



Frequently Asked Questions

1.) What is the status of the nuclear weapons complex today?

The current complex was designed and built during the Cold War and now consists of eight major sites located in seven states. Major experimental and computer facilities were established at the nuclear weapons laboratories over the last 15 years to replace the elimination of underground nuclear testing as a tool for stockpile certification. Production plants were reduced during the 1990's, but many remaining facilities are old, too large, and very expensive to maintain.

2.) Why do we need to transform the complex?

NNSA needs to eliminate or replace aging buildings that are becoming more expensive to maintain under today's safety and security requirements. Furthermore, special nuclear materials need to be consolidated at fewer sites in order to reduce escalating security costs.

3.) What is the vision for the future nuclear weapons complex?

The future complex will be smaller, more secure, safer, and less expensive. It will build on the scientific and technical capabilities of our workforce. The complex will meet current nuclear weapons requirements, but will also be better able to adapt to the national security needs of tomorrow.

4.) How will NNSA implement this transformation vision and how will you pay for it?

Our vision for a transformed complex relies on implementing change in four ways:

- Transform the nuclear stockpile through the Stockpile Stewardship Program in partnership with the Department of Defense.
- Transform to a modernized, cost-effective nuclear weapons complex to support needed capabilities in the physical infrastructure of the complex.
- Create an integrated, interdependent enterprise that employs best business practices to maximize efficiency and minimize costs.
- Advance the science and technology base that is the cornerstone of our nuclear deterrence and remains essential for long-term national security.

Transformation is expected to be implemented within existing budget projections, if savings are reinvested in the complex.

5.) What is the SPEIS and why do we need it?

The draft Complex Transformation Supplemental Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (SPEIS) analyzes the potential environmental impacts of reasonable alternatives to continue transformation of the nuclear weapons complex. The goal is for the complex to meet national security requirements and to be smaller, more secure, more efficient, and better able to adapt to unforeseen threats.

6.) What is the rationale for the preferred alternative?

NNSA anticipates that the preferred alternative would have the overall lowest cost and risk of the reasonable alternatives for the complex. It could be implemented within existing budget projections, if savings were reinvested in the complex. There would be a minimal risk of production shortfalls during transition, so the alternative would maintain a reliable stockpile. Lastly, it would support stockpile scenarios that meet the objectives of the Moscow Treaty, which sets the level of operationally deployed nuclear weapons to between 1,700 and 2,200.

7.) What effect would the implementation of the preferred alternative in the SPEIS have on the total complex?

The preferred alternative would primarily affect NNSA facilities containing large quantities of special nuclear materials that are expensive to secure, research and development facilities at our national security laboratories, and the physical footprint of the nuclear weapons complex. Present facilities consist of greater than 35 million square feet for weapons work at eight sites. Implementing the preferred alternative would consolidate functions and modernize facilities, reducing the square footage to less than 26 million square feet.

8.) How will Complex Transformation impact nuclear weapons dismantlements?

Complex Transformation supports the current high rate of dismantlements of nuclear weapons. It will also ensure the most robust security and safety features are maintained throughout the complex, including those facilities involved in nuclear weapons dismantlement.

9.) Isn't the U.S. violating the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) by continuing to make nuclear weapons and proposing to upgrade the complex?

No. Article VI of the NPT obligates the United States "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." President Bush set the objective of "achieving a credible nuclear deterrent with the lowest-possible number of nuclear warheads consistent with our national security needs."

The U.S. has made significant progress toward disarmament, including the moratorium on nuclear testing, reduced strategic force structure, nuclear weapons stockpile, and production infrastructure. A transformed nuclear weapons complex could feasibly support additional reductions in the stockpile, if directed by the President.

10.) Why is the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and nuclear weapons program important to national security?

It remains the national security policy of the United States to maintain a safe, secure, and reliable nuclear deterrent to ensure the security of the United States and its friends and allies across the globe. To meet this critical mission, the United States must preserve the core competencies to design, manufacture, and maintain nuclear weapons, and Complex Transformation ensures that the infrastructure to support the stockpile would be smaller, more secure and more efficient. NNSA's nuclear weapons program is vital to U.S. work in nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear incident response, counter-terrorism, and intelligence analysis.

11.) How will Complex Transformation help our nuclear deterrent?

The 2001 Nuclear Posture Review concluded that a credible nuclear deterrent that focuses more on NNSA's ability to adapt to possible mission changes and less on deployed weapons is the proper approach in dealing with the dynamic security challenges confronting the nation. The intellectual and productive capital of the complex, along with an infrastructure that is flexible enough to meet possible technical issues in the stockpile and respond to new international challenges, ensures the continued credibility of the deterrent. This could lead to an even smaller nuclear weapons stockpile over time.

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