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COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN AN UNCONSTRAINED, POST-NEW START TREATY ENVIRONMENT

Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Washington, D.C.

ALDERSON COURT REPORTING
1029 VERMONT AVE, NW
10TH FLOOR
WASHINGTON, DC 20005
(202) 289-2260

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U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Roger Wicker, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Wicker [presiding], Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cramer, Scott, Banks, Reed, Shaheen, Blumenthal, Hirono, Kaine, King, Warren, Rosen, and Kelly.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER, U.S. SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI

Chairman Wicker: The committee will come to order. We meet this morning to explore how the United States can prepare for and effectively compete in a multipolar world unconstrained by any limitations on nuclear forces.

The New START Treaty was negotiated in the bygone era, 15 years ago. In 2010, the idea of abolishing nuclear weapons seemed an attainable goal to some. For a while, the treaty did provide a degree of transparency and predictability between the United States and Russia on the nuclear forces of those two countries. That is until Vladimir Putin decided that compliance with Russia's obligations were no longer in his interest. That should be instructive, I would add, regarding any promises that he might be trying to make during this year.

Now, as I say, 15 years after the treaty was signed, we face an assortment of threats far more complicated and dangerous than anyone foresaw in 2010. Today, the Putin dictatorship commands the world's largest nuclear arsenal, and he's developing new weapons designed to exploit our most vulnerable points.

Despite its conventional losses in Ukraine, which are substantial, Russia's nuclear weapons production capacity is far greater than our own. His capacity to produce nuclear

weapons is far greater than that of the United States. It will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

China is poised to become an even greater threat. Over the past several years, Xi Jinping has nearly quadrupled the size of his nuclear arsenal. Meanwhile, he's expanded China's shipbuilding capacity to more than 230 times that of the United States, and he's built thousands of long-range missiles, including Fractional Orbital Bombardment weapons.

The full list of China's military advances is too extensive to cover here. But China's goal is clear; she is committed to replacing the U.S., and is rapidly building to displacing the U.S. as the leader, and is rapidly building the capability to do so.

The emergence of two peer competitors alone represents an unprecedented challenge to the United States. However, these concerns have compounded by an extensive set of new threats to our national security. These threats include; North Korea's growing nuclear missile capabilities, the weaponization of space, the accessibility of dangerous narcotics, the increased use of unmanned systems, and the emergence of artificial intelligence. This complexity has profound implications for future U.S. defense policies and strategies. Hence our distinguished panel today.

In this complicated environment, deterrence depends on tangible military capability. Some American defense

planners express hope for a "decent peace" with our adversaries, but to endure that peace, it must be founded first and foremost on a credible deterrent. To be sure, improved defenses such as Golden Dome initiative play a vital supporting role. But at its core that credible deterrence will always be based on our nuclear forces.

Secondly, strategic competition can no longer be divided into discreet domains. Our adversaries view all types of military capabilities as tools to shape geopolitical outcomes. Our nuclear posture, missile defenses, conventional forces, cyber capabilities, and space assets must be fully integrated and responsive to threats against the U.S. national security, regardless of where those threats arise.

Thirdly, we cannot field the capabilities we need without a strong industrial base. Decades of so-called streamlining have left our domestic manufacturers with almost no capacity to surge munitions production. Our critical mineral supply chains have become brittle, poorly designed workforce development plans have left us with critical labor shortages in manufacturing and skilled trades.

This moment tests American resolve and our commitment to the alliances that have helped preserve our security for decades. Our allies are waiting to see whether we will

respond to this new era with seriousness, strength, and leadership, or with hesitation, weakness, and complacency. We must compete with the adversaries I've mentioned, and we must do so responsibly.

This does not mean recklessly seeking conflict, nor does it mean retreating into isolationism. Instead, we recognize that peace is preserved through strength, preparedness, and a willingness to act when appropriate to achieve our national interest. We saw this on full display during Operation Midnight Hammer.

I thank our witnesses for their views on how U.S. defense policy and strategy must adapt. I look forward to their ideas on what Congress can do to ensure that American deterrence remains unquestioned in an increasingly dangerous world.

With that, I turn to my friend and colleague, Ranking Member Reed.

STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND

Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I want to welcome the witnesses. Thank you for your service, and your appearance here today.

The United States faces a historically dangerous strategic landscape. Tomorrow, the New START Treaty will expire for the first time in 54 years, the United States and Russia will have no binding framework to regulate our respective nuclear forces.

Although Russia suspended its verification practices in 2023, public reporting indicates Moscow has continued to observe the treaty's central limits of roughly 1,500 warheads and 700 deployed delivery systems. And I believe the opportunity still exists to pursue a successor agreement. The alternative, an unconstrained arms competition would serve neither country's interest.

Further, unlike the New START Treaty, which came into effect in 2010, we now face two near-peer nuclear rivals. China is rapidly expanding its nuclear forces to achieve parity with the United States and Russia. Experts predict Beijing could acquire approximately 1,500 warheads in the next several years, and deploy them on a triad of delivery platforms like those of the United States and Russia.

Indeed, three years ago, members of the Strategic

Posture Commission testified before this committee to warn of such a threat, and we have responded in several consecutive National Defense Authorization Acts. But to date, I have seen no serious efforts by the Trump administration to address this issue, nor engage with China on strategic stability efforts. We must act before the dangerous patterns of the U.S./Soviet arms race are replicated in a far more complex three-way competition.

