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## US to spend billions of dollars on nuke upgrade

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The United States is preparing to spend billions of dollars on modernizing its nuclear bombs stationed in Europe as part of a broader project to upgrade its nuclear arsenal.

Officials from the Pentagon and the US Department of Energy told the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee last week that Washington's B-61 nuclear bombs should be replaced by a modified version, the B61-12.

Some US lawmakers and experts dismissed the scheme as a massive waste of money that could also derail arms control talks with Russia.

The US has 180 B-61 nuclear bombs in Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey.

The cost of modernizing Washington's B-61 nuclear bombs in Europe, as estimated by a Pentagon panel, could be as high as \$12 billion.

Moreover, according to the non-partisan Stimson Center think-tank, modernizing the US nuclear arsenal, including weapons, infrastructure, and delivery systems, over the next decade would cost American taxpayers up to \$400 billion.

The huge spending scheme comes in stark contrast to Washington's call for a world without nuclear weapons. The US has held several rounds of negotiations with Russia over a nuclear arms reduction pact, known as the New START.

Washington is thought to have as many as 2,650 non-deployed warheads, plus about 3,000 waiting to be dismantled, according to The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

On October 28, US Secretary of State John Kerry emphasized that nuclear weapons form an important part of Washington's defense doctrine.

"It ensures that a strong nuclear deterrent remains the cornerstone of US national security and that of our allies and our partners," he said during a speech at the US Institute of Peace in Washington.

The US is the only country in the world that has used atomic bombs in war. US atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan in August 1945.