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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
U.S. SENATE

SUBJECT: Department of Defense Nuclear Enterprise

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Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration

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Introduction

Chairman Udall, Ranking Member Sessions, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss Air Force strategic programs.

As the Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, my team, on behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, leads planning, policy development, advocacy, integration, and assessment for the Airmen and weapon systems performing Nuclear Deterrence Operations, a core function of our United States Air Force. Stewardship of the nuclear enterprise remains a top Air Force priority, in fulfillment of the President's mandate that the United States maintain a safe, secure, and effective deterrent as long as these weapons exist. While the challenges our Air Force faces in today's fiscally constrained environment are numerous, we remain committed to making the necessary investments in the sustainment and modernization of our nuclear deterrence capabilities, and in the stewardship of our Airmen responsible for this vital mission.

Nuclear Deterrence in the 21st Century

For 21st century deterrence, one size does not fit all. Successfully deterring near-peers and other nuclear-armed states requires new thinking and tailored application. However, deterrence must, as it always has, deny adversaries the incentive to use their nuclear capabilities. The non-peer case may be the most challenging, and will require a renewed understanding of what motivates these actors as well as critical thinking on how best to address the threats they pose.

As affirmed in the January 2012 Strategic Guidance, our power projection capabilities must remain credible in the eyes of potential adversaries across the spectrum of conflict, increasingly so in pre-crisis situations. In regional contexts, the assurances and extended deterrence the United States provides to our allies are integral to strengthening security relationships and supporting nonproliferation goals. The employment of B-52 and B-2 bombers over the Korean Peninsula in the March 2013 Foal Eagle exercise recently demonstrated how the U.S. can simultaneously signal resolve to our allies and deter aggression. Such effects are highly valuable and increase in importance in a complex, multi-polar environment.

Prioritizing Investment Across the Enterprise

In order to invest in only the highest priority needs across the nuclear enterprise, the Air Force has continued to rigorously assess the objectives of every program relative to its cost. In some instances, we have found it necessary to restructure, defer, or terminate programs with unsustainable cost growth and technical challenges – for example, with the Common Vertical Lift Support Platform program, and the Family of Advanced Beyond Line-of-Sight Terminals. These decisions are difficult and often carry commensurate risks that must be continuously balanced against operational requirements.

The B61 Life Extension Program (LEP) remains one of our most important priorities. As the primary gravity weapon employed by our long-range bombers and dual-capable aircraft, the B61 plays a central role in providing extended deterrence and assurance to our allies. Originally designed and fielded in the 1960s, the aging B61 will fail to meet requirements early in the next decade. By consolidating four existing B61variants into a single one – the B61-12 – the LEP will result in a safer and more reliable weapon with reduced sustainment costs. While refurbishment of the B61's nuclear explosive package is the responsibility of the Department of Energy (DOE), the Air Force is responsible for the B61-12 Tailkit Assembly (TKA), as well as integration of the weapon on its various platforms. The November 2012 award of the B61-12 TKA development contract was an important milestone in the Air Force's commitment to meeting DOE's anticipated delivery of the B61-12 first production unit in FY19.

Progress continues apace on an array of modernization programs for our capable yet aging fleet of long range B-52 and B-2 bombers. These assets provide the President with the ability to hold at risk virtually any target on the globe with a full range of conventional and nuclear weapons. On a daily basis, this highly valuable, Air Force-unique capability forces adversaries who consider threatening our national interests and those of our allies to confront the potential costs of losing what they hold most dear. Despite continual investments in the B-2 – our only long-range, direct-strike asset capable of penetrating in anti-access/area denial environments – over time the ability of this platform to prevail against advanced emerging threats is projected to diminish.

For that reason, efforts are underway to develop and field the Long Range Strike–Bomber (LRS-B), a Department of Defense commitment to ensuring the United States maintains its ability to project power globally in the decades to come. To deliver a force of 80-100 of these new bombers beginning in the mid-2020s, we are relying upon a streamlined acquisition strategy that balances capability with affordability. While the requirement for a new bomber is being driven primarily by a validated gap in conventional capability, LRS-B will be nuclear-capable at Initial Operational Capability, and nuclear-certified two years later.

