2022 Nuclear Posture Review Force Structure Decisions

Presented to Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation brief to Congressional staffers

Hans M. Kristensen
Federation of American Scientists
November 3, 2022

• Force structure shaped by adversaries, guidance, plan history, politics. Country-specific plans/objectives. Does adversary weapons increase require US weapons increase?

• Continues full-scope Triad modernization. New START scope. Little capacity to expand.

• Continues DCA modernization & broad NATO nuclear sharing “consistent with treaty commitments.” Enhance readiness and exercises. Non-nuclear support (SNOWCAT).

• Retains low-yield W76-2 for now: reevaluate after F-35A, LRSO, plan updates.

• Continues retirement of B83 Megaton bomb: limits and costs.

• Cancels nuclear sea-launched cruise missile (SLCM-N): redundant capability, cost, modernization program pressure & timelines, operational limits.

• Continues technical hedge despite eliminating “hedge against an uncertain future as “a formal role of nuclear weapons.”

• Continues integration of conventional and nuclear capabilities. Can reduce need to increase size of nuclear arsenal.

• Continues but boosts modernization/enhancement of industrial complex. Partial stockpile refurbishment strategy no longer sufficient. New production focus to complement Stockpile Stewardship program to limit hedge and stockpile size needs.

• Operational: increased bomber operations, SSBN appearances, DCA readiness/exercises.

• Next phase: NPR Implementation Plan and Employment Policy update.