Additionally, the concept of extended nuclear deterrents, the bedrock of our global alliance system, faces its greatest challenge in decades. I'm alarmed by the Trump administration's diplomatic and economic attacks against our closest allies, and their disregard for critical mutual defense arrangements.

For example, the public version of the 2022 National Defense Strategy mentioned extended deterrence 17 times. The public version of the 2026 strategy mentioned extended deterrence 17 times. For example, this 2026 Strategy does not mention it at all.

Among many other harmful actions by the administration, there has been profound consequences. NATO allies are questioning America's Article 5 nuclear commitment. South Korea and Japan are reexamining their nuclear policies, and every woodbot, the ally of the United States, is reconsidering the long-term wisdom of such a relationship.

If our allies cannot rely on America's nuclear umbrella, then weapons proliferation becomes a dangerous next step. The implications for global stability are troubling.

Finally, calls by this President to resume nuclear testing are profoundly misguided. In total, the United States has conducted more than 1,000 nuclear tests, compared to Russia's 715 and China's 45. We have invested approximately $30 billion in the National Ignition Facility, which allows us to study weapons physics without underground testing, a capability that Russia and China lack.

Our three nuclear weapons laboratories have certified annually for nearly 25 years that we have no technical need to test these weapons. Resuming tests would simply encourage our adversaries to close their own technological gaps, and would give India, Pakistan, or North Korea justification to resume their programs. This makes no strategic sense.

Ms. Gottemoeller and Mr. Morrison, given your role in the first Trump administration, I would like to know your views on how we might balance strategic stability with China and Russia, while exploring what can be done to possibly bring both into an OMS control framework.

Similarly, Admiral Richard, you commanded U.S. Strategic Command at a time when China was rapidly expanding its nuclear forces. I would like your thoughts on whether

the force structure we are investing in today will be able to deter future threats from our competitors.

In its final report, the Strategic Posture Commission warns, "We have not seen the U.S. government demonstrate the urgency and creativity required to meet the challenge of advancing nuclear stability." I hope this hearing will serve as a catalyst for the serious, sustained engagement that this crisis demands. And I look forward to our witness insights into these issues, and thank them for their participation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Reed.

We are delighted to welcome our witnesses today. Retired Admiral Charles A. Richard, retired U.S. Navy, former Commander of the United States Strategic Command, and incoming Chief Executive Officer of the Institute for Defense Analysis.

The Honorable Rose E. Gottemoeller is -- do I pronounce that right, Gottemoeller? The William J. Perry Lecturer at the Center for International Security and Cooperation, and Hoover Institution Research Fellow, Stanford University.

And Mr. Timothy A. Morrison, former Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute.

Admiral Richard, I understand that you have declined to

make an opening statement, and we're certainly mindful of that.

Admiral Richard: Thank you.

Chairman Wicker: We're glad you're here. You'll get a lot of chances to talk. Before I recognize Ms. Gottemoeller, let me say, there are several members of the Commerce Science and Transportation Committee who are here for this hearing. At some point, we're going to receive an urgent message from the next building over that we need to go over for a vote. And so, we'll take turns presiding over this, and the members, including me, will be back as soon as we possibly can.

But for now, Ambassador Gottemoeller, we are delighted to recognize you for your opening statement.

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE ROSE E. GOTTEMOELLER, WILLIAM J. PERRY LECTURER AT THE CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AND COOPERATION, AND HOOVER INSTITUTION RESEARCH FELLOW, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and Senator Reed, distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I'm really honored to have this opportunity to testify to you regarding the strategic competition in an unconstrained post New START Treaty environment. Thank you for the invitation.

I'm also pleased to appear before you with Admiral Richard, and Mr. Timothy Morrison. Although our opinions may differ on how to proceed at this moment in our nuclear history, I have the greatest respect for these gentlemen, and I think it's good that you can hear from all of us and consider our views an equal measure.

I prepared full testimony for this morning's hearing. If I may, I'd like to make just a few points as we begin, and put the rest of my testimony on the record. Would that be acceptable?

Chairman Wicker: [Off mic.]

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Thank you. So, I would like to start with a vital point. Too often, deterrence in arms control are set up in opposition to each other. If nuclear deterrence is the top necessity, then nuclear arms control

has to be dead. If nuclear arms control is thriving, then nuclear deterrence must be suffering. I would like to stress that instead, the two enjoy a symbiotic relationship. The strength of one feeds the strength of the other and vice versa.

The symbiosis comes about because stable deterrence is driven by predictability, and nuclear negotiations done right, deliver predictability. The effect comes about because restraints on our opponents reach through agreement, bolster predictability, which in turn supports our nuclear forces in their drive for reliable, stable, and effective deterrence.

Lack of predictability by contrast, feeds uncertainty about the status of the nuclear forces among our adversaries, which means we may end up spending more than we have to on nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles. This outcome is a problem when we have so many requirements facing us for strong and modern conventional forces -- you already referred to that, Mr. Chairman -- and also in other areas of emerging technology and on the cyber front as well.

It goes without saying that we have to be alert to any cheating going on, and the Russians have violated treaties in an egregious way, including the short and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, INF, which President Trump withdrew from in response in 2019 during his first term in

office. That action conveyed an important message; we are alert to treating non-compliance by the Russians or any other country, and we will respond with every legal tool available to us and take military action, nuclear or conventional, as warranted.

