



The United States' Nuclear Inventory

The nuclear age began on July 16, 1945, when the United States [tested](#) the first atomic bomb. Less than a month later, the United States would become the only nation to use nuclear weapons in a conflict, dropping atomic bombs on [Hiroshima and Nagasaki](#). At its peak, the United States had [more than 31,000](#) nuclear weapons in its stockpile. Through various arms control agreements and unilateral reductions, the United States has a total inventory of around [5,550](#) nuclear warheads. These weapons are deployed on air, sea, and land platforms in what is referred to as "[The Triad](#)."

Since the end of the Cold War, each U.S. President has directed their administration to create a Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) outlining the role of U.S. nuclear weapons. President Trump's NPR states that America's nuclear forces are "[directed](#) toward deterring aggression and preserving peace." While some of the content in the 2018 NPR is similar to past reviews — including the policy of ambiguity over when the United States would use nuclear weapons — there is a renewed emphasis on the role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. national security strategy, and a call for "supplemental capabilities" in the form of new low-yield weapons.

How Many?

The United States' total [estimated](#) nuclear inventory is 5,177, with around 3,700 active warheads in the stockpile and another 1,477 retired warheads awaiting dismantlement. Under the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty ([New START](#)), the United States is allowed 1,550 nuclear warheads on 800 strategic launchers, only 700 of which can be deployed.

Air

The U.S. Air Force operates a fleet of [20 deployed](#) B-2 bombers and 46 deployed B-52 bombers. The B-2 bombers can carry 16 gravity bombs, while the B-52 bombers carry 20 cruise missiles, each equipped with one warhead. The F-15 and F-16 fighter aircrafts are dual-capable and can carry the B61 gravity bomb. The United States is in the process of modernizing its nuclear-capable aircraft with the F-35 and B-21 Raider.

Sea

The U.S. Navy has [14 Ohio-class](#) ballistic missile submarines, eight of which operate out of Bangor, Washington, and six of which operate out of Kings Bay, Georgia. Each submarine can carry up to 20 [Trident II D5](#) ballistic missiles. Each Trident missile can carry [up to eight](#) nuclear warheads, but usually carry four to five for an average of 90 warheads per submarine. The warheads are either the 90-kiloton W76-1 or the 455-kiloton W88. A small number of W76-2 low-yield warheads have also [been deployed](#) on some Ohio-class submarines.

Land

The United States has [400 Minuteman III](#) intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) stationed in silos in the upper Midwest and Rocky Mountain areas. Each ICBM carries one warhead, either a W87 or W78. The Minuteman III missiles underwent a multi-billion dollar modernization program in 2015, extending the service life of these missiles to 2030. The Air Force would like to [replace](#) the Minuteman IIIs with the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). The proposed program would cost more than \$100 billion and consist of [666 missiles](#) — 400 for deployment and 266 for test launches or as spares.