In concert with LRS-B, the Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) program – the follow-on nuclear-capable cruise missile that will replace the 1980s-era Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) – is advancing. Notably, the LRSO Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) was recently completed and is pending validation by the Joint Requirements Oversight Counsel (JROC) in May 2013. LRSO will be designed at its outset to be compatible with the B-52, B-2, and LRS-B. We are collaborating closely with DOE to select a life-extended warhead for LRSO that will ensure the system remains a highly credible deterrent in the decades to come. In the meantime, a comprehensive service life extension program is underway for the ALCM that will sustain its effectiveness through 2030.

We are executing a similarly robust modernization plan for our nation's Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) deterrent, the Minuteman III, to ensure it remains effective and credible through 2030. In support of that objective, multiple lines of effort are underway that will update its fuzing, solid rocket motor, and guidance systems. Looking beyond 2030, efforts commenced last year to evaluate initial requirements and capabilities for a Ground Based Strategic Deterrence (GBSD) ICBM follow-on program. In August 2012, the JROC validated the GBSD Initial Capabilities Document, and completion of a formal AoA is expected in FY14.

The Air Force continues to strengthen all aspects of the nuclear security mission at our installations in the United States and abroad. In recent years, integration of state of the art detection, assessment, and denial technologies throughout our weapons storage areas, ICBM silos, and other nuclear-related sites have provided our highly-skilled and motivated security forces with the tools and capabilities they need to face any potential threat. The opening of the Air Force's new Nuclear Security Tactics Training Center last December at Camp Guernsey, Wyoming further enhances the readiness of our Airmen entrusted with nuclear security responsibilities.

Lastly, I am pleased that ongoing efforts by Air Force and Joint stakeholders to renew focus on our nation's aging Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) architecture have begun yielding measureable progress. The effectiveness of our NC3 platforms, systems, and facilities to support timely and informed decision making during times of crisis and war is critically important to ensuring strategic stability. As the Air Force is responsible for a major portion of our nation's NC3 systems, we are leading efforts to develop a synchronized investment strategy for NC3 modernization and recapitalization. Towards that end, over the past three years, the Air Force has established strong partnerships internally and across the Department of Defense to codify and refine NC3 responsibilities and to align investment priorities.

New START Implementation

Under the terms of the New START Treaty (NST) which entered into force in February 2011, the United States and Russian Federation are obligated to reduce and limit their strategic forces in accordance with the treaty's central limits no later than February 2018. In order to ensure our ICBM and heavy bomber force is compliant with NST's central limits by the deadline, we have fully funded implementation activities necessary to achieve the baseline force structure previously reported to Congress. While a final NST force structure decision is pending, the Air Force has begun working to eliminate treaty-accountable systems no longer used to perform the nuclear mission. These activities include the elimination of non-operational heavy bombers at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, as well as environmental assessments required to eliminate empty, non-operational ICBM silos.

Human Capital

Every day, roughly 36,000 Airmen perform Nuclear Deterrence Operations throughout the Air Force. These exceptional professionals provide the highest levels of stewardship to ensure our deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective. We continue to institutionalize fixes and create an enduring culture of accountability, compliance, and self-assessment throughout our nuclear units. While not conclusive indicators, positive trends such as increasing pass rates and a

leveling of repeat deficiencies in our rigorous nuclear inspection program reflect the considerable progress we have made in recent years.

After concluding that we could do more to support the development of our nuclear-focused airmen, in February 2013 the Air Force approved a recommendation to split the career field for space and ICBM operations into two distinct fields. This realignment underpins a more deliberate approach to cultivating field-grade officer nuclear expertise and developing ICBM-focused commanders.

Closing

Maintaining ready, diverse, and resilient nuclear deterrence capabilities is critical to ensuring stability in today's profoundly complex and evolving national security paradigm. The distinctive attributes of the Air Force's deterrent forces – the responsiveness of the ICBM and the flexibility and visibility of the bomber – are ideally suited to meet this challenge. As the challenges to maintaining stability inevitably grow in the years to come, the United States must be prepared to meet them.

The President's FY14 budget submission makes hard choices, but retains the commitment to a strong nuclear deterrent through modernization and recapitalization programs. That commitment is made manifest every day by the Airmen performing deterrence operations, who demonstrate those capabilities with precision and reliability. They are trustworthy stewards of our most powerful weapons, vital to our Nation as we endeavor to maintain stability in the 21st century.