

First, it is appropriate to conduct this review. The current U.S. strategic nuclear force structure is based on presidential guidance approved more than eleven years ago. U.S. officials ought to be asking what it takes today to maintain an effective deterrent. That includes questions such as: What targets of value to a potential adversary should U.S. nuclear forces hold at risk in order to deter that adversary? How many nuclear weapons are needed to hold those targets at risk, allowing for the possibility that the adversary might consider striking first? Would some adversaries be better deterred by more usable military options, such as Predators with Hellfire missiles that could target individual leaders? And so on. Getting these calculations right should produce a policy and a force structure capable of deterring potential adversaries.

Some critics of New START (and arms control in general) claim that 1550 deployed strategic warheads is already too low for deterrence, but they do not say who is not deterred by that force. If the president and his senior civilian and military advisors conclude that the United States can maintain an effective deterrent at a number below 1550, it would be logical to consider going below New START levels.

Second, it is a smart time to conduct this review. Over the next several years, Washington will have to make important and expensive decisions about recapitalizing all three legs of the U.S. strategic triad—intercontinental ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-capable heavy bombers. Those decisions will shape the strategic force for decades. It would be wise to have a policy in place to guide those decisions rather than having them driven simply by budget considerations. That is especially true when defense resources are tight, and the Pentagon wants to buy other equipment—ships, aircraft and ground combat vehicles—for military operations that are far more likely than nuclear war.

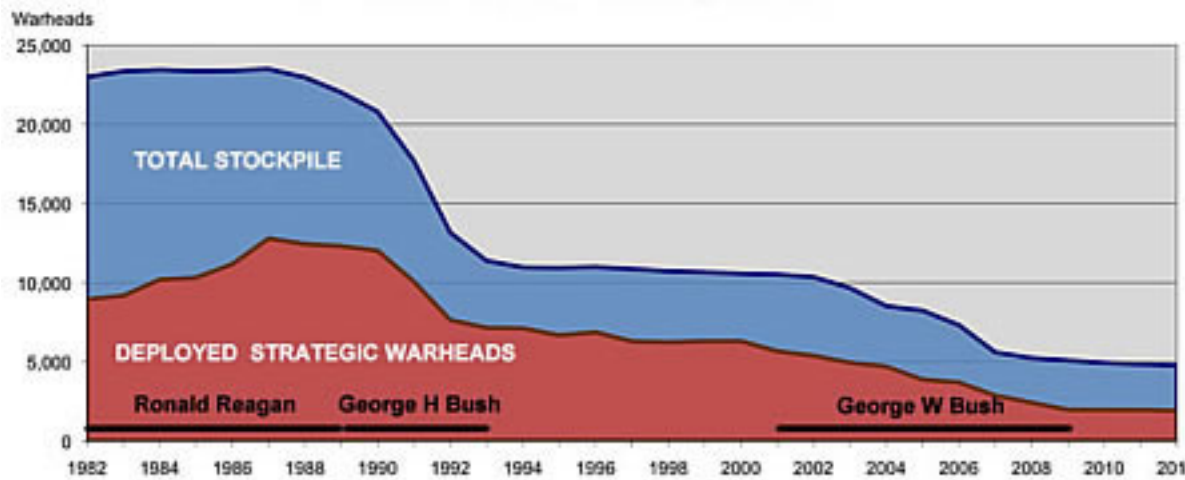
Third, whatever policy the president chooses—and whatever force structure and number of nuclear warheads follow from that policy—it is an entirely separate question how the United States chooses to get to that level. One way would be to do so unilaterally. Should Washington conclude that X deployed strategic warheads suffice to deter any potential adversary, should we worry about the number of weapons that other countries have? The George W. Bush administration decided in 2001 that deterrence required 1700-2200 operational strategic warheads, said that it did not care how many nuclear weapons Russia or China kept, and over the following eight years unilaterally cut the U.S. nuclear arsenal in half.

Alternatively, Washington could decide to implement a new level through an arms control arrangement. The president might choose to reduce U.S. nuclear forces only if Russia and possibly other countries reduced theirs as well.

I personally believe that the security of the United States and its allies could be safely maintained with fewer nuclear weapons than we have today. The current U.S. force structure, while significantly smaller than what the United States maintained 20 years ago, still looks awfully Cold War-like. The president and his senior national security advisors need to work through the complex deterrence questions, but it seems that we have more than we need to deter a rational potential adversary. And if an irrational potential adversary is not deterred by 1550 nuclear warheads, we should look at some other deterrence mechanism, since 5000 or 10,000 warheads likely will not deter him either. The review is the opportunity for the president to consider these very serious and consequential issues with his senior advisors and render his judgment.

Nuclear Studies and Republican Disarmers

By Hans Kristensen, Federation of American Scientists



Despite an outcry from congressional republicans and conservatives against the Obama administration's plans to reduce nuclear weapons, Republican presidents have been the big disarmers in the post-Cold War era.

A recent report by the Associated Press that the administration is considering deep cuts in U.S. nuclear forces has Congressional Republicans and frequent critics of nuclear reductions up in arms.

The AP report quoted "a former government official and a congressional staffer" saying the administration is studying options for the next round of arms control talk with Russia that envision reducing the number of deployed strategic warheads to 1,000-1,100, 700-800, and 300-400.

Congressional Republicans and right-wing institutions have criticized the administration for preparing reckless unilateral cuts that jeopardize U.S. security.

As it turns out, Republican presidents have been the biggest nuclear reducers in the post-Cold War era. Republican presidents seem to have a thing for 50 percent nuclear reductions.

During the George H.W. Bush presidency from 1989-1993, the size of the U.S. nuclear stockpile was cut by nearly 50 percent from 22,217 to 11,511 warheads. The number of deployed strategic warheads dropped from 12,300 to 7,114, or 42 percent, during the same period.

Likewise, during the George W. Bush presidency from 2001-2009, the stockpile was cut by nearly 50 percent from 10,526 to 5,113 warheads. The number of deployed strategic warheads was cut by 65 percent from 5,668 to 1,968 warheads.

A reduction to 1,000-1,100 would be about 30 percent below the New START treaty limit, a drop similar to the 30 percent reduction between the New START treaty and the Moscow Treaty ceiling of 2,200 warheads. A reduction to 300-400 would be a reduction of approximately 77 percent – right up there with the Bush cuts of the past two decades.

Those Bushies must have been reckless liberals in disguise.

Outside Congress, conservative institutions and analysts rally against the administration's nuclear review saying it's done in the wrong way, no one will follow, and the U.S. is not modernizing its nuclear forces like other nuclear powers.

A Heritage Foundation blog post mischaracterizes the reduced force levels being studied as "unilateral" cuts and says "there is ample historical evidence" that unilateral reductions will not cause other nuclear powers to follow.

