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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE

**STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES  
OF THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
FY2010 STRATEGIC SYSTEMS  
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Chairman Nelson, Senator Vitter, distinguished members of the Strategic Forces subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss our Navy's nuclear enterprise, today's force and the efforts to ensure the continued reliability of our submarine strategic forces, and the OHIO Class Replacement to maintain continuous strategic deterrence.

### **Navy Nuclear Enterprise**

The Navy remains vigilant in executing our nuclear strategic deterrent mission. The Department of Defense nuclear enterprise has gone through several important events over the last year. Through numerous reviews, both internal and external, the Navy has been found satisfactory in executing our responsibilities although there are areas where improvement is required. These efforts included an in-depth review of nuclear weapon custody and accountability procedures, weapons handling procedures, training, and flight test non-nuclear verification requirements. These reviews have confirmed the Navy has maintained a safe and secure environment for our strategic assets. As a result of these reviews, the Navy has established two new three Star level councils chaired by the Director Navy Staff to provide central coordination to focus and address policy, operational and acquisition issues associated with our nuclear weapons enterprise, and ensure the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) receives comprehensive recommendations for nuclear weapons governance. The first council involves the 3 Star Admirals on the CNO's direct staff and is called the Operational Navy Nuclear Weapons Council. The second brings together the Operational Navy leadership, the Fleet leadership, and acquisition leadership and is called the Navy Nuclear Weapons Senior

Leadership Oversight Council. These new councils demonstrate the Navy leadership's continued focus and commitment to this mission area.

I have focused Strategic Systems Programs on six major areas to continue to sustain high standards which include; (1) rigor (2) field activity oversight (3) self assessment (4) corrective action (5) material management and (6) personnel. These six areas of focus form the guiding principles by which we will manage our day to day operations and set the culture to sustain this mission for the long term. The men and women of Strategic Systems Programs and our industry partners remain dedicated to implement these guiding principles to meet the mission of our Sailors on strategic deterrent patrol and our Marines and Sailors who are standing the watch to ensure the security of the weapons we are entrusted with by this nation.

### **Today's Force**

Our 14 Trident Submarines, eight of which are home ported in the Pacific and six in the Atlantic fleet, continue to provide a credible, survivable and reliable sea-based strategic deterrent for our national leadership. Two of our submarines, USS NEVADA (SSBN 733) and USS TENNESSEE (SSBN 734) are undergoing Engineering Refueling Overhauls which will maintain the viability of these platforms through the end of the Class. USS ALASKA (SSBN 732) has recently completed her overhaul and post availability testing and is preparing for her Demonstration and Shakedown Operation with a Replacement strategic outload and return to the operational cycle next spring.

The men and women of Strategic Systems Programs (SSP) are committed to maintaining the high reliability of our 14 OHIO Class SSBNs with their Trident II D5 Missiles, as well as the four OHIO Class SSGNs that have been converted to carry

TOMAHAWK missiles and support Special Operating Forces (SOF) missions as directed by our combatant commanders. In February the USS ALABAMA (SSBN 731) conducted the 126<sup>th</sup> consecutive successful flight test of the Trident D5 missile as part of her Demonstration and Shakedown Operation. This record of successful flight tests is unmatched by any previous missile launch system. Therefore, I am pleased to report to you that the Trident Strategic Weapons Systems continues to meet the operational requirements established for the system almost thirty years ago. However, it is my military opinion that the overall health of the D5 weapons systems is not without cause for pause, as the weapon system is nearing its 20<sup>th</sup> year of deployment and now enters an era of its life-cycle where age-related issues may impact its reliability. With D5 planned for operational deployment to match the OHIO Class hull life extension, D5 hardware will age beyond our previous experience base and will be operational almost twice as long as any previous sea-based strategic deterrent. Age related concerns have been validated by several technical issues that have arisen over the past year that remind us that the Trident weapons system requires increased vigilance to maintain the demonstrated high reliability of the system. I am confident that the dedicated SSP team is up to this challenge.

