Negative: GBSD / ICBM Upgrade - Good

***Resolved: The United States federal government should considerably decrease its military commitments***

**By “Coach Vance” Trefethen**

Summary: Affirmative cancels an existing plan the federal government has to upgrade Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs – land-based missiles that fire nuclear bombs a long distance around the globe to a foreign target). The current ICBM missiles are known as “Minuteman 3,” and they are considered obsolete by the Pentagon and in need of replacement with newer technology. The new replacement is called “GBSD” (Ground Based Strategic Deterrent). The case argues that the cost is excessive and wasteful and that the upgrades are destabilizing to foreign relations (presumably with Russia?). US nuclear weapons policy relies on ICBMs, bomber aircraft and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) as delivery vehicles for our nuclear weapons, a strategy known as the “nuclear triad.” Negative will argue that canceling the land-based ICBM upgrade will weaken or destroy the land component of the triad and therefore present unacceptable risks to US national security.

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COUNTERPLAN – Cut other federal spending to pay for the ICBM replacement GBSD 3

Cost of the Minuteman replacement is $95.8 billion [probably in AFF’s evidence but just in case you need it…] 3

Timeline for Minuteman replacement is 10 years or more 3

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Negative: GBSD / ICBM Upgrade - good

COUNTERPLAN – Cut other federal spending to pay for the ICBM replacement GBSD

Cost of the Minuteman replacement is $95.8 billion [probably in AFF’s evidence but just in case you need it…]

AMERICAN MILITARY NEWS 2020. (journalist Liz George) 23 Oct 2020 “Pentagon estimates $95 billion cost for new ICBM nukes to replace Minuteman III” <https://americanmilitarynews.com/2020/10/pentagon-estimates-95-billion-cost-of-new-icbm-nukes-to-replace-minuteman-iii/>

The Pentagon’s cost estimate for a new fleet of nuclear missiles to replace the Minuteman 3 arsenal has been raised to $95.8 billion — an increase of about $10 billion dollars from 2016 estimates, The Associated Press [reported](https://apnews.com/article/politics-e4b80421be5dba5c5f5a162e55ac0d94) Monday.

Timeline for Minuteman replacement is 10 years or more

RAND Corporation 2014 (nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis; researched by Lauren Caston, Robert S. Leonard, Christopher A. Mouton, Chad J. R. Ohlandt, S. Craig Moore, Raymond E. Conley, Glenn Buchan under contract with the US Air Force) published in 2014, no month given in the publication date. “The Future of the U.S. Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Force” <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/MG1200/MG1210/RAND_MG1210.pdf>

Although the ongoing DoD Service Life Extension Programs (SLEPs) hope to enable the Minuteman III force, which has been in service since the 1970s, to serve until approximately 2030, it is important to begin thinking now about the necessary research, development, and testing of a new missile, as it could easily take a decade or more to field a new system

Dept. of Education is a great place to cut the federal budget

Arizona Rep. Andy Biggs quoted by journalist Alex Newman 2019 31 Jan 2019 “Lawmakers Introduce Bill to Shut U.S. Department of Education” THE NEW AMERICAN <https://thenewamerican.com/lawmakers-introduce-bill-to-shut-u-s-department-of-education/>

Representative Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.) highlighted the disastrous effects of the federalized “education” system. “Education of our students should lie primarily with parents, teachers, and state and local officials who know how to meet their individual needs best,” he explained in a statement. “Since its inception, the Department of Education has grown into an unrecognizable federal beast, and its policies have helped foster Common Core across the country. It is time the one-size-fits-all approach by the federal government is ended and authority is returned to the local level.”

Let’s fund the missile upgrade by cutting the US Dept. of Education budget (currently $64 billion/year).

US Dept. of Education 2019. “FISCAL YEAR 2020 BUDGET SUMMARY”. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget20/summary/20summary.pdf>

The President’s fiscal year 2020 Budget Request (the Request) includes $64.0 billion in new discretionary Budget Authority for the Department of Education, a $7.1 billion or a 10.0 percent reduction below the fiscal year 2019 appropriation.

Solvency: 16% ongoing cut in the Dept of Education would raise over $10 billion/year

That’s more than enough to pay for a $95 billion program over 10 years or more. This completely solves the Affirmative’s harm of “wasted money” while maintaining US national defense and continuing the Status Quo missile upgrade.

