

U. S. envisions a new generation of nuclear weapons

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Almost 62 years after detonation of the first atomic bombs, the United States is considering controversial proposals to produce a new generation of nuclear weapons and revamp its nuclear weapons complex, according to an article scheduled for the March 19 issue of *Chemical & Engineering News*, ACS' weekly newsmagazine.

In the article, C&EN senior editor Jeff Johnson points out that the proposals come at a time of growing fears about potential new nuclear powers, such as North Korea and Iran, and potential diversion of nuclear weapons into the hands of terrorists.

The U.S. Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), which oversees design, production and maintenance of nuclear weapons, developed the proposals.

One part of the plan, for instance, calls for production of the "renewable, replacement warhead (RRW)," a new nuclear weapon that NNSA says will be easier and environmentally cleaner to manufacture and more difficult for potential terrorists to disassemble or detonate. The article describes details of the RRW, envisioned for production by 2012, and discusses differing opinions about the new proposals for the U.S. nuclear arsenal, now believed to number about 10,000 warheads.

Source: ACS

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