President Putin's decision to pull the plug on New START on the implementation of New START in February, 2023 was not permitted by the treaty, and we determined quickly that Russia was therefore in violation of it. That was the right decision, but it does not belie the fact that New START has kept the Russian nuclear force posture to the limits of the treaty despite this violation; 1,550 deployed warheads, 700 deployed delivery vehicles, and 800 deployed and non-deployed launchers.

We have been able to confirm the deployments through our national technical means of verification. As a result, essential predictability has remained despite the violation, and Senator Reed did refer to that in his opening remarks.

Now, very briefly on the role of New START Treaty limits. I testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in December that I support a one-year extension of the limits of New START. My bottom line is that it does not serve U.S. National Security and trust to have to address the Chinese nuclear buildup, while simultaneously facing a rapid Russian upload campaign.

The Russians have the capacity and experience to succeed in such a campaign. It will be much better for us to keep them limited for at least another year while we continue to plan and prepare for the Chinese threat. Remaining under New START limits for a year does not prejudice our plannings and preparation to upload.

The concern about a rapid Russian upload campaign was a finding of the Strategic Posture Commission, of which I was a member. As our 2023 report stated, and I quote, "The Commission concludes that Russia's active nuclear warhead and missile production lines provide the capability, should Russia decide, to discard the limits of New START to expand its strategic nuclear forces."

The new National Security Strategy of the United States makes two other points that are relevant to this topic. First, it states, and I quote, "It is a core interest of the United States to reestablish strategic stability with Russia." Second, it underscores that our President is the President of peace with a readiness to pursue Presidential diplomacy. And we have seen that in very many settings.

I would like to state my view that it should be Donald Trump who gets to be the President of nuclear peace in this case, not Vladimir Putin. A continuation of New START limits for one year would give President Trump time to pursue his instinct to reestablish strategic stability with

Russia, and control nuclear weapons at the negotiating table.

Refusing the one-year extension on New START limits gives Putin an easy diplomatic win that should have been the President's. But I do not insist that New START is the be-all and end-all of nuclear treaties. President Trump told the New York Times in January that he wants to negotiate a better treaty. That is good. I fully applaud that goal and will do everything I can to support it.

Thank you. I look forward to our discussion today.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Gottemoeller follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Madam Ambassador. Mr. Morrison, you are recognized

STATEMENT OF MR. TIMOTHY A. MORRISON, FORMER DEPUTY ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, AND SENIOR FELLOW AT THE HUDSON INSTITUTE

Mr. Morrison: Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to share my thoughts as we approach the expiration of the New START Treaty. I always appreciate the opportunity to appear to Rose's left.

It's worth recalling that the Cold War officially ended on December 26th, 1991, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. With the expiration of the New START Treaty this week, we can finally put to rest the last Cold War-style arms control treaty as well. History doesn't afford many blank slate opportunities, but this Thursday will be an opportunity to start over in the domain of arms control.

Let's be clear, arms control can and should be an important tool of competition between nuclear arms states, but it is only a tool of competition, and it is only one tool and is not an end to itself. The Cold War did witness arms control that served us interests in that competition.

For example, the INF agreement was perhaps the most successful arms control treaty ever signed by the United States. Not only did it actually destroy nuclear weapons and prohibit an entire class of them, but the Soviet Union had to destroy more than twice as many nuclear weapons as

the United States.

But these criteria are only one piece of the puzzle. There's another piece as Dr. Freddie Iklé's said, "After detection - What?" How do we enforce compliance in a future arms control treaty? INF was after all a Cold War agreement, and it was one that Russia ultimately saw fit to end realizing perhaps before we did that, the Cold War was over.

And so, when considering what arms control the United States might want to pursue going forward, we should be thinking today after detection. What I fear, our options are limited. I'm mindful of a historical footnote a friend of mine known to this committee, Greg Weaver, sent me some years ago.

Following World War II, the United States quickly increased production of nuclear weapons. The Atomic Energy Commission chose the Dow Chemical Company to manage the production facility. A four square mile site, about 15 miles Northwest of Denver, at a place called Rocky Flats, was chosen.

On July 10th, 1951, ground was broken on the first building in that facility. In 1953, the plant began production of bomb components, manufacturing plutonium pits, which were used at the Pantex plant in Texas. From groundbreaking to first pit in less than two years.

Compare that to today. In October, 2024, the NNSA celebrated its first diamond stamped pit for the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile, effectively with a brief exception since 1989, when Rocky Flats closed.

China is adding at least 100 warheads a year to its nuclear force. General Cotton, the prior Commander of USSTRATCOM, testified before the House Armed Services Committee that, "Russia continues to update its warhead production complex and is producing hundreds of warheads each year."

By 2035, 100 percent of U.S. nuclear weapons, the warheads, and the bombs themselves, will have exceeded their design lives by an average of 30 years. They won't be 30 years old; they will have exceeded their design life by 30 years. This asymmetry undermines not only arm control but deterrence itself.

Now, history has shown that the only means to reliably enforce compliance with arm control treaties is to be able to threaten that failure to comply will be met with a compelling response. And for the next arm control treaty, if the U.S. doesn't have the means to respond quickly to a violation, what will we have accomplished by agreeing to it? Indeed, relying on ineffective arms control may actually undermine our security by denying us the motivation to make needed investments in our security.