HARMS / SIGNIFICANCE

1. Upgrades aren’t destabilizing and numbers are declining

Since end of Cold War, US and Russia have both been modernizing nuclear weapons and reducing their numbers to maintain a stable balance

RAND Corporation 2014 (nonprofit institution that helps improve policy and decisionmaking through research and analysis; researched by Lauren Caston, Robert S. Leonard, Christopher A. Mouton, Chad J. R. Ohlandt, S. Craig Moore, Raymond E. Conley, Glenn Buchan under contract with the US Air Force) published in 2014, no month given in the publication date. “The Future of the U.S. Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Force” <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/MG1200/MG1210/RAND_MG1210.pdf>

With the end of the Soviet Union, the intensity of the Cold War competition in strategic nuclear forces at the highest levels has diminished, and, although both Russia and the United States continue to maintain strategic forces that are much larger than those of other current nuclear powers, these numbers are greatly reduced from Cold War days. Both the United States and Russia have also continued to modernize their strategic forces, although much less aggressively than during the Cold War, while seeking to maintain a generally stable nuclear balance. They have also continued to reduce the overall size of their strategic forces through a series of nuclear arms control agreements aimed at maintaining the same overall stable balance between them at lower force levels.

The only destabilizing upgrades are the ones being done in Russia and China that we’re failing to keep up with

[Patty-Jane Geller](https://www.heritage.org/staff/patty-jane-geller) 2020. (Policy Analyst, Nuclear Deterrence and Missile Defense at Heritage Foundation) 28 Apr 2020 “Nuclear Modernization Is Essential Business. Don’t Let Coronavirus Shut It Down.” <https://www.heritage.org/missile-defense/commentary/nuclear-modernization-essential-business-dont-let-coronavirus-shut-it>

This promise of retaliation is precisely why our adversaries have calculated time after time against using nuclear weapons—it’s not because they feel it would be immoral. But here’s the problem: Our nuclear deterrence is deteriorating from old age, even as Russia and China modernize and expand their nuclear forces. Every single element of the U.S. nuclear deterrent has passed its projected life span. As just one example, the air-launched cruise missile carried by the B-52 bomber is now more than twenty-five years past its design life. Meanwhile, both China and Russia have nearly completed updating their nuclear arsenals. China is expected to double its nuclear stockpile in the next decade. And both Beijing and Moscow continue to develop advanced capabilities—such as hypersonic missiles with intercontinental-range and ICBMs tipped with multiple warheads—that threaten the United States.

2. Cost of ICBM upgrades isn’t a problem

The US can afford to modernize its ICBM force and the price is well worth it

Gen. C. Robert Kehler 2019 (retired US Air Force general; f*ormer Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*) 20 Aug 2019 “The U.S. Needs a New ICBM Now” (brackets in original) <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/08/20/the_us_needs_a_new_icbm_now_114680.html>

**The U.S. can afford to modernize its ICBM force.** Excessive cost is frequently cited as a reason to delay or reject ICBM modernization. Triad and nuclear C3 [command, control, and communications] modernization costs money, but the programs are clearly affordable given the high priority of nuclear deterrence and the consequences of its failure. As General Mark Milley, then-Chief of Staff of the Army, has said: “The only thing more expensive than deterrence is actually fighting a war, and the only thing more expensive than fighting a war is fighting one and losing one.” Recapitalizing the triad should not be a competition for resources among its legs (nor a competition with conventional force needs); rather it should be a recognition of the synergistic contribution of all three legs (and nuclear C3), the top national priority of nuclear deterrence, and an appreciation that investment in nuclear modernization represents a small fraction of defense spending (between 6-7% of the DOD budget at its height according to a variety of open sources). There is room in the annual defense budget for ICBM modernization; if not, Congress should fund the triad and nuclear C3 modernization separately as a national program outside the regular defense budget.

