** AN INTRODUCTION TO DEFENSE POLICY

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Most people are not going to read a book-length study of nuclear weapons command and control, and they shouldn't have to. But those who need a quick sketch -- whether they are reporters, students, or regular citizens -- can now find a concise, two-page introduction to the topic from the Congressional Research Service. See Defense Primer: Command and Control of Nuclear Forces, CRS In Focus, December 1, 2016.

This document is part of a series of some three dozen "defense primers" that were prepared lately by CRS for new members of Congress in order to explain "key aspects of the Department of Defense and how Congress exercises authority over it." The reports can serve the same purpose for interested members of the public.

The CRS primers naturally will not turn readers into experts. But they generally do an excellent job of presenting complex or obscure matters in clear language that almost anyone can understand, while identifying key policy issues, and introducing the essential vocabulary used to address them. The fact that CRS has no particular institutional stake in those issues enhances the credibility of the reports and makes them useful to readers of any persuasion, and to those who don't yet know what to think.

Among the titles in the series are these:

Defense Primer: Intelligence Support to Military Operations, CRS In Focus, December 30, 2016

Defense Primer: Organization of U.S. Ground Forces, CRS In Focus, December 29, 2016

Defense Primer: Commanding U.S. Military Operations, CRS In Focus, December 13, 2016