The continued commitment to rebuild the U.S. nuclear deterrence, and to have a system capable of building and maintaining that deterrence is essential not only for U.S. and allied security, but if we are going to be able to get to a point where arms control can again serve our national security

And Senators, I'd like to close with a personal note. I had the privilege to work in this institution for a statesman who was well known in this committee, Senator Jon Kyl. Senator Kyl recently announced he would be stepping back from public engagement due to his health.

Our country is stronger and safer for his lifetime of service to it, and I'm better for what he taught me. His voice and wisdom in these debates will be missed, but we stand on the shoulders of giants and we can see farther.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Morrison follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Mr. Morrison. And I, too, am grateful for the leadership and friendship that Senator Kyl has shown to me over time. And I wish him and his family well.

Let me ask you, Mr. Morrison, would you like to submit your full statement for the record?

Mr. Morrison: Mr. Chairman, I would.

Chairman Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ambassador and Mr. Morrison, how do you differ? Let's take a minute or two. Ambassador Gottemoeller, you would sign a treaty and you would continue to modernize?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Yes, sir. And this is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Strategic Posture Commission Report. We found that the program of record for nuclear triad modernization is necessary, but not sufficient.

And so, I actually agree with the notion that we need to think carefully about the threat that is presented by two nuclear peers by China and by the Russian Federation going forward, and we need to make judicious choices juxtaposed against the other demands on our defense budget.

And I mentioned the conventional force posture, but also the new technologies that are coming our way and must be judiciously incorporated into our new weapon systems, as well as the whole arena of cyber threats, and how we are

going to contest the Russians and the China Chinese in that space.

Chairman Wicker: All right. Mr. Morrison, would you memorialize that in a new treaty for one year or more?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, when the Trump 45 administration had an opportunity to consider this question, we stepped back and we looked at not just what the Russian Force was doing, but also the Chinese force. And we've talked a bit about that this morning.

One of the things that former Secretary of State Pompeo stated was that under New START, "Only 45 percent of Russia's nuclear arsenal was subject to numerical limits. Meanwhile, that agreement restricts 92 percent of America's arsenal."

Where we approached this question in the prior Trump administration was; let's look at an agreement that captures the total force, not just strategic weapons.

Chairman Wicker: Was it a bad deal?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I believe that the New START Treaty was a bad deal.

Chairman Wicker: All right. Okay, Admiral Richard, here you are. You are the tiebreaker. Do I get to go to Hollywood or not?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, to be very direct on the answer to your question, I would not recommend a one-

year extension to the New START Treaty, absent verification procedures being reinstated.

I am on record testifying in front of this committee that arms Control as ambassador Gott Miller mentioned, if done correctly, enhances strategic deterrence, enhances certainty, enhances confidence. But it has to include all parties, it has to include all weapons, and it has to have verification mechanisms built in with consequences for non-compliance.

Chairman Wicker: By all parties you mean multilateral?

Admiral Richard: Multilateral.

Chairman Wicker: Okay, go ahead.

Admiral Richard: Yes, at a minimum, I would include Russia, China, and the United States in any arms control agreement. Absent that, simply extending the New START Treaty for one year does not constrain Russia to the same way that it constrains us.

It prevents us from answering the challenge that China has added to this, and it increases the uncertainty because it doesn't have the verification mechanisms built in that were so successful in the past.

Chairman Wicker: Admiral, there may be some people in our viewing audience who are thinking, "I thought we were going to have Golden Dome," and thought this was going to take care of protecting us from the threat of nuclear

weapons. Would you explain on the record and for the listening public what the problem is with that sort of viewpoint?

Admiral Richard: I would strongly endorse the drive to protect the continental United States with a golden dome. I think we have real-world experience from the Middle East in terms of how that enhances defense. Deterrence provides more options to our leadership, and I would like those same benefits to be applied to the United States.

That said, I think a lesson out of the events in Israel is that deterrence by denial, which is what a defensive system like Golden Dome does, has to always be backed up by the threat of deterrence by cost imposition, otherwise, your opponent has no incentive to stop shooting.

Chairman Wicker: Well, tell us what, "by cost imposition means," for the layman.

Admiral Richard: For the layman, that you have the ability to strike back, and the threat of that will influence your opponent in a way that they will choose restraint as their least bad option.

Chairman Wicker: And that's really what we're talking about when we're talking about our nuclear deterrence posture.

Admiral Richard: Our entire nuclear deterrence posture is designed to, by threat of escalation, convince your

opponent, have a perception in your opponent's mind, that restraint, inaction is their least bad course of action. And that has been successful for over 60 years in deterring not only nuclear attack on the United States and our allies, but has made a great contribution to the deterrence of Great Power War.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, sir. Mr. Reed.

Senator Reed: Thank you much, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Gottemoeller, the New START Treaty is expiring. What effect do you think it'll have on our allies in Europe and Indo-Pacific?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Our allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific are concerned about extended nuclear deterrence. And extended nuclear deterrence as part of the predictability I was talking about at the outset, that the more predictability we have with regard to our opponents, that bolsters also their confidence in the status of the nuclear threats that may come their way in Asia and in Europe.

So, it's true that the New START Treaty does address strategic nuclear force posture, but maintaining some limitations that are in a way a way of extending that predictability are, I would say, helpful to our allies overall in their period now of grappling with questions about the legitimacy and potential of U.S. extended nuclear

deterrent deterrence going forward.