But while there may be no guarantee that other nuclear powers will follow, there certainly is ample historical evidence that they have done so in the past. The unilateral presidential initiative by president George H.W. Bush in 1991 canceled nuclear modernizations, withdrew nonstrategic nuclear weapons from overseas locations and the fleet, retired strategic weapon systems, and stood down bombers from alert with nuclear weapons onboard. The Soviet Union and later Russia followed with significant reductions of their own – reductions that directly benefitted U.S. national security and that of its allies. Britain and France later followed with their own unilateral reductions.

Although I don't think the current review is about unilateral reductions but about developing potential options for the next round of negotiations with Russia, unilateral initiatives can jumpstart a process by cutting through the fog of naysayers.

The Heritage blog also mischaracterizes the United States as "the only country without a substantial nuclear weapons modernization program." That's quite a stretch given that the U.S. has recently converted four SSBNs to carry the Trident II D5 SLBM, has just finished modernizing its Minuteman III ICBM force and replacing the W62 warhead with the more powerful W87, has full-scale production underway of the W76-1 warhead, is preparing full-scaled production of the new B61-12 bomb, is producing a nuclear-capable F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, is studying a new common warhead for ICBMs and SLBMs, is designing a new class of 12 SSBNs, is designing a new long-range bomber, is studying a replacement for the Minuteman III ICBM, and is building new or modernized nuclear weapons production facilities.

That looks like a pretty busy modernization effort to me.

Similarly, an article in The Washington Free Beacon warns that the deepest cut being considered "would leave Pentagon with fewer warheads than China." Not so. The 300-400 option is for deployed strategic warheads, not the total arsenal. China's total arsenal includes about 240 warheads, none of which are deployed.

The same article also quotes an unnamed congressional official saying that no president in the past ever told the Pentagon to conduct a review based on specific numbers of warheads.

"In the past, the way it worked was, 'tell me what the world is like and then tell me what the force should be,'" the official said. "That is not happening in this review."

Well, in this review, as in other reviews intended to reduce nuclear forces, the process begins with the White House asking the Pentagon to examine the options for lower levels. Of course the military is asked to examine implications of a certain range of options; Pentagon reviews have a tendency to be worst-case and the force levels higher than strictly needed. The nice round numbers of arms control treaties are shaped by 1) presidential intent, 2) force structure analysis, and 3) they have to be lower than the previous treaty limit.

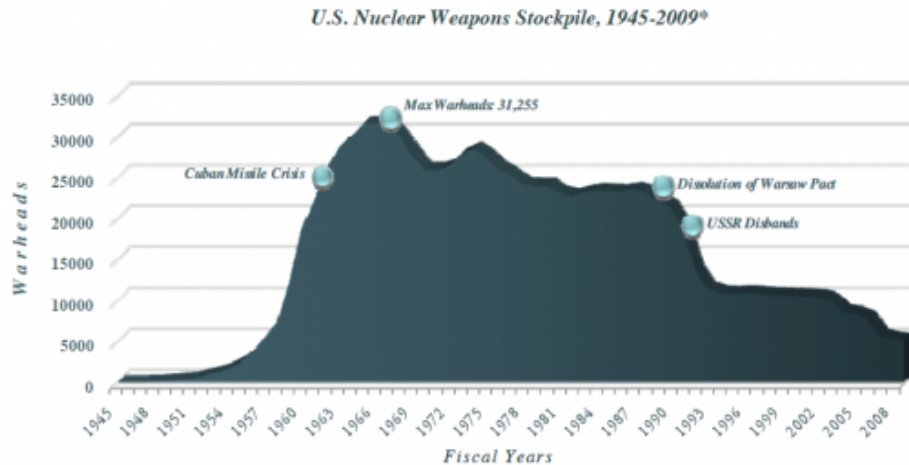
During the 1990s, for example, STRATCOM conducted a series of force structure studies in response to – and in anticipation of – future reductions. STRATCOM was created partly to get around the Air Force-Navy rivalry and create a single voice for nuclear force structure analysis. But STRATCOM's analysis obviously is focused on the needs of the warfighter to meet presidential guidance. As such, there is a tendency to protect force structure and avoid cutting too much too fast. That's to be expected but it shows that one cannot simply leave it to the military to define what the force should be; it should be an interactive and inter-agency process because the proper nuclear posture is not – and should not be – simply a military matter.

So even if the United States were to cut its number of deployed strategic warheads to the lowest number said to be under consideration, those 300-400 warheads would be still more than enough to threaten destruction of Russia. Thousands of additional non-deployed warheads would be in reserve to upload if necessary. Requirements for greater numbers of deployed warheads only emerge when warfighters are asked to use them to hold at risk other nuclear forces, command and control facilities, political and military leadership targets, and war-supporting industry in a myriad of different strike scenarios.

If the administration could convince the Kremlin that it is in Russia's interest to reduce as well, both countries would be better off.

[Nuclear New Math](#)

By Mark Thompson, TIME



*Includes active and inactive warheads. Several thousand additional nuclear warheads are retired and awaiting dismantlement.

Reports that the Pentagon is weighing a range of cuts to the nation’s nuclear arsenal – perhaps going as low as 300 deployed strategic weapons, down from the current 1,550 – has nuclear-triggered concern on Capitol Hill. “I have to suggest to you,” Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., told Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on Wednesday, “I consider that reckless lunacy.”

But Stephen I. Schwartz, editor of the *The Nonproliferation Review* at California’s Monterey Institute of International Studies, has gone to the history books. “Amid all the hyperventilating from congressional Republicans over the Obama administration’s ongoing review of nuclear force levels and postures, it’s worth remembering that when it comes to actual reductions in U.S. nuclear weapons, whether bilateral or unilateral, these have always been deeper and faster under Republicans than under Democrats,” he tells *Battleland*, flinging recently-declassified charts our way to make his case.

“During George H.W. Bush’s four years in office, the total stockpile was reduced by 38%, from 22,217 to 13,708 weapons, thanks in part to his unilateral decision to retire all ground-based nuclear weapons in Europe and South Korea and remove all nuclear weapons from naval surface vessels,” Schwartz says. “George W. Bush went even further, cutting the total stockpile over eight years by 50%, from 10,526 to 5,273 weapons.

“I don’t recall too many Republicans complaining about, or opposing, those reductions,” he adds. The stockpile shrinkage under W., he points out, “took place during a period when we were fighting two wars, when North Korea conducted two nuclear tests, and as Iran expanded its uranium centrifuge operations.”

Doing Your Homework

By Stephen Young, Union of Concerned Scientists

The Pentagon is working on finalizing nuclear weapons policy options for the president, who is preparing to make decisions that will set the size, structure and roles of the U.S. nuclear stockpile and set positions for future potential negotiations with Russia on force reductions below New START. The media was abuzz in the last 36 hours with reports that the options under consideration were 300-400, 700-800 or 1,000-1,100 deployed warheads.

