



December 11, 2014

Congressional Committees

## **Nuclear Weapons: DOD’s Plan for Implementing Nuclear Reductions Generally Addresses Statutory Requirements but Lacks Some Detail**

Nuclear weapons have long been a cornerstone of the nation’s defense strategy. These weapons—deployed on strategic delivery systems, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), and nuclear-capable aircraft—have played an essential role in U.S. policy for deterring potential adversaries and assuring U.S. allies and other security partners that they can count on America’s security commitments. At the same time, arms control agreements and strategic policies have led the United States to maintain its nuclear deterrent capability with decreasing numbers of weapons and strategic delivery systems. In his April 2009 speech in Prague, the President spoke of the United States’ commitment to seeking a world without nuclear weapons. The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Report (NPR) outlined the administration’s approach to maintaining the U.S. nuclear deterrent capability while pursuing further reductions in nuclear weapons.<sup>1</sup> The NPR report focused on five key objectives; one of these objectives, maintaining strategic deterrence and stability at reduced nuclear force levels, emphasizes the importance of bilateral and verifiable reductions in strategic nuclear weapons in coordination with Russia. In support of this objective, the United States signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia—known as New START—on April 8, 2010, which entered into force on February 5, 2011.<sup>2</sup>

Section 1042 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 required the Department of Defense (DOD) to submit a plan to the congressional defense committees, the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for implementing the nuclear force reductions, limitations, and verification and transparency measures contained in New START.<sup>3</sup> In April 2014, DOD submitted a report on its plan to implement New START. Section 1042 also mandates that we submit a review of DOD’s plan.<sup>4</sup> This report assesses the extent to which DOD’s report includes the elements required by the mandate.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1070 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-181 (2008), required the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of Energy and the Secretary of State, to conduct a comprehensive review of the nuclear posture of the United States for the next 5 to 10 years. The Department of Defense published the conclusions and recommendations from that review in the April 2010 *Nuclear Posture Review Report*.

<sup>2</sup> *Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*, U.S.-Russ., Apr. 8, 2010, T.I.A.S. No. 11-205.

<sup>3</sup> Pub. L. No. 112-81, § 1042(a) (2011). Section 1042 required DOD to submit the plan not later than 30 days from the date of enactment.

<sup>4</sup> § 1042(c).

This report is a public version of a classified report that we are issuing concurrently. This report omits information on alternative force structures DOD considered for implementing New START and our detailed analysis of DOD's report, which DOD deemed to be classified. Although the information provided in this report is more limited in scope, the overall methodology used for both reports is the same.

To address our objective, two analysts independently reviewed DOD's April 2014 report on its plan to implement New START—*Report on Plan to Implement the Nuclear Force Reductions, Limitations, and Verification and Transparency Measures Contained in the New START Treaty Specified in Section 1042 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012*—which contains DOD's strategic force structure plans to comply with the requirements of the treaty.<sup>5</sup> We compared the report to the requirements in section 1042 to determine the extent to which DOD's plan addresses the required elements.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2014 to December 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

In summary, we found that DOD's Section 1042 report addresses or partially addresses the required elements; however, DOD did not include additional detail, including certain information on costs and verification and transparency measures, which would more fully inform congressional decision-makers on the department's plan for implementing New START.

## Agency Comments

We are not making recommendations in this report. We provided a draft of this report to DOD for review and comment. In response DOD provided technical comments, which we have incorporated as appropriate.

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We are providing copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees, the Secretary of the Defense, Secretary of the Air Force, Secretary of the Navy, Joint Staff, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. In addition, this report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9971 or [kirschbaumj@gao.gov](mailto:kirschbaumj@gao.gov). Contact points for our Office of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report were Penney Harwell Caramia (Assistant Director), Jonathan Gill, Joanne Landesman, Brian

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Plan to Implement the Nuclear Force Reductions, Limitations, and Verification and Transparency Measures Contained in the New START Treaty Specified in Section 1042 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012* (April 2014).

Mazanec, Timothy Persons, Jeffrey Phillips, Steven Putansu, Michael Shaughnessy, Amie Steele, and Sam Wilson.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe W. Kirschbaum" with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

Joseph Kirschbaum  
Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

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