




# THE U.S. NUCLEAR TRIAD:

## THE MOST STRATEGICALLY SOUND AND COST-EFFECTIVE MEANS OF ENSURING NUCLEAR DETERRENCE.

- › For more than six decades, across ten presidential administrations, the United States has fielded a Triad of complementary nuclear delivery systems involving land-, sea-, and air-based nuclear weapons to deter nuclear and non-nuclear aggression against the United States, its allies, and partners.
- › Today's strategic nuclear Triad consists of three legs: ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) carrying submarine-launched ballistic missiles; land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs); and strategic bombers capable of carrying nuclear gravity bombs or air-launched cruise missiles.
- › Each leg of the Triad has unique attributes that make the deterrent of the whole greater than the sum of its parts.
  -  *SSBNs operating underwater in vast ocean areas are the most survivable leg of the Triad as they are virtually undetectable.*
  -  *ICBMs are the most responsive leg of the Triad due to their high state of readiness. The geographic dispersion of the ICBM force requires that adversary launch a large-scale attack to defeat that leg.*
  -  *Strategic bombers and dual capable aircraft are the most flexible leg of the Triad: they can be forward deployed to signal U.S. resolve, their flight times and ability to be recalled increase stability and Presidential decision-making time and are survivable given strategic warning.*
- › The Triad allows the United States to hedge against potential technical problems or vulnerabilities that may arise in any one leg of the Triad, and against unexpected developments in the strategic or geo-political landscape.
- › The Triad is sized, composed, and postured to provide effective deterrence and maintain strategic stability.
- › By sustaining a nuclear Triad we deter attacks on the United States, its allies, and partners and provide the President with a range of effective options should deterrence fail.

