



STUDIES

Sustaining the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent: The LRSO and GBSD

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Resources: Forces & Capabilities

The threat of nuclear attack by a great power or a rogue state is a major reason why every U.S. administration since the end of the Cold War has validated the need to maintain a safe, secure, and credible nuclear triad. Russia maintains a large stockpile of nuclear warheads and continues to adhere to military doctrine that indicates it might be willing to use nuclear weapons to coerce the United States and its allies in a crisis. Both Russia and China are funding multiple programs to modernize their nuclear arsenals, and the proliferation of advanced military technologies has allowed North Korea to fast-track its nuclear weapons development program.

Given this context, CSBA's new report assesses arguments that have been made for and against replacing DoD's nuclear Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) with the Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) weapon, and modernizing its Minuteman III ICBM force with the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). DoD has invested hundreds of millions of dollars to extend ALCMs and Minuteman IIIs far past their original planned service lives. Today, it is increasingly apparent that these Cold War-era weapon systems will not meet future requirements, and further delaying their replacements could result in ALCM and Minuteman III inventories falling below the level needed to sustain the U.S. strategic deterrent posture.