

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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**FACT SHEET: Nuclear Weapons Employment Strategy of the United States**

Today, the President announced new guidance that aligns U.S. nuclear policies to the 21st century security environment. This is the latest in a series of concrete steps the President has made to advance his Prague agenda and the long-term goal of achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

Following the release of the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and ratification of the New START Treaty, the President directed the Department of Defense (DOD), the Department of State, Department of Energy, and the intelligence community, to conduct a detailed analysis of U.S. nuclear deterrence requirements and policy in order to ensure U.S. nuclear posture and plans are aligned to address today's security environment. This review was based on the principle that a robust assessment of today's security environment and resulting Presidential guidance must drive nuclear employment planning, force structure, and posture decisions.

The President's new guidance:

- affirms that the United States will maintain a credible deterrent, capable of convincing any potential adversary that the adverse consequences of attacking the United States or our allies and partners far outweigh any potential benefit they may seek to gain through an attack.
- directs DOD to align U.S. defense guidance and military plans with the policies of the NPR, including that the United States will only consider the use of nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances to defend the vital interests of the United States or its allies and partners. The guidance narrows U.S. nuclear strategy to focus on only those objectives and missions that are necessary for deterrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In so doing, the guidance takes further steps toward reducing the role of nuclear weapons in our security strategy.
- directs DOD to strengthen non-nuclear capabilities and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks.
- directs DOD to examine and reduce the role of launch under attack in contingency planning, recognizing that the potential for a surprise, disarming nuclear attack is exceedingly remote. While the United States will retain a

launch under attack capability, DOD will focus planning on the more likely 21<sup>st</sup> century contingencies.

- codifies an alternative approach to hedging against technical or geopolitical risk, which will lead to more effective management of the nuclear weapons stockpile.
- reaffirms that as long as nuclear weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal that guarantees the defense of the U.S. and our allies and partners. The President has supported significant investments to modernize the nuclear enterprise and maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal. The administration will continue seeking congressional funding support for the enterprise.

After a comprehensive review of our nuclear forces, the President has determined that we can ensure the security of the United States and our allies and partners and maintain a strong and credible strategic deterrent while safely pursuing up to a one-third reduction in deployed strategic nuclear weapons from the level established in the New START Treaty. The U.S. intent is to seek negotiated cuts with Russia so that we can continue to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures.

This analysis did not set out to address weapons forward deployed in Europe in support of NATO. The role of nuclear weapons in NATO was examined as part of the last year's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review, which affirmed Allies' support for further U.S.-Russian nuclear reductions, and underscored that any changes in NATO's nuclear posture must be an Alliance decision.

As we continue to implement the NPR, we are focused on maintaining and improving strategic stability with both Russia and China.

In sum, this review was essential to advance the policies laid out in the NPR. The resulting strategy will maintain strategic stability with Russia and China, strengthen regional deterrence, and reassure U.S. allies and partners, while laying the groundwork for negotiations with Russia on how we can mutually and verifiably reduce our strategic and nonstrategic nuclear stockpiles and live up to our commitments under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The President has directed DOD to use the new guidance to begin the process of updating and aligning its directives and contingency plans in order for this policy to be implemented over the course of the next year.

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