At a hearing of the House Armed Services committee on Wednesday where Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta testified, Republican members were clearly distressed by the thought that the administration would even consider such reductions, calling it “reckless lunacy” and a “preposterous notion.”

In that light, you may recall the committee’s attempt last year to constrain the Obama administration’s prerogative to set U.S. nuclear policy, an attempt that was essentially neutered in the final FY12 Defense authorization bill.

A few thoughts on this latest kerfuffle:

1. The new study falls well within the normal range of activities any administration undertakes. Time and again, the Pentagon, its various defense boards and affiliated think tanks have been tasked with looking at a range of stockpile sizes. Those who think it is surprising simply do not know the history. In fact, the congressionally mandated 2009 Strategic Posture Commission, often cited by Republicans as an unimpeachable source on nuclear policy, specifically set out options for deep cuts that it thought should be studied in the future. The person selected by the Commission to lead that effort to establish the options to study was none other Jim Miller, who now is directing the Pentagon’s study for the Obama administration. (See Chapter 12 of the Commission’s *In the Eyes of Experts*.)

2. As Secretary Panetta testified yesterday, one option that will be presented to the president is maintaining the current stockpile, in its current size. Cuts are not a foregone conclusion.

3. Those criticizing these options act as if the president will unilaterally make these reductions tomorrow. That is not the case. As mentioned above, one of the mandates for the Pentagon study is to develop the U.S. position in the next round of arms controls with Russia. The Senate mandated that the administration seek such an agreement when providing its consent to the New START agreement in 2010. Would critics prefer that the administration approach such negotiations from a position of ignorance?

4. In 1991, when President GHW Bush unilaterally cut thousands of deployed U.S. nuclear weapons, there was nary a hit of concern from the Congress. Even more interesting, in 2001, President GW Bush simply told the Pentagon that they needed to develop a nuclear strategy based on maintaining 2,200 warheads, without asking them to first study what the implications of such a decision would be. Coming down from the then stockpile of 6,000 strategic warheads, it was a fairly dramatic call, but made without critical comment from the Congress.

5. More importantly, if this story is accurate on the ranges of options under consideration, it is certainly true that moving to 300-400 warheads would be a major shift in U.S. nuclear policy, but it would not reduce our security. It would end the current focus, maintained since the end of the Cold War, on fighting and winning a nuclear war. Instead it would require a focus on what the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review identified as the fundamental role of nuclear weapons: deterring a nuclear attack on the US and its allies.

6. Such a policy change would truly reflect the “end to Cold War thinking” that President Obama has called for, and would allow the U.S. military to increase its focus on the threats that we do face today, rather than the threats of the past. The fact is, nuclear weapons are now a security liability for the United States, rather than an asset for our defense. More and more military leaders, foreign policy and defense experts are recognizing that not only can we reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons, but for our own security we must.

Obama May Ditch Most US Nukes

By Adam Weinstein, Mother Jones

Obama is considering ditching most US nukes. Conservatives say it's "reckless lunacy"—but military strategists think it's smart.

If the White House has its way, America could soon reduce its nuclear arsenal dramatically, possibly even to the point where it would possess fewer atomic bombs than congressmen. And though Republicans on the Hill are already complaining that the plans are "reckless lunacy," the administration appears to have plenty of military thinkers on its side.

According to a report this week [1] from the Associated Press, President Obama is considering three proposals by the Pentagon to cut the number of deployed nukes. The biggest proposal would reduce America's active stockpile to just 300 to 400 warheads—fewer than the US has had since the earliest days of the Cold War. Since the dawn of the nuclear age, the US has reportedly built [2] close to 70,000 atomic bombs. The recent New START treaty with Russia requires both countries to cut their deployed warheads to 1,550, so these new reduction plans would be dramatic, indeed.

Any real movement on this front may not come until 2013; follow-up reporting by the Washington Post suggested that the White House won't make a change [3] until it resumes negotiations with the Russians, which is likely only to come after presidential elections take place in both countries this year. But the fact that plans are brewing for a major arsenal reduction is itself significant, and it signals where Obama may really be headed on nuclear strategy if elected to a second term.

The DOD's top dogs spent much of their time in Congress on Wednesday [4] stressing that all options are still on the table, including maintaining the current number of nukes. Even so, Republicans pounced on the proposed reductions. "I just want to go on record as saying that there are many of us that are going to do everything we possibly can to make sure that this preposterous notion does not gain any real traction," Rep. Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) declared [4] in a House Armed Services Committee Hearing. (He was the one who deemed the plan "reckless lunacy.") Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), a powerful advocate for nuclear forces, ridiculed the plan [5] as a cynical re-election ploy by Obama. (Catering to public opinion on spending reductions—imagine that.)

As I've reported before [6], many conservative politicians, and some moderate and progressive ones, have historically considered America's nuclear arsenal to be sacrosanct. After all, it's backed by a robust and expensive weapons complex [7] that keeps legions of contractors in business. But away from Capitol Hill, American academics and military officers are getting beyond the sound bites and provincial interests, and asking the impolitic question: In the post-Soviet age can the US do as much—or more—with fewer nukes? The answer seems to be: Yes, we can.

On the eve of the New START signing in 2010, three Air Force researchers argued in a military journal [8] that the US should tweak its nuclear strategy to focus on "proportional deterrence"—the idea that America doesn't need to annihilate its enemies out of existence, but instead just needs enough firepower to threaten an enemy's most valuable targets. It's straight out of Clausewitz [9]: You can win merely by taking away the adversary's will to fight [10]—like that

moment at the end of WarGames [11], when the self-aware missile-launching computer realizes that global thermonuclear war is as futile as tic-tac-toe: "A strange game. The only winning move is not to play."

The "lesser" nuclear nations in NATO, like France, have long practiced proportional deterrence; it's also at the heart of the atomic strategies of rogue states like North Korea and (potentially) Iran, which could never build as many bombs as the US, but could exert leverage by threatening Tokyo or Jerusalem with a single warhead. In an era of great fiscal strain and shifting military goals, the idea is catching on among US strategists. "Small numbers of nuclear weapons produce dramatic effects," the Air Force authors wrote. "In fact, the United States could address military utility concerns with only 311 nuclear weapons in its nuclear force structure while maintaining a stable deterrence."

Last year, after the Air Force journal article was published and New START was signed, Paul K. Davis, a researcher for the RAND Corporation, wrote a white paper [12] theorizing that the US could go down to 300 nuclear warheads and maintain its security objectives, assuming defenses and more conventional attack weapons were beefed up. (Part of his argument was that non-nuclear rogue nations and small hotspots are deterred as much by regular air and ground forces as by atomic warheads; does it really matter if we could flatten Tehran with a big mushroom cloud or with a bunch of conventional Tomahawks?) And as I reported on recently [13], a spate of scientists, researchers, and ex-government analysts have come to the same conclusion: America's 5,000-plus active warheads are far more numerous and costly than is necessary to keep the nation safe.

