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BRIEFS

Are U.S. Nuclear Forces Unaffordable?

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Since the Budget Control Act (BCA) was enacted in 2011, every area of the defense budget has come under increased scrutiny. The cost of nuclear forces in particular has received considerable attention because nearly every component of the triad is due for modernization. To execute these programs as currently planned, the Department of Defense (DoD) will need to increase funding for U.S. nuclear forces well above recent levels, creating additional pressure on an already-strained defense budget. This has led some to conclude that nuclear forces are "unaffordable." In this preview of a forthcoming study, Todd Harrison and Evan Braden Montgomery estimate the cost of U.S. nuclear forces over the next 25 years. While costs are projected to grow over the next decade due to a "bow wave" of nuclear modernization programs, they conclude that the search for savings in nuclear forces continues to be a "hunt for small potatoes."