Cost of nuclear modernization is well worth it because of the national security implications

[Patty-Jane Geller](https://www.heritage.org/staff/patty-jane-geller) 2020. (Policy Analyst, Nuclear Deterrence and Missile Defense at Heritage Foundation) 28 Apr 2020 “Nuclear Modernization Is Essential Business. Don’t Let Coronavirus Shut It Down.” <https://www.heritage.org/missile-defense/commentary/nuclear-modernization-essential-business-dont-let-coronavirus-shut-it>

The Defense Department may need to make changes to its budget due to the pandemic. And, of course, finding ways to reduce the costs of nuclear modernization would be a welcome development. But we must not allow opponents of nuclear deterrence to use the pandemic as an excuse to advance their categorical anti-nuclear agenda. Rather, in a time of global uncertainty, there is no more important national security priority than ensuring a strong nuclear deterrent.

3. A/T “Spending on GBSD hurts the economy”

Defense spending stimulates the economy

Dr. Martin Feldstein 2009. (PhD; Harvard University economist and chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors) Full Statement for the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee 7 Jan 2009 <http://www2.nber.org/feldstein/EconomicStimulusandEconomicGrowthStatement.html>

Since the defense budget is as large as all of the other discretionary spending combined, it is surprising that defense is not proposed as a part of the overall stimulus package. It is surprising also to read in the press that there will be reductions in military spending because, according to those stories, of the weakness of the economy. That logic is exactly backwards. The overall weakness of demand in the economy implies that the next two years are a time when military spending and other forms of spending should rise.

4. A/T “ICBMs not needed today / Cold War is over”

ICBMs are just as critical today as they were during the Cold War

Gen. C. Robert Kehler 2019 (retired US Air Force general; f*ormer Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*) 20 Aug 2019 “The U.S. Needs a New ICBM Now” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/08/20/the_us_needs_a_new_icbm_now_114680.html>

In my view, delaying or deferring ICBM modernization threatens the enduring value of the triad and risks compromising the foundation of U.S. strategic deterrence and allied assurance. Land-based ICBMs remain as critical today for these objectives as they were during the Cold War, and the need to retain and recapitalize them without delay is based on the sound strategic contributions they make.

SOLVENCY

1. Canceling GBSD won’t save money

Cost of maintenance on existing Minuteman ICBMs, to keep them working without going to GBSD, will be as high or higher than a new system

Sydney J. Freedberg 2017 (journalist) 2 Aug 2020 “[New ICBM Cheaper Than Upgraded Minuteman: Boeing On GBSD](https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/new-icbm-cheaper-than-upgraded-minuteman-boeing-on-gbsd/)” <https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/new-icbm-cheaper-than-upgraded-minuteman-boeing-on-gbsd/>

A [brand-new ICBM](https://breakingdefense.com/tag/ground-based-strategic-deterrent/) may cost the nation [more than $85 billion](https://breakingdefense.com/2016/09/new-icbms-could-cost-way-above-85b-capes-morin/), but keeping the geriatric Minuteman will cost even more. That’s according to Boeing, the aerospace giant that began building the original Minuteman I in [1958](http://www.boeing.com/defense/weapons/minuteman-iii/index.page) and has maintained the much-modified Minuteman III since [1970](http://www.boeing.com/defense/weapons/minuteman-iii/index.page). Sure, the company can reset the odometer on the Minuteman with yet another service life extension program (SLEP), Boeing strategic deterrence chief Frank McCall told reporters this morning. But it’s still a 1950s design upgraded over six decades with a mix of technologies it was never intended to accommodate. While parts of the guidance and propulsion systems date to [1993](http://www.boeing.com/defense/weapons/minuteman-iii/index.page), for example, some parts are so old the original manufacturers have long since gone out of business. That forces the Air Force to expensively reinvent the wheel – or, say, a 1961-vintage mechanical coding device. So for about the same price as a rebuilt Minuteman, McCall told us, Boeing would rather build you an all-new missile.

Believe it: GBSD is cheaper than maintaining the Minuteman

Sydney J. Freedberg 2017 (journalist) 2 Aug 2020 “[New ICBM Cheaper Than Upgraded Minuteman: Boeing On GBSD](https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/new-icbm-cheaper-than-upgraded-minuteman-boeing-on-gbsd/)” <https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/new-icbm-cheaper-than-upgraded-minuteman-boeing-on-gbsd/> (brackets added)

But as expensive as GBSD was, [chief of Strategic Command, General John] Hyten emphasized, it was [still cheaper](http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2017/7/23/air-force-on-a-long-road-to-replace-minuteman-iii) than re-re-rebuilding the Minuteman: “You will have ended up replacing just about everything on the missile, which will cost you more (than GBSD), but nobody believes me.” Now that we’ve heard more of the details from [Boeing](https://breakingdefense.com/tag/boeing/), maybe we will.