Will Republicans accede to a sweeping drawdown of US nuclear might? Beyond the knee-jerk emotions on top national security issues, there's an awful lot of defense pork [6]—not just missiles, but also bombers, submarines, and scientific research—bound up in our nuclear program. That makes the most dramatic reduction scenarios highly unlikely to pass muster in Congress. But if the White House and Pentagon push one of their more modest proposals—cutting the number of bombs to, say, 700 or 1,000—that could represent a reasonable compromise that still offers compelling financial savings and progress toward greater global stability. Faced with a plan like that, resistant congressmen might end up looking like just a bunch of Dr. Strangeloves.

[Rep. Turner vs. the Budget Control Act: More Nukes is Good Nukes](#)

By Kingston Reif, The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

Rep. Michael Turner's (R-OH) love affair with nuclear weapons continues. His national security raison d'être appears to be to protect at all costs spending on an excessively large nuclear arsenal ill-suited to the current threat environment and oppose common sense, bipartisan steps such as the New START treaty that begin to put America's nuclear posture on a 21st century footing.

On February 8, the Chairman of the House Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee announced that he plans to introduce an updated version of the New START Implementation Act following the release of the President's budget on February 13.

Recall that Turner offered the original bill prior to the House Armed Services Committee mark-up of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 defense authorization bill last May. According to Turner, the purpose of the bill was to hold the Obama administration accountable to the long-term commitments it made on nuclear modernization during the Senate's consideration of the New START treaty.

Republicans attached many of the bill's provisions as amendments to the House version of the defense bill, including a section that would have delayed force reductions under New START and made further changes to U.S. nuclear force levels contingent on several onerous conditions. In the end, cooler heads prevailed in the Senate and conference committee and the final version of the bill either did not include or significantly watered down these provisions.

Turner argues that a new version of the bill is needed because the administration's FY 2013 budget request of \$7.58 billion for the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) Weapons Activities account is less than the \$7.95 billion called for as part of the **November**. All told the 1251 report calls for \$88 billion in spending on NNSA weapons activities between FY 2011 and FY 2020. The FY 2013 request does not keep pace with this plan. According to NNSA, "the Administration will develop out year funding levels based on actual programmatic requirements at a later date." Within weapons activities, the request defers the Chemistry and Metallurgy Research Replacement Facility (CMRR-NF), the new plutonium facility scheduled to be built at Los Alamos, by five years.

Turner claims that the U.S. shouldn't implement the reductions required by the New START treaty (to say nothing about deeper reductions) without spending the amounts outlined in the 1251 report.

Like his previous efforts to constrain U.S. implementation of New START and future changes to U.S. nuclear posture, Turner's latest gambit isn't likely to gain much traction outside the House Armed Services Committee. Not only did Turner lose the funding battle when Congress passed the Budget Control Act, but insisting on the maintenance of current U.S. nuclear force levels in perpetuity makes neither fiscal nor strategic sense.

If Not Weapons Then Where?

If it sounds like Rep. Turner's call to fund weapons at any cost ignores a big piece of context, that's because it does: It's called the Budget Control Act (also known as the deal to raise the debt ceiling), which Congress passed in August 2011. The Section 1251 report was crafted in the pre-Budget Control Act world, which might as well be eons ago. Furthermore, it was designed before the cost of many of NNSA's large scale construction and life extension projects were fully known (some have increased in cost, others are still not known).

In fact, the cuts to weapons activities began before the Budget Control Act was negotiated, spearheaded by the Republican-led House. House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan and House Appropriations Committee Chairman Rogers proposed to reduce the FY 2011 request by over \$300 million in February 2011. This cut was ultimately reversed in the final FY 2011 spending bill.

In FY 2012, Congress provided \$7.23 billion for NNSA's weapons activities account, a reduction of \$355 million below the FY 2012 requested level of \$7.63 billion, but still an increase of \$338 million over the FY 2011 enacted level (see our handy chart for more detail here). The final FY 2012 enacted level was again higher than what the Republican-led House Appropriations Committee approved during the FY 2012 appropriations process.

The failure of the Supercommittee to come up with an additional \$1.2 trillion in deficit reductions has reset the original Budget Control spending caps and applied them to defense (Function 050, which includes NNSA) and nondefense programs for 2013 through 2021. It also triggered an automatic sequester that, if implemented as scheduled in January 2013, could result in reductions of approximately \$500 billion to projected defense spending over the next decade. These cuts would be in addition to the more than \$450 billion in reductions to projected defense spending the Pentagon is already planning to implement over the next decade as part of the first round of cuts required by the Budget Control Act.

The pre-sequester FY 2013 cap for defense spending is \$546 billion, which is \$8 billion less than the FY 2011 enacted level. If sequestration is implemented, that level could be reduced by an additional \$54.5 billion.

Though the FY 2013 budget request is above this new cap, the Budget Control Act is putting enormous pressure on NNSA's budget, making it nearly impossible to fund weapons activities at the 1251 report level and build the CMRR-NF and Uranium Processing Facility (UPF) at the same time. The administration also no doubt noticed that Congress reduced its request for weapons activities last year.

Sure, the administration could have fully funded weapons activities by taking money from the Pentagon or some other defense program (DoD has already transferred a significant amount of money to support NNSA's nuclear enterprise). But if Rep. Turner wants to lambast reductions to the NNSA weapons activities budget, it is incumbent upon him to explain what other defense programs he would cut to find the needed funding. He may not have voted for the Budget Control Act, but many of his Republican colleagues did. It is the law of the land.

NNSA Still Flush with Cash

While funding levels for weapons activities has been less than projected in the 1251 report the last two years, the FY 2012 appropriation and the FY 2013 budget request provide major increases for nuclear weapons programs.

Last year Congress struck a balance within NNSA that protected the most important nonproliferation programs while still providing nearly \$300 million above the FY 2011 enacted level for weapons – more than enough to implement the highest priority goals laid out in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review and maintain safe, secure, and credible nuclear warheads.

The FY 2013 request of \$7.58 billion for weapons activities is still an increase of \$363 million above last year's enacted level – no small feat in a budget environment in which many other security and non-security programs suffered decreases.

By way of additional comparison, the FY 2013 request is a \$710 million increase over the FY 2011 enacted level and an increase of \$1.2 billion over the FY 2010 enacted level! These huge increases belie the claim that NNSA is being forced to scrape from the bottom of the barrel.

In fact, given the amount of fat and waste in NNSA's budget, there is ample room for cuts. Weapons programs that are beset by unsustainable cost growth, are not essential to maintaining the stockpile, or do not comport with the current threat environment should be scaled back or delayed, especially in a time of economic austerity. The CMRR-NF was one of the worst offenders in this regard. To avoid cuts to programs we need for current threats, the U.S. should spend less on unaffordable, Cold War-era nuclear programs with diminishing strategic relevance.