Many questions, many debates going on in this regard, but I do think that the continuation of the New START Treaty limits would play a role in bolstering their shaking confidence at this difficult period.

Senator Reed: There is a danger, I think, and your comment would be helpful, that once this treaty sort of disappears, all treaties disappear. And the concept of trying to negotiate agreements becomes a relic of the past, and we're left now with simply deterrence through kinetic means. Is that something that bothers you?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: As I said, sir, I think that deterrence and negotiated restraint both play a role. And in fact, they are woven together. If you have good arms control treaties -- and I must say, I do want to emphasize that we do know what to do next.

When a treaty is violated, we call the Russians out on it and we tell them you have violated this treaty. And in the case of the INF treaty, we withdrew from the treaty after trying to get them back into compliance. And we also conveyed to them very clearly that NATO would take countermeasures, including the deployment of conventional missiles in Europe, which is beginning to unfold now.

And so, we do make responses to violations, and we do so in a way -- and this is another point at the negotiating

table, you look the other guy in the eye and you tell him, "We've got your number, we know what you're up to." This is an important role for negotiated diplomacy in this realm as well.

Senator Reed: And there's another aspect to these treaties; that's the whole verification mechanism --

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Right.

Senator Reed: -- which is important to keep everybody on the straight and narrow, we hope.

Admiral Richard, is there a simple sort of arithmetic that without treaties, we need more deterrent forces, which increases the budget we have to deal with?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I would offer that we're already in an environment where we need additional forces. That independent of the treaty, Russia has been very successful at adding capability that is not covered by the treaty. Mr. Morrison just mentioned the 45 percent versus the 92 percent. China is completely unconstrained.

So, yes. Is there a value to the verification mechanisms in terms of reducing what you might consider error bars around your intelligence community's assessment of your opponent's capability? Yes, but that is very minor in comparison to where they are unconstrained, and have no limits on their ability to improve or increase their forces.

Senator Reed: Just a quick response. The presumption,

I think, with China, is that they will not seriously begin to negotiate until they've reached parity with the United States or Russia. Do you agree?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, on China, I had a rule with my intelligence folks back at STRATCOM that whatever the intelligence community tells you about China in terms of numbers, double it or triple it, and you will probably be closer to where we're actually going to wind up.

In terms of time, divide by two, maybe by three, and you'll actually wind up being closer. And in my four years since retiring, that rule of thumb seems to have held. So, yes, I think that's the way to approach that.

Senator Reed: Just a final point. We've seen a crowd of agitation between this administration and many of our allies, and there is renewed interest, I think, in many countries, particularly in Europe, Japan, South Korea, in having their own nuclear deterrence systems.

Quickly, Ambassador Gottemoeller, are you concerned about proliferation right now because of the paths that we've taken?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: I'm very concerned about the potential for proliferation, so-called friendly proliferation. I do not think it will be helpful to stability and security going forward.

Senator Reed: All right. And Mr. Morrison, forgive

me, but just quick. Are you also concerned about preliminary proliferation?

Mr. Morrison: Yes, sir. I don't think you can understate the risk of proliferation.

Senator Reed: Yeah. Admiral, yay or nay?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I am, but it's for a different reason. I will defer to my distinguished colleagues to my left on policy and diplomatic issues. But from an operational standpoint, in my conversations with the allies, the issue was less about treaties, and it was more about capability and will.

And we have recently demonstrated will. I think we've made positive movement in that direction, but it's the capabilities we have or don't have that is of a much bigger concern to our allies in terms of our ability to honor our extended deterrence commitments.

Senator Reed: Thank you. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Rounds: [Presiding.] Thank you, Senator Reed. On behalf of the chairman, I think I'm up next. And so, I want to just begin by thanking all of you for your service to our country.

And Ambassador, I'm just curious. In your discussions, you focused on the specifics of the treaty between the United States and Russia, but didn't really talk a lot about where China fits into this and about what the impact of an

extension of one year would have.

Can you go into a little bit more detail with regard to what your analysis was concerning China's role, and how we should be treating it if there would've been an extension of this by one year? How would we treat China?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Yes, sir. And the administration, President Trump, has been in no doubt about how he would like to proceed. He said publicly, and as I've understood, he's discussed with President Xi Jinping, at least according to media reports, that he would like to get into a new nuclear negotiation with China as well. And I applaud that. I believe that it's absolutely necessary.

But I do want to place things a bit in context. The United States and Russia each deploy under New START, 1,550 warheads, operationally deployed warheads. In addition, each has approximately 4,000 total warheads. So, we do have, I would say, warheads superiority, still considerable over the Chinese. According to public sources, they have approximately 600.

I agree with Admiral Richard and with Mr. Morrison that they are quickly building up. There's no question about that. The best information I have is that by 2035, they will have right around 1,500 warheads according to our Department of Defense, now Department of War. So, we have the ability to work this problem.

I say we have to be self-confident in our ability to work this problem over the next decade, including through responses that we make in the development and modernization of our nuclear triad, but also in terms of how we engage and interact with them at the negotiating table.

I do think those two things work together and that we can gain success by having a very firm and strong approach to the modernization of our nuclear triad.

Senator Rounds: Thank you. Mr. Morrison, and Admiral Richard, I'm just curious, I firmly believe that if we end up in a confrontation with either one of these two adversaries, China or Russia, that we will be involved in a confrontation with both.

