

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Fact Sheet on B61 Variant Development
October 27, 2023

On October 27, the Department of Defense announced that the United States will pursue a modern variant of the B61 nuclear gravity bomb, designated the B61-13, pending Congressional authorization and appropriation.

The B61-13 will strengthen deterrence of adversaries and assurance of allies and partners by providing the President with additional options against certain harder and large-area military targets.

A more challenging security environment

- The 2022 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) observed that U.S. competitors continue to expand, diversify, and modernize their nuclear forces while increasing reliance on nuclear weapons.
- The NPR charted a balanced approach to the security environment, investing in deterrence while renewing a commitment to pursue arms control and other risk reduction measures.
- As the security environment evolves, it is necessary for us to consider nuclear force adjustments to assure our ability to achieve deterrence and other objectives.

Additional flexibility

- The B61-13 will replace some of the B61-7s in the current stockpile, pending Congressional authorization and appropriation.
- The B61-13 will have a yield similar to the B61-7, which is higher than that of the B61-12. The B61-13 will include the modern safety, security, and accuracy features of the B61-12.
- While the B61-13 will provide the President with additional options against certain harder and large-area military targets, the Department of Defense will separately continue its work to complete and implement a comprehensive strategy for defeat of hard and deeply buried targets, as directed in the Nuclear Posture Review.

A balanced approach

- Deterrence and assurance are enhanced if the United States can continue to deny an adversary sanctuary from attack.
- The B61-13 will provide the President with additional options against certain harder and large-area military targets, even while the Department works to retire legacy systems such as the B83-1 and the B61-7.
- The B61-13 will not increase the overall number of weapons in the U.S. stockpile. The number of B61-12s to be produced will be lowered by the same amount as the number of B61-13s produced.

- This initiative follows several months of review and consideration. The fielding of the B61-13 is not in response to any specific current event; it reflects an ongoing assessment of a changing security environment.