New START Implementation Can Proceed With Less Than \$7.59 Billion

Rep. Turner claims that failure to provide the resources for modernization contained in the 1251 report is grounds for U.S. withdrawal from the New START treaty. He forgot to read the treaty. Condition nine of the New START resolution of ratification states that “If appropriations are enacted that fail to meet the resource requirements set forth in the President's 10-year plan...the President shall submit to Congress, within 60 days of such enactment...a report detailing...whether and why, in the changed circumstances brought about by the resource shortfall, it remains in the national interest of the United States to remain a Party to the New START Treaty.”

So the administration is obliged to provide Congress with the required report detailing why remaining a party to the treaty still makes sense for U.S. national security. The administration will no doubt provide such an affirmation, if it hasn't done so already.

This is because, as noted above, the U.S. can still maintain a devastating deterrent with less than the levels called for in the 1251 report.

Moreover, while the administration and Congress should ensure that NNSA has the resources it needs to maintain safe, secure, and effective warheads, implementation of New START should not be held hostage to the maintenance predetermined levels of funding (i.e. the levels called for in the 1251 report) that could be overtaken by unforeseen economic or geopolitical events, thereby altering prior plans. The Budget Control Act has imposed new fiscal constraints that were not present when the 1251 report was constructed in 2010.

Finally, the New START limits and verification provisions have yielded invaluable, precise information essential to US national security. As then-Undersecretary of Defense Jim Miller noted at a November 2011 hearing of the House Strategic Forces Subcommittee, “the new START treaty has benefits to the United States, including the 18 on-site inspections per year, the exchange of data and the ability to have a much better understanding of Russian strategic forces than we otherwise would. So withdrawing from it would not be without other costs.”

[Obama Administration Considers Strategic And Responsible Nuclear Arsenal Cuts, Right-Wing Media Freak Out](http://www.mediamatters.org)

www.mediamatters.org

Right-wing media are attacking the Obama administration for reportedly considering options for cuts to the U.S. nuclear arsenal. But experts have said that the United States should significantly reduce its nuclear arsenal, which was built up to fight the Cold War.

AP: The Obama Administration Is Weighing Options For Cuts To U.S. Nuclear Stockpile Built Up During The Cold War

AP: "US Weighing Options For Future Cuts In Nuclear Weapons, Including 80% Reduction." In a February 14 article headlined "US weighing options for future cuts in nuclear weapons, including 80% reduction," the Associated Press reported:

The Obama administration is weighing options for sharp new cuts to the U.S. nuclear force, including a reduction of up to 80 percent in the number of deployed weapons, The Associated Press has learned.

Even the most modest option now under consideration would be an historic and politically bold disarmament step in a presidential election year, although the plan is in line with President Barack Obama's 2009 pledge to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons.

No final decision has been made, but the administration is considering at least three options for lower total numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons cutting to: 1,000 to 1,100; 700 to 800, and 300 to 400, according to a former government official and a congressional staffer. Both spoke on condition of anonymity in order to reveal internal administration deliberations.

The potential cuts would be from a current treaty limit of 1,550 deployed strategic warheads.

A level of 300 deployed strategic nuclear weapons would take the U.S. back to levels not seen since 1950 when the nation was ramping up production in an arms race with the Soviet Union. The U.S. numbers peaked at above 12,000 in the late 1980s and first dropped below 5,000 in 2003.

Obama has often cited his desire to seek lower levels of nuclear weapons, but specific options for a further round of cuts had been kept under wraps until the AP learned of the three options now on the table.

A spokesman for the White House's National Security Council, Tommy Vietor, said Tuesday that the options developed by the Pentagon have not yet been presented to Obama. [Associated Press, 2/14/12]

Right-Wing Media Respond To Potential Cuts In Nuclear Stockpile With Predictable Outrage

Fox's Liz Cheney: Obama "Is So Clearly Putting The Nation's Defense At Risk." From the February 14 edition of Fox News' *Hannity*:

LIZ CHENEY (guest host and Fox News contributor): Well it seems that the one area that he is in fact willing to cut is in defense. And in addition to the \$487 billion in defense cuts we're going to see over the next ten years, we just learned this evening -- Jennifer Griffin reported that the president is now in fact considering cutting our nuclear -- our strategic nuclear forces by as much as 80 percent. Can you believe that the American people will stand by for this, you know, again as we're going into this election cycle when he is so clearly putting the nation's defense at risk?

DANA PERINO (Fox News host): It's a hard argument for them to make when there are so much other nuclear armament activity happening all around the world in places that are not friendly to the United States. I don't think -- they've not made a good case for it. You know, certainly I'll sit there and listen. But I feel like if you want to have a place in the world where you are in a position of leadership the only reason people respect you is if you have more than they do, and we're on a precipitous decline. [Fox News, *Hannity*, 2/15/12, via Media Matters]

Fox's Stuart Varney: "Retreat On The Nuclear Front" Will "Invit[e] Someone To Go Against" The U.S. From the February 14 edition of Fox News' *Hannity*:

STUART VARNEY (Fox Business host): Why would we do this? Why would we retreat on the nuclear front so dramatically? What's the point? Is this for saving financially? Is that what it is? Because it is a retreat. If you don't have a forward posture that is one of strength then, I think, you're inviting -- not attack, that's too strong a word. But you're inviting someone to go against you. As you retreat somebody else will step forward. If that's what we're doing with nuclear weapons that is very dangerous. The Washington Post report on this calls it disarmament. That's a very strong word. [Fox News, *Hannity*, 2/15/12, via Media Matters]

Fox's Peter Johnson: "Most Americans Would Say, In The Ideal World, We Don't Want Nuclear Weapons," But "This Is Not In The Ideal World. In The Ideal World, We Want America To Be Protected." From the February 15 edition of Fox News' *Fox & Friends*:

BRIAN KILMEADE (co-host): That was President Barack Obama back in 2009 pledging to eliminate nuclear weapons. And it looks like that's exactly what he's trying to do today. The AP now reporting he's considering cutting our nuclear arsenal by up to 80 percent. Is this a good idea? Joining us right now, Fox News legal analyst Peter Johnson Jr. So we're going to disarm as a nation?

PETER JOHNSON JR. (Fox News legal analyst): The president has not approved these takedowns yet, but there's a various set of proposals and one of the proposals would bring

us back to levels that we haven't seen since 1950. And this is one of the reasons that the president won the Nobel Peace prize, and he's articulated it time and time again and we've heard it that he wants to bring us to a zero, a global zero with regard to nuclear weapons in the world and of course in the United States.

[...]

JOHNSON: The truth is that we have to understand that deterrence usually mean strength. The issue becomes what is deterrence? There's a lot of people around the world that say: "Let's disarm, we don't need nuclear weapons." We all agree that nuclear weapons are destructive. But in the world, in the realpolitik that we live in, it's clear that nuclear weapons do in fact have a deterrence.

