

Nuclear Weapons Budget Fact Sheet

March 18, 2013

Options for Reducing U.S. Nuclear Weapons Spending, 2013-2022

The diminishing role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense strategy and the need to cut military spending by up to \$1 trillion over the next decade require rethinking earlier plans to rebuild U.S. nuclear forces in the years ahead.

Ongoing U.S. and Russian nuclear force reductions can open the door to significant budgetary savings as the Department of Defense considers long-term, multi-billion dollar decisions about how many new missiles, submarines, and bombers the nation needs for the next 50 years. Overbuying now would have adverse budget implications down the road.

The U.S. Navy wants 12 new ballistic missile submarines with a lifetime cost of almost \$350 billion. The Air Force is seeking up to 100 new, nuclear-armed strategic bombers that would cost at least \$68 billion, as well as a new fleet of land-based ballistic missiles (price unknown). The Pentagon and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) have been pursuing a costly, \$10 billion plan for upgrading B61 nuclear bombs in Europe, which may no longer be there by the time the upgrades are finished.

The United States spends about \$31 billion annually, according to independent estimates, to support an arsenal of about 1,700 deployed strategic warheads and associated delivery systems--missiles, submarines, and bombers--and to maintain other non-deployed and non-strategic warheads in the active stockpile, which total approximately 5,000 weapons.

The 2010 New START Treaty will take the United States down to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads by 2018; Russia is already below that level. Other than Russia, the only potential U.S. adversary with

a long-range nuclear capability is China, which has no more than 50 to 75 single-warhead intercontinental ballistic missiles, according to the Pentagon.

After signing New START, President Obama said he would pursue a new treaty with Russia to further reduce strategic weapons, as well as seek new limits on tactical weapons and warheads in storage. According to recent news media reports, the administration has determined it can reduce U.S. strategic forces to 1,000-1,100, or about one-third below New START levels.

Below are options for reducing U.S. military

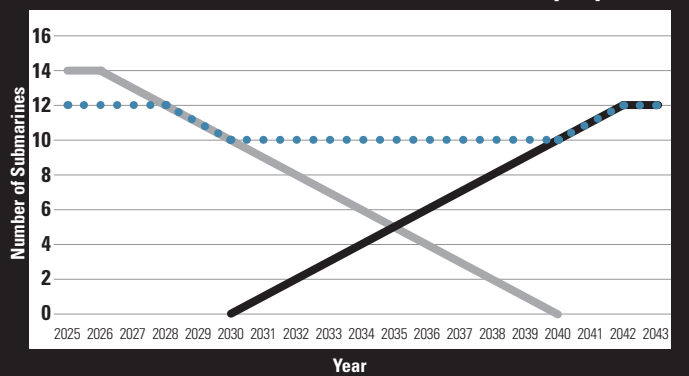
spending on nuclear weapons and related programs from FY 2013-2022. The baseline is the current Obama administration plan to maintain U.S. nuclear forces at New START levels, build a new generation of delivery systems (submarines, bombers, and long-range missiles), and extend the service life of nuclear warheads. We consider two budget-friendly alternatives to these plans, both of which would maintain equal warhead levels with Russia.

- **Option 1**, called “Cost-Effective New START,” would maintain the New START warhead level but field fewer strategic submarines and delay building new delivery systems, the most expensive part of the nuclear enterprise, saving about \$50 billion over 10 years. This option would scale back the B61 life extension



The Ohio-class ballistic-missile submarine USS Nevada (SSBN 733) returns to its homeport of Naval Base Kitsap-Bangor following a strategic deterrent patrol in July 2012.

Planned U.S. Ballistic Missile Submarine Deployment



— Ohio-class submarine
— SSBN(X)
• Total operational submarines

Note: Of the 14 Ohio-class subs, only 12 are operational at any time. All 12 planned SSBN(X) subs would be operational.

Source: U.S. Department of the Navy fiscal year 2013 budget request.

sion program and cancel the fourth phase of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) to missile defense, which the Pentagon cancelled on March 15.

- **Option 2**, called “New START II,” would reduce strategic deployed warheads to 1,000 as the administration is reportedly seeking to do in tandem with Russia, as well as delay building new delivery systems, saving about \$58 billion. This option would also delay the B61 life extension program.

STRATEGIC SUBMARINES

The Ohio-class replacement submarine program is the most expensive piece of the nuclear modernization plan (\$350 billion over its lifetime) and will consume a hefty portion of the Navy’s shipbuilding budget in the 2020s. The current fleet of 12 operational Ohio class submarines can be reduced to 8, and the planned purchase of 12 new Ohio class replacement subs (SSBNX) can also be reduced to 8. This would save an estimated \$18 billion over 10 years and still allow the Pentagon to deploy over 1,000 warheads on submarines as planned under New START. Procurement of the first SSBNX can be delayed until 2023, and its deployment delayed until 2033. Savings include personnel costs, procurement costs from pushing back the SSBNX purchase

dates, and operations and management costs saved by reducing the current Ohio class fleet.