Would you share with us your thoughts about how we work at creating a deterrence, or what your thoughts are with regard to deterrence, recognizing that we may very well face both of them, and that our deterrence has to recognize that. Admiral Richard?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, I didn't have the luxury when I was at STRATCOM of deterring our opponents one at a time. I had to look at the collective. I am very concerned about the possibility of opportunistic or coordinated aggression, either between major powers such as Russia, and China, and or the regional ones. Again, I had to deter them all.

And so, the simple numerical comparisons don't completely capture the complexity, what the U.S. has to have in order to deter two peers at the same time that have to be deterred differently. And I think there's a lot of work left to be done in terms of even updating how you apply deterrence theory in a three-party world with possibility of coordinated opportunistic and ambiguous aggression.

In a way, all of that needs to be worked out, but I would strongly support what the Strategic Posture Commission said; our current modernization program is necessary, but not sufficient, and there are a number of obvious steps we need to take in terms of additional capabilities to address the threat I just described.

Senator Rounds: Let me just hit that before I go to Mr. Morrison, the B-21 stealth bomber. We're currently on Schedule 4, purchasing 100 of them with several of our other strategic forces behind in terms of the modernization critical that we seriously consider larger numbers of the B-21, which is on target on budget?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I would definitely encourage that. And it's not only for the strategic deterrence role of the B-21, but the B-21 also carries a significant conventional deterrence role. And the nation should not have to decide based on limited numbers of its bombers, whether to employ them in a conventional or a strategic

role.

Senator Rounds: Thank you. Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I think it comes back to deterrence works. And part of our ability to deter is to demonstrate that whoever may choose to challenge us, including if they challenge us in a conspiracy or confederation, can't possibly win.

And that's where I worry about the asymmetry between our nuclear weapons production complex and those of our potential adversaries. I don't believe that right now our complex deters aggression, including aggression by more than one power at a time.

Senator Rounds: And specifically with regard to the B-21 stealth bomber, would you recommend accelerating that, or where are you at with regard to the right now? We're set up for a hundred of them testimony before this committee has indicated more than that are necessary. Your thoughts?

Mr. Morrison: Sir, I look at the world, and I think more and faster across the board.

Senator Rounds: Thank you very much. And with that, Senator Shaheen.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Senator Rounds.

Ambassador, I think the questioning has assumed that China is not interested in entering into any arms control framework given its current arsenal. Do you agree with

that? Do you think that's an accurate assessment?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: It certainly has been up to this point, Senator Shaheen, and I do think it will depend on that Presidential diplomacy that I mentioned at the outset and just referred to. But I will say that as long as China is approached to wrestle with notions of nuclear risk that it's concerned about, I think that we can get into early discussions with them.

It's been my recent experience working with them in track two settings that they seem very interested in trying to figure out ways to begin in a conversation with the United States about nuclear risks. And I think that that is a valuable way to get to the point where we can be talking to them about limitations.

Again, they have a much smaller arsenal than ours, but things like nuclear launch notif, or not nuclear launch notifications, but missile launch notifications, developing better communications links with them at the strategic level, hotline arrangements, these types of things, I think they are valuable to begin a conversation about the necessity of controlling nuclear weapons at the negotiating table, and not being so negotiating untransparent about what they're doing with their modernization.

That has to be the first and foremost objective, talking to them about what their intentions are.

Senator Shaheen: And is there a risk to delaying any kind of an agreement with Russia to try and negotiate a trilateral arms control treaty?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Because the numbers are so different, Senator, I do not support trying to do a trilateral negotiation. I believe that these negotiations should be done in parallel. We have 50-plus years of experience now limiting and reducing nuclear weapons with the Russians. We can continue that kind of process with them at this point, not necessarily to reduce, but to continue to limit and control nuclear weapons.

And by the way, I agree that non-strategic nuclear weapons, that's where we get this 45 percent versus 95 percent number. We did not constrain non-strategic nuclear weapons in the New START Treaty. It was not designed for that purpose. So, to fault it for not controlling those weapons is a bit bizarre.

But nevertheless, I agreed very much with Mr. Morrison's approach and the entire Trump administration during the first term when they said we need an all-warhead limit in the next negotiation. I think that is definitely the priority we need to proceed on with the Russians. I've already spoken about the Chinese, I think they are willing to talk to us now, but it is about risk reduction, and the beginning of more predictability and transparency about

their nuclear objectives.

Senator Shaheen: And based on the comments that you've both made so far, Admiral Richard, and Mr. Morrison, do you share that view that we can go ahead and negotiate without trying to include both China and Russia in any negotiations?

Admiral Richard: Senator, no. I would recommend including Russia and China in any future negotiations. There's a point I didn't want to pick up on though in terms of the discussions with China. Again, I'm have testified to this effect before. One thing that Russia and the United States learned through the Cold War was how you responsibly operate systems of this great destructive potential. China, we don't know if they have learned the same lessons. Ours were learned over time, and they were very difficult.

I think that is an excellent starting point for a conversation with China. There are terms like confidence building and transparency that I would certainly endorse, but fundamentally, it comes back to how do you responsibly operate weapon systems with this magnitude of destructive potential that is to everyone's benefit, including China. And I think that makes an excellent starting point for diplomacy.