KILMEADE: What kind of power does he have? Because the final decision has not been made. Congress can speak out. Republicans and Democrats, I imagine, will speak out.

JOHNSON: Sure, and there was a lot of debate about the START treaty. And so no one is saying at this point the president is going to unilaterally disarm. This is going to be the subject of conversations between us and the Russians. But as the world changes and as the threats become different, we may in fact have to change the way shorter-range nuclear weapons, more targeted nuclear weapons, less dispersive nuclear weapons, to deal with the terrorist threat.

KILMEADE: But the problem is we're not just dealing with the Russians, we're negotiating with ourselves. We're doing this to ourselves with no other upside, and it costs a lot of money to do this.

JOHNSON: I think most Americans would say, In the ideal world, we don't want nuclear weapons. This is not in the ideal world. In the ideal world, we want America to be protected.

KILMEADE: And the ideal world -- Sesame Street. And we're not on Sesame Street.

JOHNSON: We're not on Sesame Street. This is a tough game and they're protecting us right now. [Fox News, Fox & Friends, 2/15/12, via Media Matters]

Rush Limbaugh: Obama "Is Reducing Our Stockpile Unilaterally By 80 Percent," Shifting The Balance Of Power "Away From Us" "By Design." From the February 15 edition of Premiere Radio Networks' *The Rush Limbaugh Show*:

RUSH LIMBAUGH: There are some things happening today that are downright scary. The regime, led by Barack Hussein Obama, is weighing options for reducing our U.S. nuclear force, including a reduction of up to 80 percent in the number of deployed warheads. 80 percent. Folks, this is staggering. Meanwhile, the Iranians are nuking up.

[...]

LIMBAUGH: We are unilaterally disarming. We are not requiring the Russians to go along. And even if the Russians said they would match these reductions, they lie. That is the lesson of the Russians and nukes. I think our top -- what was our top moment? We had -- our number of warheads peaked at 12,000 in the late '80s. And let me tell you something. That number of nuclear warheads is what helped us win the Cold War. That number of nuclear warheads sent a message to every other nation, particularly at that point in time the Soviet Union. You hit us, it doesn't matter. We've got enough left to wipe you out in retaliation. That many nuclear warheads was a deterrent.

So much is flashing back in me. You go back to the '80s and the '70s, the nuclear freeze movement, the peaceniks wanting to get rid of nukes, and there was an arms race going on. And we were increasing our stockpile, as were the Russians. The numbers mattered only in terms of deterrent. We had to keep up and we had to stay ahead. It was the deterrent. You build, for example, the B2 bomber hoping never to have to use it.

The left has never understood this about military matters and defense. They never understood this about nukes. You build them so that you don't have to use them. That's the point. You don't build them because you want to. You don't build them because you can't wait to use them. You don't build them because you're warmongers. You build them so that you don't have to. It's what's behind practically every major weapon, invention, and manufacture. The B2 stealth bomber -- you hope you never have to use it. Now we have had to, obviously. But the hope is that the brute force and the ability to project power is enough to deter anybody from taking us on. It's a great strategy; it is how this stuff works.

And now, Barack Obama is reducing our stockpile unilaterally by 80 percent, back to 300 warheads. Now you might say: "Well that's good, Rush. It's making the world safer." It is not making the world safer. If the Russians still have 1,500 or 2,000, whatever the number is, folks, there's a balance of power here that has shifted away from us. And this, I'm here to tell you, is by design. [Premiere Radio Networks, The Rush Limbaugh Show, 2/15/12, via Media Matters]

But Experts Agree U.S. Should Make Strategic Reductions To Its Nuclear Arsenal

Arms Control Association Executive Director: U.S. Could Reduce Its Nuclear Stockpile "Substantially ... While Retaining Sufficient Firepower To Deter Nuclear Attack By Any Current Or Potential Adversary." In a May 2011 editorial, Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association, "a national nonpartisan membership organization dedicated to promoting public understanding of and support for effective arms control policies," wrote:

In the 20 years since the end of the Cold War, successive U.S. and Russian presidents have gradually reduced the size and salience of their enormous nuclear stockpiles. Nevertheless, the size of each country's arsenal far exceeds what might be considered necessary to deter nuclear attack. Both sides can and should go lower.

Even under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), each country is allowed to deploy 1,550 strategic nuclear weapons on 700 missiles and bombers. Thousands of additional warheads are held in reserve. Unless they adjust their thinking, both countries will spend scarce resources to modernize and maintain similar nuclear force levels for 20 to 30 years to come.

This year, as the Obama administration reviews decade-old presidential guidance on nuclear force structure and nuclear employment policy, the president has an unprecedented opportunity to discard outdated targeting assumptions, open the way for deeper reductions of all warhead types, and redirect defense dollars to more pressing needs.

The 2010 "Nuclear Posture Review Report" outlines the national security rationale for reducing the role and number of U.S. nuclear weapons and eliminating outdated Cold War policies. The document asserts that "the fundamental role of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter nuclear attacks against the U.S. and our allies and partners."

At the same time, the report acknowledges that the United States and Russia "each still retain more nuclear weapons than necessary for stable deterrence." Given that no other country deploys more than 300 strategic warheads and given that China possesses 40 to 50 warheads on intercontinental-range missiles, the United States and Russia could reduce their overall nuclear stockpiles substantially -- to 1,000 warheads -- while retaining sufficient firepower to deter nuclear attack by any current or potential adversary.

As the 2007 Arms Control Association report "What Are Nuclear Weapons For?" suggests, the United States could move to a smaller force of 500 deployed and 500 non-deployed strategic warheads on a smaller, mainly submarine-based triad within the next few years. A 2010 study by three Air Force analysts in Strategic Studies Quarterly concludes that the United States could "draw down its nuclear arsenal to a relatively small number of survivable, reliable weapons dispersed among missile silos, submarines, and airplanes." They argue that such a force might number only 311 nuclear weapons.

Maintaining and modernizing U.S. strategic forces at current, higher levels is not only unnecessary, but prohibitively expensive. If Congress and the White House are serious about reducing defense expenditures by \$400 billion by 2023 to reduce the ballooning federal deficit, they should start by deferring or curtailing the Pentagon's ambitious plan to upgrade and replace the strategic triad, which is projected to exceed \$100 billion over the same period. [Arms Control Association, May 2011]

Air Force Experts: U.S. Could "Address Its Conceivable National Defense And Military Concerns With Only 311 Strategic Nuclear Weapons." In a May 23, 2010, New York Times op-ed, Gary Schaub Jr., an assistant professor of strategy at the Air War College, and James Forsyth Jr., a professor of strategy at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, wrote:

Last week, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton testified before the Senate to advocate approval of the so-called New Start treaty, signed by President Obama and President Dmitri Medvedev of Russia last month. The treaty's ceiling

of 1,550 warheads deployed on 700 missiles and bombers will leave us with fewer warheads than at any time since John F. Kennedy was president. Yet the United States could further reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons without sacrificing security. Indeed, we have calculated that the country could address its conceivable national defense and military concerns with only 311 strategic nuclear weapons. (While we are civilian Air Force employees, we speak only for ourselves and not the Pentagon.)

