

Status of World Nuclear Forces. Large Arsenals for the Indefinite Future

By [Robert S. Norris](#) and [Hans M. Kristensen](#)
Global Research, February 21, 2017
[Federation of American Scientists](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)
Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)
In-depth Report: [Nuclear War](#)

The number of nuclear weapons in the world has declined significantly since the Cold War: down from a peak of approximately 70,300 in 1986 to an estimated 14,900 in early-2017.

Government officials often portray that accomplishment as a result of current arms control agreements, but the overwhelming portion of the reduction happened in the 1990s. Moreover, comparing today's inventory with that of the 1950s is like comparing apples and oranges; today's forces are vastly more capable. The pace of reduction has slowed significantly. Instead of planning for nuclear disarmament, the nuclear-armed states appear to plan to retain large arsenals for the indefinite future.



Despite progress in reducing Cold War nuclear arsenals, the world's combined inventory of nuclear warheads remains at a very high level: approximately 14,900 warheads as of early-2017. Of these, roughly 9,400 are in the military stockpiles (the rest are awaiting dismantlement), of which more than 3,900 warheads are deployed with operational forces, of which nearly 1,800 US, Russian, British and French warheads are on [high alert](#), ready for use on short notice.

Approximately 93 percent of all nuclear warheads are owned by Russia and the United States who each have roughly 4,000-4,500 warheads in their military stockpiles; no other nuclear-armed state sees a need for more than a few hundred nuclear weapons for national security:



The United States, Russia and the United Kingdom are reducing their warhead inventories, but the pace of reduction is slowing compared with the past 25 years. France and Israel have relatively stable inventories, while China, Pakistan, India and North Korea are increasing their warhead inventories.

All the nuclear weapon states continue to modernize their remaining nuclear forces and appear committed to retaining nuclear weapons for the indefinite future. For an overview of global modernization programs, see [this 2014 article](#).

[Read Complete FAS article](#)

The original source of this article is [Federation of American Scientists](#)
Copyright © [Robert S. Norris](#) and [Hans M. Kristensen](#), [Federation of American Scientists](#),
2017

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Robert S. Norris](#)
and [Hans M. Kristensen](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca