



# \$ Nuclear Weapons and the Economy

## Basic Facts

- A new nuclear arms race was triggered in 2010 by the New START Agreement between the United States and Russia, which allows for nuclear weapons “modernization” in exchange for modest reductions to 800 nuclear missiles and 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads.<sup>1</sup>
- 9 countries have nuclear weapons: The US, Russia, UK, France and China, as “legacy nuclear states,” plus Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. There are an estimated 14,900 known warheads.<sup>2</sup>

## Cost of Current Nuclear Weapons Program<sup>3</sup>

- The administration’s commitment to maintaining the nuclear weapons arsenal is reflected in the fact that the Department of Defense and Department of Energy requested a combined \$23 billion for nuclear weapons spending in 2016.
- Overall, the projected spending on nuclear weapons modernization over the next ten years comes to \$400 billion. Over the next 30 years, the US nuclear weapons modernization program is estimated to cost \$1 trillion.
- The current nuclear program would allocate money to both modernize or upgrade existing weapons and delivery systems, as well as completely replacing current systems with new ones.

## Where will the money come from?

- There has been significant concern over where the money to fund nuclear modernization will come from. The passage of the Budget Control Act of 2011 has meant that available funding for defense could be up to \$1 trillion lower than the Obama Administration had originally expected.<sup>4</sup>
- It therefore seems unavoidable that if the current nuclear modernization program and the associated budget is maintained, spending on conventional military programs would be cut.
- For example, the Navy would be required to cut funding for 32 other ships in order to pay to replace ballistic missile submarines. These other ships are currently used around the world for important security purposes, such as launching attacks against ISIS, patrolling the South China Sea, and carrying out humanitarian relief efforts.<sup>5</sup>



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Nuclear modernization is projected to cost \$400 billion over the next 10 years.  
What's the cost of other programs we would love to see instead?



- **\$260 billion over the next 10 years:** the cost of providing high level pre-school education for every 3-and 4-year old in America. Additionally, by 2050, every dollar spent on this program would be offset in \$2.37 of budget saving for the government in the form of increased compensation and lower costs on health care and child abuse. (The Washington Center for Equitable Growth put the cost at \$26 billion a year starting in 2017).<sup>6</sup>
- **\$250 billion over the next 10 years:** the cost of part of Bernie Sander's ambitious plan to upgrade highways, bridges, and transit systems. (His plan stated a projected cost of \$125 billion over 5 years).<sup>7</sup>
- **\$86 billion over the next 10 years:** the maximum cost of complying with the Clean Power Plan, the most extensive clean energy regulation in US history. Benefits are estimated to be \$25 billion to \$45 billion by 2030. (Projected costs are between \$1.4 billion and \$8.4 billion annually between now and 2030).<sup>8</sup>
- **\$61 billion over the next 10 years:** the cost of the Obama Administration's proposed plan to provide two years of free community college education for all students.<sup>9, 10</sup>
- **\$60 billion over the next 10 years:** the cost of expanding immunization to reach WHO elimination and eradication goals in the world's 94 low- and lower-middle-income countries, potentially averting 24-26 million deaths.<sup>11</sup>

## References

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