This may seem a trifling number compared with the arsenals built up in the cold war, but 311 warheads would provide the equivalent of 1,900 megatons of explosive power, or nine-and-a-half times the amount that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara argued in 1965 could incapacitate the Soviet Union by destroying "one-quarter to one-third of its population and about two-thirds of its industrial capacity."

Considering that we face no threat today similar to that of the Soviet Union 45 years ago, this should be more than adequate firepower for any defensive measure or, if need be, an offensive strike. And this would be true even if, against all expectations, our capacity was halved by an enemy's surprise first strike. In addition, should we want to hit an enemy without destroying its society, the 311 weapons would be adequate for taking out a wide range of "hardened targets" like missile silos or command-and-control bunkers.

The key to shrinking our nuclear arsenal so radically would be dispersing the 311 weapons on land, at sea and on airplanes to get the maximum flexibility and survivability.

[...]

While 311 is a radical cut from current levels, it is not the same as zero, nor is it a steppingstone to abandoning our nuclear deterrent. The idea of a nuclear-weapon-free world is not an option for the foreseeable future. Nuclear weapons make leaders vigilant and risk-averse. That their use is to be avoided does not render them useless. Quite the opposite: nuclear weapons might be the most politically useful weapons a state can possess. They deter adversaries from threatening with weapons of mass destruction the American homeland, United States forces abroad and our allies and friends. They also remove the incentive for our allies to acquire nuclear weapons for their own protection.

We need a nuclear arsenal. But we certainly don't need one that is as big, expensive and unnecessarily threatening to much of the world as the one we have now. [The New York Times, 5/23/10]

Nuclear Posture Review: "Our Most Pressing Security Challenge At Present Is Preventing Nuclear Proliferation And Nuclear Terrorism, For Which A Nuclear Force Of Thousands Of Weapons Has Little Relevance." According to the Defense Department's 2010 Nuclear Posture Review:

During the Cold War, our nuclear weapons policies and forces were designed to meet two core goals: to deter a massive nuclear or large-scale conventional, biological, or chemical attack by the Soviet Union and its allies; and to reassure our allies and partner that they

could count on us to carry out that mission effectively. At the peak of the Cold War, the United States had over 30,000 nuclear weapons, including thousands deployed in overseas locations on short-range delivery systems. The U.S. nuclear weapons production complex constantly developed new types of weapons.

Today, the reassurance mission remains, but the deterrence challenge is fundamentally different. While we must maintain stable deterrence with major nuclear weapons powers, the likelihood of major nuclear war has decline significantly; thus far fewer nuclear weapons are needed to meet our traditional deterrence and reassurance goals. Further, the United States today has the strongest conventional military forces in the world. Our close allies and partners field much of the rest of the world's military power. Moreover, our most pressing security challenge at present is preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism, for which a nuclear force of thousands of weapons has little relevance. [Defense.gov, Nuclear Posture Review Report, April 2010]

American And Russian Security Experts: Smaller Is Safer When It Comes To Our Nuclear Arsenal. In a September/October 2010 Foreign Affairs article headlined "Smaller and Safer: A New Plan for Nuclear Postures," Bruce Blair, president of the World Security Institute and Co-coordinator of Global Zero; Victor Esin, a retired Colonel General and former Chief of Staff of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces; Matthew McKinzie, a Senior Scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council; Valery Yarynich, a retired Colonel who served at the Center for Operational and Strategic Studies of the Russian General Staff; and Pavel Zolotarev, a retired Major General and former Section Head of the Defense Council of the Russian Federation, wrote:

The New START agreement did not reduce the amount of "overkill" in either country's arsenal. Nor did it alter another important characteristic of the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals: their launch-ready alert postures. The two countries' nuclear command, control, and communication systems, and sizable portions of their weapon systems, will still be poised for "launch on warning" -- ready to execute a mass firing of missiles before the quickest of potential enemy attacks could be carried out. This rapid-fire posture carries with it the risk of a launch in response to a false alarm resulting from human or technical error or even a malicious, unauthorized launch. Thus, under the New START treaty, the United States and Russia remain ready to inflict apocalyptic devastation in a nuclear exchange that would cause millions of casualties and wreak unfathomable environmental ruin.

In the next round of arms control negotiations, Washington and Moscow need to pursue much deeper cuts in their nuclear stockpiles and agree to a lower level of launch readiness. These steps would help put the world on a path to the elimination of nuclear weapons -- "global zero." And they can be taken while still maintaining a stable relationship of mutual deterrence between the United States and Russia, based on a credible threat of retaliation, and while allowing limited but adequate missile defenses against nuclear proliferators such as Iran and North Korea.

[...]

Many planners still contend that deterrence also requires the ability to retaliate against an opponent's leadership bunkers and nuclear installations, even empty missile silos. But this Cold War doctrine is out of date. Deterrence today would remain stable even if retaliation against only ten cities were assured. Furthermore, uncertainty and incomplete knowledge would make U.S. and Russian policymakers risk averse in a crisis rather than risk tolerant. So arsenals can safely be reduced much further than the New START level. But just how deeply can they be cut? And how can the reliance on a quick launch be eliminated while preserving strategic stability? To answer these questions, we created computer models that pitted U.S. and Russian strategic offensive forces against each other in simulated nuclear exchanges. We also modeled the thorny problem of missile defense systems to assess their impact on the stability of deterrence and to gauge at what warhead levels they become destabilizing.

[...]

Our modeling found that the United States and Russia could limit their strategic nuclear arsenals to a total level of 1,000 warheads each on no more than 500 deployed launchers without weakening their respective security. De-alerting these forces actually helped stabilize deterrence at these and lower levels. And the modeling showed that fairly extensive missile defense deployments would not upset this stability.

[...]

Once the New START agreement is approved by the U.S. Senate, the arms control process between the United States and Russia needs to continue moving forward. Washington and Moscow could easily reduce their nuclear forces to just 1,000 warheads apiece without any adverse consequences. They could also de-alert their nuclear forces, diminishing the risk of an accidental or unauthorized launch. Eventually, in concert with other nuclear states and after progress has been made on missile defense cooperation, they should be able to reduce their arsenals to 500 weapons each. Even after these deep cuts, hundreds of cities would still remain at risk of catastrophic destruction in the event of a nuclear war. [Foreign Affairs, September/October 2010, via CarnegieEndowment.org]

Under Secretary Of Defense Michèle Flournoy: "We Can Maintain Deterrence At Lower Levels Of Forces." From a January 5 Defense Department press briefing:

Q: Dr. Carter, I'd like to ask you about the nuclear arsenal. The strategy document says that it's impossible that our deterrence goals can be achieved with a smaller nuclear force. Could you elaborate on that? And is it still an open whether the department wants to preserve all legs of the nuclear triad?