10 YR. SAVINGS FOR SUBMARINES	
Cost-Effective New START	\$18B
New START II	\$18B

HEAVY BOMBERS

Under New START, the Pentagon plans to reduce the heavy bomber force from about 96 today to 60 (18 B2s and 42 B52s) by 2018. The B2 and B52 bombers are expected to operate into the 2050s and 2040s, respectively. Development of a new bomber, expected to cost about \$68 billion for 80-100 planes, can be delayed until the mid 2020s, saving \$18 billion over 10 years. A new long-range standoff missile and refueling tanker aircraft (KC-46A) are planned as well.

10 YR. SAVINGS FOR BOMBERS	
Cost-Effective New START	\$18B
New START II	\$18B

B61 LIFE EXTENSION PROGRAM (LEP)

A Pentagon review has projected that the program would cost \$10.4 billion to refurbish an estimated 400 B61s, both tactical and strategic, at roughly \$25 million per bomb. This is an increase of \$6 billion over the National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) original estimate. Yet the tactical bombs may no longer be deployed in Europe by the time the program is completed a decade from now, and upgrades to the strategic bombs can be scaled back. There is time to reevaluate the LEP plan and choose a more modest course, which could save an estimated \$5 billion or more, or to delay the program into the mid 2020s. NNSA has said that the program would be delayed under sequestration, providing time to review the program.

10 YR. SAVINGS FOR B61	
Cost-Effective New START	\$5B
New START II	\$10B

INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES (ICBMS)

Under New START, the Air Force plans to reduce the current Minuteman III ICBM fleet from 450 to 420-400, and can go lower. The ICBM recently underwent several modernization programs to extend its life expectancy, and the Air Force plans to sustain it through 2030, and possibly through 2075. Development of the new ICBM can be delayed until the mid 2020s without affecting operations of the current ICBM fleet. The new ICBM is in an early design phase and there is no official cost estimate. Independent estimates range from \$15-\$50 billion depending on how many new missiles are built and whether they would be silo-based or mobile.

10 YR. SAVINGS FOR ICBMS	
Cost-Effective New START	?
New START II	\$3B

EUROPEAN MISSILE DEFENSE

Although not a nuclear weapons program, cancellation of the fourth phase of the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) is warranted and may be necessary to achieve U.S-Russian agreement on reductions below New START levels. The Pentagon announced its decision to cancel the Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) IIB on March 15. A National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, which recommended canceling the program, estimated development of the SM-3 IIB would cost about \$9 billion; procurement costs are unknown. The Pentagon also announced it would deploy an additional 14 Ground-Based Interceptors in Alaska, at a cost of about \$1 billion.

10 YR. SAVINGS FOR SM-3 IIB	
Cost-Effective New START	\$9B
New START II	\$9B

For more information, please contact Tom Z. Collina at the Arms Control Association, tcollina@armscontrol.org

Options for U.S. Nuclear Weapons Budget Savings, 2013-2022

	Current New START	OPTION 1 Cost-Effective New START	10-year Savings	OPTION 2 New START II	10-year Savings
	1,550 deployed strat. warheads	1,550 deployed strat. warheads	Estimate, in billions	1,000 deployed strat. warheads	Estimate, in billions
SUBMARINES					
Current Ohio-Class Sub	12 operational, retire 2027-2040	8 operational	\$3	8 operational	\$3
New Ohio-Replacement Sub, SSBNX	12 subs by 2042, procure first boat 2021	8 operational, first boat procured 2023	\$15	8 operational, first boat procured 2023	\$15
	FY13: \$565m Total: \$100b				
BOMBERS					
Current B52 and B2	60 operational into 2040s	60	—	60	—
New Bomber	Build 80-100, begin devel.	Delay development to mid 2020s	\$18	Delay development to mid 2020s	\$18
	FY13: \$292m Total: \$68b				
WARHEADS					
B61 Bomb Life Extension	Upgrade 400 bombs	Scale back scope and number	\$5	Delay to mid 2020s	\$10
	FY13: \$369m Total: \$10b				
ICBMS					
Current Minuteman III ICBM	400 deployed into 2030s	400 deployed	—	300 deployed	\$3
New ICBM	Begin development	Delay development to mid 2020s	?	Delay development to mid 2020s	?
	FY13: \$12m				
MISSILE DEFENSE					
Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) IIB, EPAA Phase 4	Cancel	Cancel	\$9	Cancel	\$9
	FY13: \$213m				
TOTAL			\$50 billion		\$58 billion