A/T “Submarines are a good replacement”

Subs are too vulnerable, there are only 4 of them at sea at any time, not as responsive, and not suited for many limited nuclear operations

Peter V. Pry 2020 (*director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA*) 6 Oct 2020 “Loss of ICBMs: Biden will almost certainly abolish this indispensable deterrent” <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/6/loss-of-icbms-biden-will-almost-certainly-abolish-/> (Note: MIRV = multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles. It means you fire one missile and it can drop 3 or 4 bombs on different targets)

SSBNs [nuclear subs] are far more vulnerable than ICBMs to surprise attack, as two-thirds of U.S. missile submarines are berthed at two ports, where they could be destroyed by nuclear or conventional weapons, highly tempting targets as every submarine sunk eliminates 20 strategic missiles and 60-80 warheads. SSBNs at sea are supposed to be “invulnerable.” Assumptions about “invulnerability” are often the first fatalities in war. Surprise attack is the nightmare scenario — most likely to happen because it maximizes U.S. vulnerabilities — against which 400 ICBMs that can launch-on-tactical-warning are sentinels. Surprise attack would find at sea just 4 U.S. SSBNs — none responsive as ICBMs. Most submarine missiles are MIRVed with 3-4 warheads, unsuited for many limited nuclear operations. SSBNs are designed never to be used, a survivable reserve at sea intended to deter attack on U.S. cities.

Submarines may be increasingly vulnerable

Constance Baroudos 2016 (M.A.; *Vice President of the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank*) 18 Feb 2016 “New ICBMs: Necessary to Secure the American Strategic Deterrent” <https://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/new-icbms-necessary-to-secure-the-american-strategic-deterrent/>

While nuclear submarines are undetectable in the ocean today, a technological breakthrough could occur that would make the oceans less opaque – especially with the fast pace at which technology now develops. The sea-based leg might be severely weakened and could be at risk of being destroyed by conventional forces. Thus, the land leg would increase in significance as would any remaining bombers. Finally, eliminating ICBMs may motivate potential adversaries to try even harder to develop the capability to locate nuclear submarines underwater to put America’s second-strike capability at risk.

A/T “Aircraft / bombers are a good replacement”

Slow, vulnerable to air defenses, could all be destroyed in surprise attack

Peter V. Pry 2020 (*director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA*) 6 Oct 2020 “Loss of ICBMs: Biden will almost certainly abolish this indispensable deterrent” <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/6/loss-of-icbms-biden-will-almost-certainly-abolish-/>

Bombers can deliver nuclear or conventional weapons and can be recalled. But they need to be generated, are the slowest delivery system, might not penetrate air defenses, and could all be destroyed on their 3 bases with just a few warheads in a surprise attack.

Bomber aircraft are vulnerable

Constance Baroudos 2016 (M.A.; *Vice President of the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank*) 18 Feb 2016 “New ICBMs: Necessary to Secure the American Strategic Deterrent” <https://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/new-icbms-necessary-to-secure-the-american-strategic-deterrent/>

There are three bases for nuclear-capable bombers and two bases for ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs); that makes a total of five targets on the American homeland. If an adversary were to launch a nuclear attack, some SSBNs would be safe at sea carrying up to 24 Trident missiles with multiple warheads on each and could launch an attack on an enemy or combination of enemies. However, bombers are not undetectable and can be destroyed with conventional forces, thus the air leg would be vulnerable and possibly compromised.