ASHTON CARTER (Deputy Secretary of Defense): Surely you can. I'm going to ask Michèle to elaborate on that.

MICHÈLE FLOURNOY (Under Secretary of Defense): So I mean, I think the strategy is very clear, that we will continue to field a safe and secure and effective deterrent, but -- and

that we will continue to modernize and recapitalize as necessary. I do think it's that -- our judgment than we -- that we can maintain deterrence at lower levels of forces, but I will defer any discussion of specific programmatic details to the budget when it rolls out. [Defense.gov, 1/5/12]

Nuclear Expert Joseph Cirincione: "Rightsizing The Nuclear Force Would Strengthen U.S. Global Leadership, Enhance The Country's Ability To Deter New Nuclear Weapon States, [And] Accelerate Efforts To Prevent Nuclear Terrorism." In a February 2 Foreign Affairs article, Joseph Cirincione, President of Ploughshares Fund, a global security foundation, and an adjunct professor at the Georgetown University Graduate School of Foreign Service, wrote:

Obama could rewrite those policies to shrink the target list, eliminate the need to launch weapons in minutes, and make other common-sense improvements. For example, by dropping the requirement to launch approximately 1,000 weapons at targets within 20 minutes, he could reduce the number of submarines required on station, allowing for a secure submarine force of eight boats. That would save \$20 billion over ten years and \$120 billion over the life of the program. Delaying the new strategic bomber would save \$18 billion over ten years, and canceling it, \$68 billion over 20 to 30 years. Reducing the current arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles from 420 to 300 would save billions more, although no one is sure how much, because the government has never done what most businesses do routinely -- that is, cost out the options.

Whatever Obama decides will remain secret. But the results will speak for themselves in budget submissions, program schedules, and whether the United States accelerates reductions required under the New START treaty. Rightsizing the nuclear force would strengthen U.S. global leadership, enhance the country's ability to deter new nuclear weapon states, accelerate efforts to prevent nuclear terrorism, and greatly reduce the danger of the use of nuclear weapons from miscalculation, misunderstanding, or accident. It would make us all safer. More than budget decisions, these are fundamental security issues that tell the world a great deal about U.S. leadership, intentions, and values. Updating the nuclear posture from that of the Cold War era could be one of the most lasting legacies of the Obama presidency. He has already made promises; the time has come to deliver on them. [Foreign Affairs, 2/2/12]

Ploughshares Fund Director Of Policy And Government Affairs: "It's Time To Stop Spending Dollars That We Don't Have On Programs That We Don't Need And That Don't Make Us More Secure," Including Nuclear Weapons Programs. In an August 3, 2011, blog post, Joel Rubin, the Director of Policy and Government Affairs for the Ploughshares Fund, wrote:

As the dust settles on the debt ceiling deal, it's become clear that major cuts to defense spending have not only been approved in a bipartisan manner by Congress, but that even more are on the way. This means that the days of unlimited defense spending increases, where all systems can be purchased, are over.

So now is the time for tough choices to be made between defense programs that serve our warriors and those that we have maintained for too long due to bureaucratic, parochial or

ideological reasons. It's time to stop spending dollars that we don't have on programs that we don't need and that don't make us more secure.

And there is a clear target for such cutting: nuclear weapons. Making these cuts will fit neatly into the broader framework on defense cutting that this debt deal has created. [PloughShares.org, 8/3/11]

Vice Chairman Of The Joint Chiefs Of Staff Gen. James Cartwright Said "Nuclear Deterrence" Is No Longer An Effective Counter To Our Greatest National Security Threats. From a July 14, 2011, article published in Global Security Newswire:

The nation's second-ranking military officer on Thursday called for a broad reassessment of how to deter significant threats to the United States (see GSN, June 22).

A future national military strategy should strike a balance between fielding conventional weapons and nuclear arms, with the latter viewed as less usable against most threats, said Gen. James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Fresh planning should also account for the emerging roles played by missile defenses and cyber capabilities, he said.

Cartwright suggested, as well, that the future role of each leg of the nuclear triad -- bomber aircraft, ICBMs and submarine-launched missiles -- must be fundamentally re-examined so that desired capabilities and quantities are maintained, rather than determined by budget-cutting drills or political horse-trading.

"I'm advocating a conscious decision on: What is deterrence? How does it work?" the Marine Corps general told reporters at a breakfast Q&A session. A 21st century approach should also account for the role of nonmilitary forms of power and persuasion, such as economic and diplomatic tools, he said.

During the Cold War, the United States sought to balance its fielded atomic weapons against the Soviet arsenal in a standoff dubbed "mutual assured destruction," in which either side that initiated a nuclear war would risk a devastating response.

With the growing possibility today that the first modern detonation of a nuclear weapon could be at the hands of a terrorist rather than a foreign government, the game has changed, said Cartwright, who is slated to retire early next month after a nearly 40-year military career.

"Violent extremist organizations are very real" and have signaled interest in using weapons of mass destruction against the United States and its allies, he said. "It's not a nation-state you're dealing with [but] it's equally threatening. So we have to start to think about this a little more holistically."

Washington in the future might attempt, for example, to head off threats from major nuclear powers in one way, while using a different strategy to deter any smaller nuclear-capable adversary, he said.

"You may actually decide that you're going to stay [with] mutual assured destruction with one country, but the other one is not going to be that," Cartwright said at the event, sponsored by the Center for Media and Security. "You're going to have to have the capability ... to convince them that you are, in fact, capable" of hitting an adversary that contemplates using a nuclear weapon, and that such an adversary is "not going to win," he said.

[...]

"What is it that you do, when you get the president up in the middle of the night and you say, 'So-and-so is attacking. The only thing I've got that can get there for the next 24 hours or 48 hours is a nuclear weapon?'" Cartwright said.

"We have to find some way to get a range of action that allows us to be credible in those first few hours if we're not there" with military forces on the ground, and "allows us also to not have to start at the nuclear level," he said. [NTI.org, 7/14/11]

Even Conservative Politicians Have Called For Nuclear Weapons Cuts

Republican Sen. Tom Coburn Proposed Saving \$79 Billion And Improving National Security By Reducing U.S. Nuclear Force. From Senator Tom Coburn's (R-OK) July 2011 deficit reduction plan:

Reduce Nuclear Weapons Force Structure (\$79 Billion)

This option would reduce the size of the nuclear weapon stockpile to levels within the START treaty limits and make the following changes:

- Reduce the size of the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) force from 500 to 300.
- Maintain a 1,100 nuclear weapon reserve.
- Reduce the size of the ballistic nuclear submarine fleet from 14 to 11.
- Maintain 40 strategic bombers and delay the purchase of new bombers until the mid-2020s. [Coburn.Senate.gov, July 2011]

— M.F.B.