



Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

STUDIES

Spending on US Strategic Nuclear Forces: Plans and Options for the 21st Century

September 1, 2006

The United States currently possess an arsenal of about 3,950 “operationally deployed” strategic nuclear warheads. These weapons are deployed on intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and long-range bombers. These weapon systems are capable of striking targets located anywhere on the globe, and causing enormous destruction. The explosive power of the individual warheads carried by these systems ranges from as little as 0.3 kilotons (equivalent to 300 tons of TNT) to as much as 1.2 megatons (equivalent to 1.2 million tons of TNT). Under Bush Administration plans, the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear weapons will be reduced to 1,700-2,200 warheads by the end of 2012.

In addition to these operationally-deployed strategic nuclear weapons, the United States today has some 1,300 other active (i.e., ready to use) strategic nuclear weapons, as well as 500 active non-strategic (i.e., short-range) nuclear weapons, and 4,250 inactive nuclear warheads. Thus, altogether the United States currently has some 10,000 nuclear weapons.

For 2006, the Department of Defense (DoD) has been provided about \$15.5 billion (fiscal year 2006 dollars) to modernize, operate and support its nuclear offensive strategic forces. In addition, the Department of Energy (DoE), which develops, produces and maintains the nuclear warheads themselves, has been provided \$17 billion for defense-related activities (excluding \$1.1 billion for DoE non-proliferation programs).

Other related programs and activities, including non-strategic nuclear forces, ballistic missile defenses, air defenses, nuclear command, control, communications, and intelligence (C3I) capabilities, and various (DoE and other) non-proliferation activities, have been budgeted roughly \$21.7 billion. Thus, altogether, annual funding for nuclear-related forces and activities currently amounts to about \$54 billion.