Senator Shaheen: Mr. Morrison, do you agree?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I find myself more in agreement with Admiral Richard. Arms control requires two or more

parties to choose to enter into the process. And my concern about extending the New START Treaty, for example whether as part of what was an agreed mechanism or now an expiration, a sort of an executive agreement, is it takes away the leverage we need, the interest that Russia has in continuing to bind our forces, 92 percent of our forces, and allows them to continue to escape the tougher conversation that they want to avoid of what to do about their non-strategic forces. And I also think it removes pressure from the other party.

Senator Shaheen: Well, thank you all. I have only a few seconds left, but I do want to -- I know this is about the New START Treaty. But I want to get your reaction to whether you think it's in our interest to negotiate with Iran to try and prevent them from achieving a nuclear weapon. Can you all just answer very briefly whether you think that's in our interest or not?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Yes, I've been glad that Mr. Witkoff seems to be pursuing that goal.

Senator Shaheen: Admiral Richard?

Admiral Richard: Senator, any mechanism that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is in our interests.

Senator Shaheen: Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I think it's always worth trying, but I think we also have to realize who the Iranian

regime is and whether or not we think they'll actually live up to a commitment they make.

Senator Shaheen: Well, that's a challenge with all of our adversaries, I would argue. Thank you.

Senator Rounds: On behalf of the chairman, Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Yes. Good morning, and thanks to our witnesses for being here today, and for collectively, your decades of work and experience on this area. It's incredibly important, and your insights are very, very good.

As the New START expires, we know that our deterrence is becoming more and more dependent upon effective nuclear modernization. But what we have seen, and especially from the cheap seats here, is that the entire nuclear enterprise has seen delays in their schedule. We've seen a number of cost overruns, and we have to ensure that the Department of War and industry deliver on these programs on time, on budget, and in a way that preserves our strategic deterrence.

So, to all of our witnesses, and we'll start with you, Admiral, please. How do continued modernization delays affect us leverage in future arms control or nuclear risk reduction efforts?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, any delay is not good for that, right? We waited until the last possible moment.

Again, an example of U.S. restraint to recapitalize and modernize our forces. Others did not.

But I am encouraged by the New National Defense Strategy, and it has a whole line of effort of turbocharging our industrial base. It uses the terms, "national mobilization," which I think is appropriate for the threats that we face.

And there are a number of individual actions being announced by both the Departments of Energy and Department of War that give me some confidence or hope that we're going to get the bureaucracy out of the way. We're going to place operational risk back on par with programmatic and technical risk, and that we will move out recapitalizing our conventional and strategic forces.

Senator Ernst: Wonderful. And we hope it's more than just words on paper. Thank you. Yes, Ambassador?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Well, Senator, it's great to see you. I absolutely agree, as the Strategic Posture Commission said, that the triad modernization under the program of record is necessary but not sufficient.

So, I think we have to continue to press to get that program of record implemented on time to the degree that is possible. I know delays are already happening, but we just have to keep intense pressure on that process in order to get the program of record completed.

I would like to point out, however, that the Posture Commission also recommended that new requirements not be piled on at this moment, but that we continue on the program of record the triad modernization, and then think what else will need to be accomplished.

Senator Ernst: Okay. Thank you, Ambassador. Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I agree with both of the panelists. We skipped an entire generation of modernization of our nuclear force, and we waited until the last minute to modernize everything all at once.

Every year you hear posture hearings. Admiral Richard gave them, his successors have given them. And they talk about the risks of further delays, and those risks accumulate. They undermine deterrence, they undermine assurance of our allies.

And at some point, those risks reach a breaking point that I'm sure Admiral Richard always had to calculate how much uncertainty does he want to give our allies, and how much uncertainty does he want to show to our adversaries? But the risks are real. So, yes, delays undermine deterrence and assurance.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. So, we've talked a lot about the fact that between Russia and the United States, negotiations are important. But we have China that's

hanging out there. You've addressed that quite well this morning.

The diplomacy is very, very important. But at such a time when that diplomacy falls short and we're not able to make an agreement with China, what does that look like? Does the removal of binding limits then with the New START Treaty provide the United States with greater flexibility and leverage when competing with China, or does it risk increasing instability without delivering a clear advantage for us? So, what does that look like when our diplomacy fails? What then? And Ambassador, we'll start with you.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Thank you, Senator. I think that it's wise to bear in mind that we have a lot of options available, and I will just refer, since we were talking about the limits of New START Treaty remaining in force possibly for a year, that I do not believe that they would prejudice anything that we need to do in order to prepare and respond to the Chinese buildup.

But I will also say that there are certain aspects of New START that are quite interesting for having more flexibility. And we had questions about the bomber forces. The bombers are actually a great option for further flexibility because the counting rule under New START is quite flexible. You can load more long-range cruise missiles on outcomes rather or even gravity bombs on bombers

and they are counted as one under the New Start Treaty.

So, I just wanted to put the point out there that, in fact, there's a lot of flexibility in the limits of the treaty that could help us with these problems at this moment without the New START Treaty. Nevertheless, we have the same kind of challenges. Obviously, we have to proceed and think carefully about where our resources should be placed.

Senator Ernst: Thank you. And my time has expired, but thanks to our witness.

Chairman Wicker: Well, and will it has, but let's go ahead and see if Admiral Richard or Mr. Morrison --

Senator Ernst: Well, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair

Chairman Wicker: -- would you like to answer that question?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I'd like to offer two points in response to your question. First, you ended it with a discussion of something potentially being, not your exact words, destabilizing. I get that question a lot along with whether or not something is escalatory.