### **D5 Life Extension Program**

Our efforts to extend the life of the Trident II D5 missile continue. We are procuring additional missiles, due to the OHIO Class hull life extension, to ensure that our OHIO Class submarines are fully out loaded throughout their service life. This is being accomplished through continuous production of critical components such as rocket motors, major requalification efforts when necessary, and an update to missile electronics

and guidance packages to address obsolescence. However, even with continuous production of solid rocket motors, we are experiencing cost challenges today as both NASA and Air Force demand declines and will continue to experience those cost increases as demand continues to shrink in future years. We are approaching the Critical Design Review for our missile electronics update and are evaluating various options to determine the most cost effective implementation into the fleet. These updated electronic packages form a large part of the life extension strategy which supports the deployment of the TRIDENT II D5 weapons systems on the OHIO Class submarine and its impending replacement program.

Key to the success of the TRIDENT II, D5 Life Extension is the life extension of the W76, Mk4 warhead refurbishment known as the W76-1 which we are executing in partnership with the Department of Energy. This program is on track to provide the Navy with the weapons we need to meet operational requirements throughout the OHIO Class deployment and the planned follow-on platform.

### **Nuclear Weapons Security**

As technical program manager responsible for the Navy's Nuclear Weapons Security, SSP has actively pursued technologies which will provide credible, cost effective security for the nuclear assets entrusted to our watch. Our Marines and Navy Master-at-Arms are providing an effective and integrated elite security force at both of our strategic weapons facilities. We have begun construction of our Limited Area Production & Support Complex (LAPSC) at Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific, Bangor, WA. When complete, this facility will provide a higher degree of security for our ashore operations.

The United States Coast Guard, Maritime Protection Force Units have been commissioned at Kings Bay, Georgia and Bangor, Washington. These Coast Guardsmen and the Navy vessels they man provide a security umbrella for our OHIO Class Submarines as they deploy and return from their deterrent patrols. They form the basis of our Trident Transit Protection System (TPS).

### **OHIO Class Replacement**

In 2027, the Navy will retire the oldest of the 14 OHIO-Class SSBNs when it reaches the end of its service life. Over the subsequent 13 years the Navy will retire the remaining OHIO-Class SSBNs at a rate of approximately 1 per year. The OHIO Class Replacement is the replacement capability for the OHIO Class ballistic missile submarine. It will be a strategic national asset whose endurance and stealth will enable the Navy to provide continuous uninterrupted survivable sea-based strategic deterrence. Appropriate investment in the OHIO Class Replacement research and development and concept development is essential to a reliable, survivable and adaptable sea-based strategic deterrent prepared to face an uncertain future. The Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) study commenced on 13 Aug 2008 and will complete this summer. The Navy's FY 2010 budget provides the required RDT&E investment to support the lead ship construction.

The U.S. will maintain its strong strategic relationship with the UK for follow-on platforms, based upon the Polaris Sales Agreement of 1963 and recently reinforced by the Presidential, Prime Minister and SECDEF exchange of letters. The UK has provided funding in 2008 and 2009 to support the design and development of a Common Missile

Compartment that supports both the OHIO Class Replacement and the successor to the UK Vanguard Class.

### **SSGN**

Although SSGN is not a strategic asset, the program synergizes off of the TRIDENT system. This highly successful program, authorized by the Congress as a method to maintain the viability of four OHIO Class submarines and bring a major advance in tactical submarine overseas presence is almost complete. All four of these submarines have completed their conversion to SSGN Attack and Special Operating Force Platforms. USS OHIO (SSGN 726) completed a highly successful 14 month forward deployed period, USS FLORIDA (SSGN 728) just returned from her deployment in 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet, USS MICHIGAN (SSGN 727) is forward deployed in 7<sup>th</sup> Fleet, and USS GEORGIA (SSGN 729) will depart on her maiden deployment later this year. By any measure, these platforms have delivered on the promise to provide high volume strike and high capacity Special Operating Forces capability to our Combatant Commanders. I am in the process of turning over the day-to-day maintenance operations and future spiral development efforts of these fine ships to the Naval Sea System Command In-Service Submarine Organization as these platforms are no longer considered part of the nation's Strategic Forces.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I sincerely appreciate your continued support of the Navy's nuclear enterprise. Your efforts will ensure the continued credibility and reliability of our Trident II Weapons System and its remarkable Trident II D5 Missile, maintaining an unmatched record of success by any

missile system. The men and Women of Strategic Systems Programs are committed to the highest standards of safety, surety, and reliability of this remarkable system. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and am prepared to answer any questions you may have.