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## News Review

### Floppy disks control US weapons

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#### **BBC World Service report**

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The US government Accountability Office says it's concerned that many federal activities, including the country's nuclear **arsenal**, urgently need to **upgrade** outdated technologies.

It said Pentagon systems helping to coordinate the strategic deterrent, such as **intercontinental ballistic missiles** and nuclear bombers rely on 40-year-old computers and floppy disks.

#### **Gary O'Donoghue – BBC News**

You may have thought the floppy disk was now a historical artefact. But it turns out it is alive and well within the US Defence Department and used to store data in the system that communicates with the different parts of America's nuclear deterrent.

The 1970s technology is so limited that you need about 3m of them to approach the storage capacity of a \$10 USB memory stick.

But the Pentagon isn't alone. US social security systems are written in a computer language dating from the late 1950s which fewer and fewer people are familiar with.

On the floppy disks, the Pentagon says they'll be gone by the end of next year though the 40-year-old computers that use them may take a little longer to reach the museum.

#### **Vocabulary**

##### **arsenal**

collection of weapons

##### **upgrade**

improve the quality of something

##### **deterrent**

something that prevents people doing something

**phase out**

stop doing something gradually

**nukes**

slang word for nuclear weapons

**ancient**

very old (humorous)