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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

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OF THE

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

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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

Strategic Systems Programs is impeccably supported by the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and by your committee in all aspects of our program. We appreciate this strong support and remain vigilant in executing our strategic deterrent mission. Strategic Systems Programs continues to maintain a safe, reliable, and secure environment for our strategic assets. We continue to focus on the custody and accountability of the nuclear assets you have entrusted to the Navy.

Earlier this year, the Navy took a significant step to better define the roles and responsibilities associated with the safety and security of our strategic weapons. The Secretary of the Navy signed an instruction strengthening Strategic Systems Programs' role as the program manager and technical authority for technical operations, safety, security and maintenance of the Navy's nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons systems.

Strategic Systems Programs will continue to sustain our high standards and focus on two major areas which include; (1) fully meeting operational and fleet support requirements and (2) recruiting and retaining the highest quality personnel to execute our strategic mission. I established senior executive level management for field operations and am implementing continuous on-site evaluation. These actions have improved the rigor applied to daily operations, increased the level of accountability, created an

environment of self-assessment, and placed priority on implementing corrective actions. SSP has also placed a high priority on the recruitment, development and retention of a highly-skilled workforce. These two focus areas shape the way in which we manage our day-to-day operations and set the culture to sustain our strategic deterrent for the long-term. The men and women of Strategic Systems Programs and our industry partners remain dedicated to supporting 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.

I would like to take a moment to address a few of the major initiatives underway within the Navy that address the sustainment of our sea-based deterrent and ensure its future viability.

Today's Force

We have returned three SSBNs to strategic patrol in the past twelve months. USS ALABAMA (SSBN 731), HMS Victorious and USS ALASKA (SSBN 732) have all completed Demonstration and Shakedown Operations and are ready for or already on strategic patrol. Our 14 U.S. Navy SSBNs, 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.

In December, the USS ALASKA (SSBN 732), the third of the three SSBNs to return to strategic operations, conducted the 130th consecutive successful flight test of the TRIDENT II (D5) missile as part of her Demonstration and Shakedown Operation. This record of successful flight tests is unmatched by any other missile launch system. Therefore, I am pleased to report to you that the Trident Strategic Weapons System

continues to demonstrate itself as a credible deterrent and meet the operational requirements established for the system almost thirty years ago.

USS NEVADA (SSBN 733) will soon complete her Engineering Refueling Overhaul, enter post availability testing, prepare for her Demonstration and Shakedown Operation and return to the operational cycle in spring 2011. Two more of our submarines, USS TENNESSEE (SSBN 734) and USS PENNSYLVANIA (SSBN 735) are undergoing Engineering Refueling Overhauls which will maintain the viability of these platforms through the service life of the OHIO Class.

The TRIDENT II (D5) weapons system is nearing its 20th year of deployment. We must continue to be vigilant of age-related issues to ensure the high reliability needed for a strategic weapons system. With the TRIDENT II (D5) missile planned for operational deployment through 2042 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. Therefore SSP has adjusted our testing to focus on older missiles in order to best predict aging characteristics. For example, the missile successfully fired by the USS ALASKA (SSBN 732) was approximately 17 years old.

D5 Life Extension Program

The TRIDENT II (D5) missile service life is being extended to 2042 to match the OHIO Class submarine service life. This is being accomplished through an update to missile electronics and guidance packages to address obsolescence and continuous production of critical components such as rocket motors.

SSP has restructured our D5 life extension program to ensure sufficient time for additional missile electronics design evolutions. The flight test schedule has been realigned by a few months to allow for data analysis and to incorporate any test changes. The initial introduction of the D5 life extended missiles to the Fleet has shifted from FY 2013 to FY 2017. This shift, which is cost neutral until FY 2013, will provide more time to ensure the successful deployment of the life extension program, while allowing us to continue to meet our ship-fill requirements. This modest schedule shift will also allow SSP to better accommodate the any potential outcomes of the Nuclear Posture Review and the New START Treaty. Ninety percent of the TRIDENT II (D5) life extension component procurement remains on track to support missile production.

One area of concern for the TRIDENT II (D5) life extension program is the decline in the Solid Rocket Motor Industrial Base. The Navy is maintaining a continuous production of solid rocket motors and should be in production through 2023. However, we have faced significant cost challenges as both NASA and Air Force demand have declined and will continue to experience those cost increases as demand continues to shrink further in future years.

Another key to the success of the TRIDENT II, D5 life extension program 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. The W76-1 refurbishment maintains the military capability of the original W76 for approximately an additional 30 years. This program will provide the Navy with the weapons we need to meet operational requirements throughout the OHIO service life and the planned follow-on platform.

OHIO Replacement

The Congress approved the first significant funding request for the OHIO Replacement program in the FY 2010 budget. Thank you for your strong support. The OHIO Replacement will be a strategic, national asset whose endurance and stealth will enable the Navy to provide continuous, uninterrupted survivable strategic deterrence into the 2080's.

The OHIO Replacement Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) study was completed and is being reviewed within the Navy. It will support the Milestone A review, which is planned for the spring of 2010. The Navy's FY 2011 budget provides the required RDT&E investment to support the lead ship construction beginning in FY 2019.

The United States and the United Kingdom have maintained a shared commitment to nuclear deterrence through the Polaris Sales Agreement since April 1963. The U.S. will continue to maintain its strong strategic relationship with the UK for our respective follow-on platforms, based upon the Polaris Sales Agreement. The OHIO Replacement program includes the development of a common missile compartment that will support both the OHIO Class Replacement and the successor to the UK Vanguard Class.

Nuclear Weapons Security

Our Marines and Navy Masters-at-Arms are providing an effective and integrated elite security force at both of our Strategic Weapons Facilities. 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).

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, reliability, and safety of our TRIDENT II (D5) Weapons System and its remarkable TRIDENT II (D5) Missile, maintaining a record of success unmatched 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. I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today and am prepared to answer any questions you may have.