

Air Force Releases New ICBM Solicitation

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KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. (AFNS) -- The Air Force released July 29 a request for proposals for its Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) intercontinental ballistic missile weapon system program; up to two contract awards are expected in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2017.

GBSD is the follow-on to the aging LGM-30 Minuteman III ICBM. The launch systems and weapon system command and control physical infrastructure being used for Minuteman III today first became operational with the Minuteman I ICBM system in the mid-1960s. While certain components and subsystems have been upgraded over the years, including a transition to Minuteman III configuration in the 1970s, most of the fundamental infrastructure in use today is original and has supported more than 50 years of continuous operation. The Minuteman III flight systems in use today were fielded in the late 1990s and early 2000s with an intended 20-year lifespan. The current Minuteman III system will face increased operational and sustainment challenges until it can be replaced.

The Air Force is focused on developing and delivering an integrated weapon system, including launch and command and control segments. The new GBSD weapon system will meet existing national requirements, while having the adaptability and flexibility to affordably address changing technology and threat environments through 2075. Deployment is projected to begin in the late 2020s.

"The Minuteman III will have a difficult time surviving in the active anti-access, area denial environment that we will be dealing with in the 2030 and beyond time period," Gen. Robin Rand, the commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, told the House Armed Services Committee's Strategic Forces Subcommittee in March.

"This request for proposals is the next step to ensuring the nation's ICBM leg of the nuclear triad remains safe, secure and effective," said Maj. Gen. Scott Jansson, the commander of the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center and Air Force program executive officer for strategic systems.

Adm. Cecil Haney, the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, supports the GBSD to "ensure an adversary cannot launch a comprehensive counterforce attack on the United States by striking only a few targets," he said during his keynote speech at a strategic deterrent panel at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in January.

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