

US needs nuclear weapons for rest of century: General

By [Global Research](#)

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The commander of US strategic forces said Tuesday the United States will need nuclear weapons as a deterrent for the rest of the 21st century and should move now to field more modern weapons.

Air Force General Kevin Chilton said new, more reliable nuclear weapons would enable the United States to reduce the large inventory of non-deployed weapons it keeps as a hedge.

"As we look to the future — and I believe we are going to need a nuclear deterrent for this country for the remainder of this century, the 21st century — I think what we need is a modernized nuclear weapon to go with our modernized delivery platforms," he told reporters.

The administration has requested 10 million dollars for the program in its 2009 budget request even though the US Congress turned down a similar request in its previous budget submission.

It also is seeking 100 million dollars for a plant to make nuclear triggers for the new weapon.

The program is controversial in part because it runs counter to the US obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to work toward bringing its stockpile to zero.

"I'm the father of two children, and I would love to have them grow up in a nuclear-free world, absolutely," said Chilton. "But I'm not for unilateral disarmament. I also want them to grow up free."

Chilton, who heads the US Strategic Command, said the new weapons would be designed to be more reliable, safer and more secure than those in the existing stockpile.

New infrastructure to build and maintain the weapons also would enable the United States to reduce its hedge stockpile, he said.

"As long as there are other countries in the world that possess enough nuclear weapons to destroy the United States of America, we will have to deter those countries," he said.

He said his command needed to do technical studies over the next year to present the new administration early next year with a "decision package" on which way they want to go.

"I really think now is the time to act on this. This is not something that we can continue to

either not talk about or to kick down the road for future generations," he said.

The United States currently has about 6,000 deployed nuclear warheads but is required to come down to 2,200 by 2012 under the 2002 Moscow Treaty.

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