

Prepared Remarks

United States Senate

Committee on Armed Services, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

Hearing: The Future Nuclear Posture of the United States

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UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

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Tuesday, January 26, 2016 – 2:30 p.m.

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Committee Tasking: “We would like you to provide an assessment of the continuities and changes in the U.S. nuclear posture since the end of the Cold War, with an eye toward what we’ve gotten right and what policies and/or assumptions have not been borne out by recent events. Most importantly, please provide the committee your thoughts about how the current nuclear posture should be changed to address the strategic environment as you see it evolving over the next 25 years. In other words, what should be the major considerations and content of the next nuclear posture review.”

I am honored to be here and would like to thank the Committee for asking me to join my distinguished colleagues and friends on this panel. I have worked with each of these gentlemen for many many years and I deeply respect them and their contributions to the United States.

The Nuclear Posture of the United States

You asked me to comment on our nuclear posture – which I understand to mean our understanding of the threats we face, our declaratory policy and the state of our forces. Sadly, I must report to you that I am deeply concerned on all counts, and that I believe we have declined in all three areas since the beginning of this century. It should be evident to all, although astonishingly it is not so -- particularly in the Washington-based arms control village -- that the world President Obama called for in his April 2009 Prague speech is not the one he is bequeathing to his successor. Rather than reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, Russia, China, and North Korea have all significantly increased the role those weapons play in their respective national security strategies. North Korea is now a full-fledged nuclear weapons state. China is engaging in a major modernization of its intercontinental land-based and sea-based nuclear missile forces.

And President Putin has increasingly over the last decade, presided over an administration which is:

- Engaged in an across- the-board modernization of both its strategic nuclear triad and its shorter range nuclear forces, in the process violating both the landmark 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the 1991-1992 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs). In sharp contrast to our programs, which are with the exception of updating the antiquated B-61 bomb all in the

planning phase, the Russians are deploying their new systems on land and at sea. Last month Russian Defense Minister Shoigu stated that over 50% of Russian nuclear forces are “new”;

- Using strategic bombers to engage in highly dangerous military activities and maneuvers adjacent to the our own airspace and that of our NATO and Pacific allies (in some cases actually endangering civil aviation);
- Carrying out a series of nuclear exercises which explicitly simulate attacks on our NATO allies; and
- Issuing a stream of nuclear saber rattling policy statements and specific threats, including many by Putin himself, the likes of which have not been heard since the days of Nikita Khrushchev.

Regrettably, our declaratory policy, apart from stating that “as long as nuclear weapons exist the United States will maintain a safe, secure and reliable deterrent” has not recognized the threats posed by the developments I have just described. To the extent that our unwillingness to respond is perceived by the Russian leadership as weakness – much as Hitler perceived the failure of Britain and France to respond to his reoccupation of the Rhineland and his annexations of Austria and Czechoslovakia as proof that London and Paris would not defend Poland – then we have left open the door to potential

miscalculations by Mr Putin and his gang, miscalculations which could prove deadly in a crisis.

Moreover, in sharp contrast to both Russia and China, the United States has not deployed a new strategic system in this century. The bomber and ICBM legs of our Triad have significant deficiencies. And yet, the modernization programs for all three legs of the Triad remain in the planning stages, with new systems not expected in the field until the mid-to-late 2020's. Worse yet, the arms control community continues – despite the deal it struck to support Triad modernization in exchange for ratification of New Start – to call for slashing the modernization programs: eliminating the replacement for the air launched cruise missile (thereby taking the B52 out of the Triad and eliminating our ability to use the so-called “bomber discount rule” which then-Strategic Command head General Bob Kehler said was crucial to maintaining sufficient strategic weapons numbers under New Start); eliminating the replacement for the Minuteman ICBM; cancelling the B61 modernization program, thereby ending NATO's forward based nuclear deterrent and its concurrent nuclear risk- and burden- sharing; and cutting back the number of SSBNs (which, in the aggregate, will carry upwards of 70% of our deterrent under New Start).

As a result of all this, I believe a major review of our nuclear posture is required in order to better align us to deter foreign leaders whose policies, pronouncements, and investments in nuclear forces suggest that they might actually believe in military use of such weapons in a crisis.