Bombers aren’t on alert – that makes ICBMs even more critical

Gen. C. Robert Kehler 2019 (retired US Air Force general; f*ormer Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*) 20 Aug 2019 “The U.S. Needs a New ICBM Now” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/08/20/the_us_needs_a_new_icbm_now_114680.html>

ICBMs have additional importance today that wasn’t envisioned during the Cold War. Not only is today’s triad far smaller than during the Cold War, it is configured differently than it was at that time. At the end of the Cold War, President George H. W. Bush removed heavy bombers and supporting aerial refueling tankers from their daily nuclear commitment, which means on a day-to-day basis the bomber leg of the triad is no longer loaded and poised to take off with nuclear weapons. In essence, the U.S. now relies on a relatively small dyad of ICBMs and SSBNs to meet daily deterrence requirements. The U.S. still has the classic nuclear triad with all its benefits, but only when the president orders the bombers to be readied for nuclear use (“generated” in nuclear parlance). ICBMs and SSBNs together have allowed the bombers and tankers to be released for use by military commanders with great effect in a wide variety of conventional missions. This has raised the importance of ICBMs as a mainstay of deterrence, as a hedge against unforeseen technical problems or geopolitical events, and as an enabler for other operational needs such as adjusting at-sea operations of the SSBN fleet when needed for major submarine maintenance or modernization.

Putting the bombers back on nuclear alert wouldn’t be a good solution either

Gen. C. Robert Kehler 2019 (retired US Air Force general; f*ormer Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*) 20 Aug 2019 “The U.S. Needs a New ICBM Now” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/08/20/the_us_needs_a_new_icbm_now_114680.html>

Significantly, bombers and tankers re-committed to the day-to-day nuclear deterrence mission would not be available to project conventional military power (an essential role to counter adversaries deploying anti-access strategies); nor would they be available to provide conventional options intended to reduce the role of nuclear weapons and strengthen strategic deterrence below the nuclear threshold.

A/T “Experts advocate abolishing ICBMs”

They’re ignoring history, and their assumptions need to be challenged

Peter V. Pry 2020 (*director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA*) 6 Oct 2020 “Loss of ICBMs: Biden will almost certainly abolish this indispensable deterrent” <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/6/loss-of-icbms-biden-will-almost-certainly-abolish-/>

President Clinton’s former Secretary of Defense, William Perry, and many other Democrat defense professionals likely to influence a Biden administration, vociferously advocate banning ICBMs. (See the report “Rethinking Land-Based Nuclear Missiles” Union of Concerned Scientists: June 22, 2020). Democrats now subscribe to nuclear deterrence minimalism, which theory assumes that only a small number of SSBNs are needed to deter nuclear war, and that nothing can go wrong with their warheads, missiles or the submarines — assumptions which defy all of military history. The nuclear Triad was invented by the Great Generation who survived and won World War II where, for the Allies at the beginning, confidently propounded pre-war military theories and sophisticated weapons went wrong. France’s “impregnable” Maginot Line was rendered obsolete by Nazi Germany’s Blitzkrieg strategy. Allied infantry and tanks were overwhelmed and outclassed by Axis panzer divisions. Battleships were rendered obsolete by aircraft carriers at Pearl Harbor. U.S. torpedoes did not work, but dive bombers miraculously saved the day at Midway. As in World War II, a lot can go wrong with the best laid plans and weapons in a nuclear World War III.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Wasted money

Link: “NOT” doing GBSD will cost more than doing it because Minuteman is so expensive to maintain

Sydney J. Freedberg 2017 (journalist) 2 Aug 2020 “[New ICBM Cheaper Than Upgraded Minuteman: Boeing On GBSD](https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/new-icbm-cheaper-than-upgraded-minuteman-boeing-on-gbsd/)” <https://breakingdefense.com/2017/08/new-icbm-cheaper-than-upgraded-minuteman-boeing-on-gbsd/>

Most important, perhaps, the new missile would be designed from the start to last for decades – until at least the 2070s – while Minuteman was originally meant to last just 10 years. Between the open architecture and the build-to-last philosophy, [Boeing strategic deterrence chief Frank] McCall said, GBSD would be cheaper to maintain over the long haul than Minuteman.

Impact: Turn the harms

Whatever impact AFF’s harm of “wasting money” has, it gets worse if you vote Affirmative.

