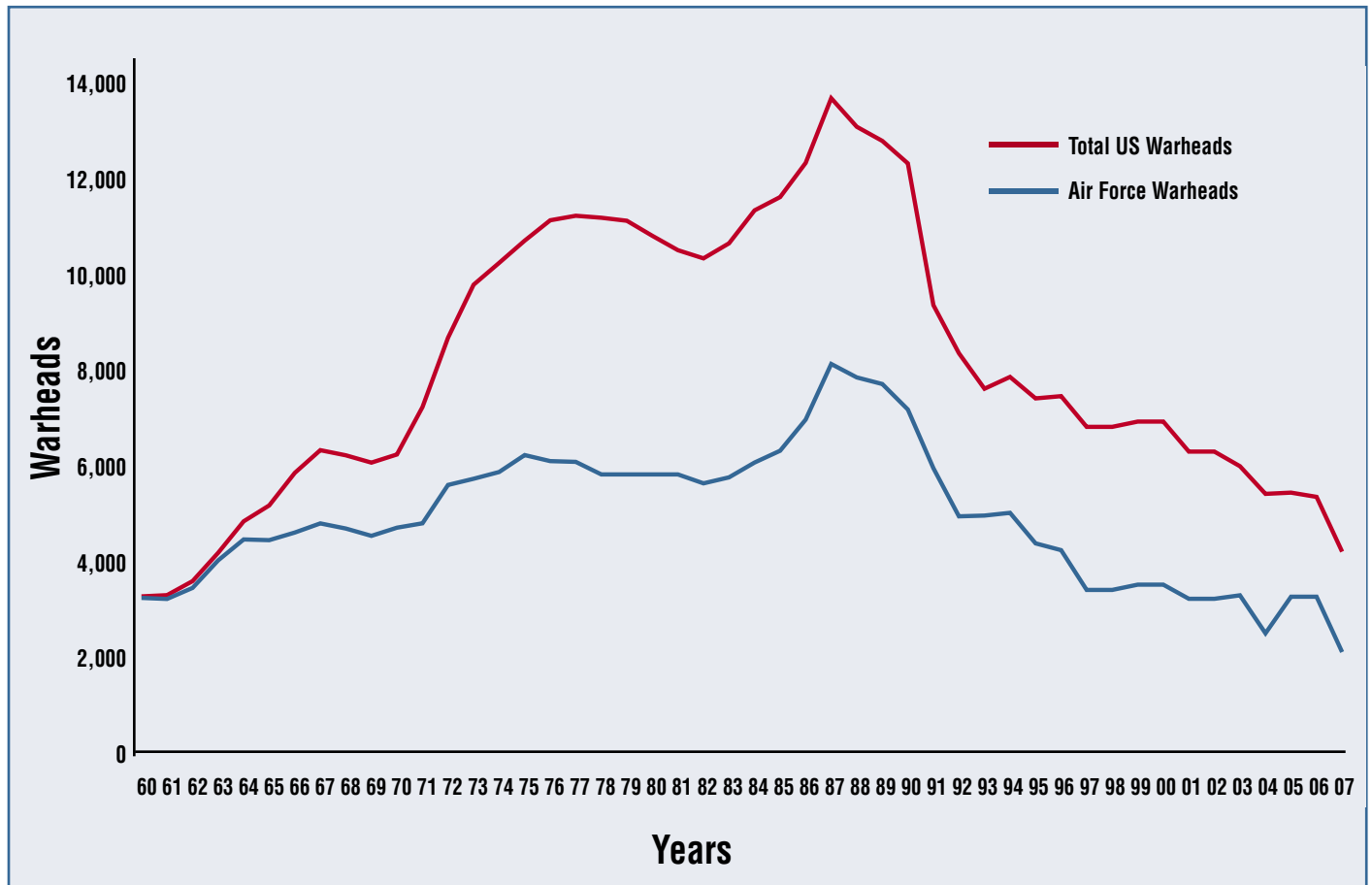


A Flagging Nuclear “Enterprise”

“Reinvigorating the Air Force Nuclear Enterprise” was the title of an Oct. 24 USAF task force report. Pentagon chief Robert M. Gates also refers to the “nuclear enterprise.” Yet, as the chart makes only too apparent, a dramatic shrinking of this enterprise has been national policy for 20 years. In 1987, the US boasted some

14,000 strategic nuclear warheads, of which USAF had more than 8,000. Two decades of arms control, political hostility, and budget cuts pushed the total below 4,000, and plans call for the inventory to go below 2,200 in 2012. Some critics are thinking the end-state goal should be more like 500.

The warhead count has been sliding for 20 years.



Source: “Table of US Strategic Offensive Force Loadings. Archive of Nuclear Data.”
Posted by the Natural Resources Defense Council [<http://www.nrdc.org/nuclear/nudb/datab1.asp>]. Includes subsequent NRDC annual updates.