Reviewing our Nuclear Posture or a holding new Nuclear Posture Review

I believe I have a slightly different take from my colleagues, however, on how that nuclear review should be carried out. Let me say at the outset that I believe it is incumbent on every incoming Administration to review its predecessor's policies. This is certainly true with respect to defense policies and particularly the case with respect to nuclear deterrence policy and the programs and plans which support that policy. Where I believe I may part company with my colleagues, however, is that I believe such a review should be conducted promptly and quietly and in a highly classified manner, within a select group of policy makers and senior military officials in the Pentagon; the results of such a review should be shared with the President and the Vice President. Changes which the review might suggest, if approved by the Secretary of Defense or the President, as appropriate, should then be implemented and announced when appropriate and at a time and in a manner which achieves maximum national security benefit for

the United States and our allies. The relevant Congressional Committees should be consulted where appropriate and kept abreast of decisions which may have been required – and all this well before a public roll-out.

The hype and publicity created by holding “Congressionally-mandated Nuclear Posture Reviews” tends, on the other hand, to create significant and early expectations on the Hill and elsewhere that there will be opportunities for all of the interested parties – Congressional, other Executive branch agencies, and public interest groups -- to comment on the draft changes and to affect their trajectory. In particular, the inclusion in the past of the State Department and the White House staff have led to an over-emphasis on arms control initiatives and non-proliferation policies. While those are important, the basic nuclear posture which the United States requires to deter attack on ourselves and on our allies should be decided on firm national security principles; having decided these, an Administration can expand its focus to where arms control might be able to help support nuclear stability on a regional or global basis – and it is here that the State Department will have a role. Again, however, this would be after the basic deterrent requirements had been established.

There are other good arguments against recreating prior NPRs. Full-blown interagency involvement in Nuclear Posture Reviews also tends to increase significantly the amount of time necessary to reach – and therefore to implement –

conclusions; endless meetings of interagency working groups serve to slow the review process and do not improve its results. Furthermore, holding NPRs on a quadrennial basis also has created the expectation that nuclear policy needs to change with every new Administration. Contrary to changing policy simply because a new Administration has taken office are the facts (1) that the basic tenets of US nuclear deterrence policy (as contrasted to the implementation of those policies) have been remarkably consistent over the decades, and (2) that such consistency has served the nation, and our allies, well.

Those basic tenets include:

- Deterrence rests on the ability to convince an enemy leadership that our retaliation will impose costs which will outweigh any gains he hopes to make through his aggression;
- To be credible, we must have a modern retaliatory force which can clearly impose the costs our policy requires – even under the worst-case conditions of a surprise attack;
- Our retaliation must focus on assets the enemy leadership values – not on what we value; this means we must always study potential enemy leaderships to understand their value structures;

My views are based on my own experiences in the Department of Defense. Beginning in October 1981, I became the senior most official in OSD/Policy, tasked on a day-to-day basis with managing US nuclear deterrence policy (with the exception of actual nuclear target planning). In 1985, I also assumed responsibility for nuclear target planning. As I advanced in my career, rising to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary, a Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, and an Assistant Secretary, I maintained control of the nuclear portfolio. This continued through January 2001, at which point I was seconded to the White House as Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control. During the period 1981-2001, we in OSD, working with the Joint Staff and the nuclear staff in Omaha, and with the strong support of several Secretaries of Defense:

- corrected the perception that the Reagan Administration believed in nuclear war-fighting,
- reconfigured US declaratory policy,
- weathered the nuclear freeze and nuclear winter movements while maintaining support for our deterrent,
- maintained the vast majority of the strategic Triad modernization efforts on track,

- completely overhauled the nation's nuclear war plans twice (once during the period 1989-1991, and then again as the USSR was beginning to disintegrate in 1991)
- and, based on a firm understanding of our deterrent needs, developed proposals which formed the basis of the 1991-1992 Presidential Nuclear Initiatives with Russia and of the START 2 Treaty.

Most of this was done within the Defense establishment, and public mention was made by the then-Secretary of Defense when the final decisions had been approved either by himself or by the President. Some of the major changes, particularly those relating to the war plans, were never announced. We did not raise public expectations that change was necessary nor, in both Democrat and Republican Administrations, did we ask for public comment on what we proposed to do. Neither did we involve the other Executive Branch departments and agencies (with the exception of coordinating with the Department of Energy on developing and fielding new nuclear warheads.) The one NPR in which I was involved, that of 1993-1994, proved a disappointment in that it raised many expectations about radical changes in our posture which were not fulfilled because the international situation made such changes imprudent at best and dangerous at worst. Accordingly, I would urge

Congress not to mandate that the incoming Administration conduct yet another Nuclear Posture Review.

Mr. Chairman, I again thank the Committee for asking me to testify and I look forward to answering any questions the Committee might have for me.