

Plans that quantitatively cut the number of weapons would restrict the number of missions as fewer weapons would exist to carry them out. This has been true historically as nuclear weapons cutbacks have forced the DOD to cover missions with conventional weapons that had previously been taken by nuclear weapons.

Federation of American Scientists, Missions for Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War, 2005
<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/armscontrol/missionsaftercoldwarrpt.html>.

Military forces must adapt to evolving political circumstances. Changes made by the Air Force after the Cold War were in response to the defense downsizing of the 1990s as well as national leadership priorities. Just as Strategic Air Command (SAC) was being dissolved, the Air Force and other services were experiencing severe resource constraints. With less national emphasis on nuclear weapons during this period, the Air Force failed to grasp the continued need to maintain a viable airpower-based nuclear deterrent capability. Moreover, as the size of the nuclear arsenal was reduced and emphasis shifted to conventional missions, the Air Force failed to articulate the continuing value of the nuclear deterrent.¹

The mission of damage limitation would be restricted if we cut the number of weapons since the more we have the more of the enemy's missiles we can take out.

Federation of American Scientists, Missions for Nuclear Weapons after the Cold War, 2005
<http://www.fas.org/programs/ssp/nukes/armscontrol/missionsaftercoldwarrpt.html>.

Unlike the missions discussed thus far, the size of the force needed for the damage limitation mission is tied directly to an adversary's nuclear arsenal size. As long as Russia depends on a large initial arsenal to guarantee that an adequate retaliatory force survives, it cannot reduce its nuclear forces. The United States cannot reduce its nuclear forces if it wants to keep a force large enough to target the large Russian force. The United States

¹ The Air Force's Nuclear Mission, Department of Defense, September 2008 p.21

could simply abandon this mission, and give up on targeting Russian nuclear forces, but that will not make the threat from Russian weapons go away. The problem from the perspective of the United States is not U.S. weapons, of course, but Russian ones.

Analyzing “missions” is the clearest way to determine reliance on nuclear weapons.

Nikolai Sokov, *The Nonproliferation Review* Summer 2002 “Why Do States Rely on Nuclear Weapons?”

It is easy to detect differences between Russian and American cases with regard to reliance on nuclear weapons. The most obvious difference concerns new missions assigned to nuclear weapons. For Russia, these missions boiled down to deterrence of small- or medium-scale conventional attacks; for the United States, the issue is destruction of small, deeply buried targets.