2. Lost deterrence and risk of nuclear war

Link: ICBMs (land-based) are the most important weapon in the nuclear Triad (Triad = land-based, bomber aircraft and submarines)

Peter V. Pry 2020 (*director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security, served as chief of staff on the Congressional EMP Commission, and on the staffs of the House Armed Service Committee and the CIA*) 6 Oct 2020 “Loss of ICBMs: Biden will almost certainly abolish this indispensable deterrent” <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/oct/6/loss-of-icbms-biden-will-almost-certainly-abolish-/>

ICBMs are the most important weapon in the U.S. nuclear Triad — faster, more combat-ready, and more responsive than strategic bombers and missile submarines. Everyday, anytime, in the few minutes required to receive an Emergency Action Message and turn two keys, [U.S. ICBMs](https://www.washingtontimes.com/topics/us-icbms/) can launch 400 of the most powerful, accurate, effective nuclear warheads, delivering them anywhere in 30 minutes or less.

Link & Brink: Canceling GBSD would have “grave” security consequences by dangerously diminishing deterrence

[Patty-Jane Geller](https://www.heritage.org/staff/patty-jane-geller) 2020. (Policy Analyst, Nuclear Deterrence and Missile Defense at Heritage Foundation) 28 Apr 2020 “Nuclear Modernization Is Essential Business. Don’t Let Coronavirus Shut It Down.” <https://www.heritage.org/missile-defense/commentary/nuclear-modernization-essential-business-dont-let-coronavirus-shut-it>

As China’s lack of desire to rise peacefully becomes more apparent, so does the importance of U.S. nuclear modernization programs remaining on schedule. If attempts to delay modernization succeed, the security consequences could be grave. For example, there is “no margin” for another life extension for our aging Minuteman III missiles. Either the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent goes forward, producing replacements, or our nuclear deterrent is dangerously diminished.

Impact: Risk of nuclear war. Upgrading to the new ICBM system is “essential” to preventing nuclear war

Constance Baroudos 2016 (M.A.; *Vice President of the Lexington Institute, a public policy think tank*) 18 Feb 2016 “New ICBMs: Necessary to Secure the American Strategic Deterrent” <https://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/new-icbms-necessary-to-secure-the-american-strategic-deterrent/>

Deterrence is effective because it causes the enemy to fear a massive retaliatory response; ICBMs in particular ensure an adversary’s objectives are beyond reach because they are on alert and cannot be destroyed by conventional forces. Without ICBMs, execution of the president’s response to a nuclear first strike might be delayed and the challenge of disarming America in a surprise attack would be greatly simplified. A new ICBM is an expensive but essential investment that will prevent a potential aggressor from launching a nuclear first strike and ensure these fearsome weapons are never used.

Impact: National security and nuclear war. Credible deterrence with ICBMs is essential to prevent nuclear attack and uphold US national security

Gen. C. Robert Kehler 2019 (retired US Air Force general; f*ormer Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*) 20 Aug 2019 “The U.S. Needs a New ICBM Now” <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/08/20/the_us_needs_a_new_icbm_now_114680.html>

The U.S. faces far more diverse security problems and uncertainty than it did during the Cold War and the threats are growing, including nuclear. Russia and China seek to change the international order and have aggressively modernized their nuclear arsenals as part of strategies designed to diminish U.S. power and prestige, coerce our allies, and reduce our global influence. North Korea has acquired nuclear weapons and others have expressed interest in pursuing nuclear weapons programs. The great paradox of the nuclear age remains with us; in order to prevent the use of nuclear weapons our deterrence threats must be credible. Along with the rest of the triad, ICBMs continue to provide credible deterrence that ensures our national security as well as the security of our allies and partners.

3. Perception of weakness

Failing to replace aging missile system creates a perception of weakness that increases threats to world peace and risk of nuclear conflict

[Patty-Jane Geller](https://www.heritage.org/staff/patty-jane-geller) 2020. (Policy Analyst, Nuclear Deterrence and Missile Defense at Heritage Foundation) 28 Apr 2020 “Nuclear Modernization Is Essential Business. Don’t Let Coronavirus Shut It Down.” <https://www.heritage.org/missile-defense/commentary/nuclear-modernization-essential-business-dont-let-coronavirus-shut-it>

Deterrence depends on our adversaries perceiving that our nuclear warheads and delivery platforms will work as intended. If the United States fails to replace aging warheads or timed-out missiles, adversaries might doubt they would actually produce an unacceptable amount of damage. Further, the perception of weakness may embolden our adversaries. China might view the time as right to invade Taiwan, or Russia might invade a Baltic state. These calculations—which are not at all implausible—could drag the United States into a nuclear conflict.

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