Let me offer to the committee. I think that is not the first question that should be asked. The first question that we should ask is, are we defended? The second question is, are they deterred? And then, only then, do we start to ask ourselves; is it stabilizing or destabilizing, escalatory or not? Deterrence, fundamentally is the

withheld threat of escalation. So, it is not possible to deter without threatening escalation.

Back to your specific question, I think that the United States needs to immediately start taking steps, steps that are currently precluded by the New START Treaty to enhance its posture with the forces that it has today in order to answer the challenge that is presented to us by both Russia's non-compliance, and their efforts around the New START Treaty, as well as China being unconstrained to include uploading warheads to our intercontinental ballistic missiles, removing covers off the four tubes on our trident submarines that are currently empty, and several other posture steps that should be taken, now not a year from now.

Chairman Wicker: Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I would urge that we not continue to look through the soda straw of New START and strategic arms control. It's not an accident that the first place the United States deployed an INF range conventional system at the expiration of that agreement was in the Philippines.

We have an opportunity to look at all of the tools in our toolkit to create leverage to drive all parties to the negotiating table. And that's where I think maybe I disagree with Ambassador Gottemoeller.

Having the security blanket of continuing the New START

Treaty gives both Russia and China an excuse to move this conversation off the table, and look for other areas where they might want to engage. And that's where maybe I disagree in the approach.

Senator Ernst: Thank you.

Chairman Wicker: I thank the committee for indulging me on that. Senator Hirono, you're recognized.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, all three of you, for coming to testify.

So, post-New START, and we are now in an environment of nuclear proliferation. Correct? The three major countries no longer have any treaty to stop any of us from doing anything from modernizing to creating more nuclear weapons. Isn't that correct?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: There have not been any limits on the Chinese, Senator, and there have never been -- there are none on Russia and the United States once the New START Treaty goes out of force.

Senator Hirono: So, are we not in an environment of nuclear proliferation?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Senator, we are in an environment of potential buildup to more deployed nuclear weapons in two nuclear weapons states, the United States and Russia, and also then in China. So, the question then is; will there be additional proliferation to other countries

encouraged at this moment to build their own nuclear weapons program? So, that's a serious question.

Senator Hirono: You know, you were asked that question, and I think you responded, and I'd like Admiral Richard to respond to what is South Korea and Japan seeing this uncertainty created by the end of this major treaty. Not perfect, but where do you think their views are going to be in terms of their own protection?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, I know of no non-nuclear states, allied or not, who have recently announced plans to acquire nuclear weapons. You asked if we're, so I don't know of any proliferation that is actually occurring.

I certainly think particularly our Asia Pacific allies are certainly reexamining their own defense needs to include the possibility of them acquiring their own nuclear weapons. We certainly have longstanding history and have had successful extended deterrence commitments to both of those. And there are still options available to us to continue to maintain those.

Senator Hirono: Well, when I talk about nuclear proliferation, I'm talking about the three major countries. Although Iran has its nuclear ambitions, I'm talking about China, Russia, and the U.S. It's bad enough that we're what looks like an environment where the three major countries with nuclear weapons do not have any constraints.

So, should we be pursuing a treaty with Russia? And there's some discussion about whether this should be in a parallel way to pursue diplomatically a treaty with Russia and China together, or Russia and then China. I'd like to get that clarified because I sense that maybe we're not going to be able to get into a treaty that involves all three countries who may need to pursue separate treaties with Russia and with China. Do Ambassador and the Admiral have any further points on that?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I'll just offer that I don't know how China could be moving much faster, independent of treaties, that we do or don't have on ourselves. Russia seems to be very capable of going around the New START Treaty to add capabilities and capacity that are not constrained by the treaty.

I would certainly encourage arms control negotiations between the U.S., Russia, and China to put effort to put some limits on that.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: If I may, very briefly, Senator?

Senator Hirono: Go ahead.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: I would just say as a negotiator, I like to keep things simple and straightforward. I believe that we must negotiate with the Chinese. We must negotiate with the Russians. I would do

it in parallel. I'll tell you one reason is that the Russians just this morning said very clearly as they have repeatedly, if you insist on a trilateral negotiation, we want UK and France at the table as well, the P5, all of the nuclear weapon's states under the NPT. That is a very complex negotiation, and I think that we can make progress with Russia and with China on parallel tracks.

Senator Hirono: Thank you for one last question for Admiral Richards. You were in charge of the command that you had to certify our modernization efforts that et cetera, without having to actually do kinetic testing. Do you think that we need to actually do kinetic testing of our nuclear weapons in order to be to confirm that they are ready to go, if that's a way of putting it?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I stand by my certification of the nuclear weapons complex under my command as not requiring explosive testing. However, at the same time, I also, in every one of those certifications, noted that we need to have test readiness improve from what it currently is, should conditions develop, requiring us to consider testing. And those are not just technical. They could be political.

And so, yes, I saw nothing during my time on active duty that caused me to doubt the safety, security, and surety of our nuclear weapons complex under the current

testing regime. But I also saw a future where we needed to have test readiness in case those conditions change.

Senator Hirono: One more question in that regard, Mr. Chairman. And who would authorize such kinetic testing?

Admiral Richard: That's ultimately a Presidential decision, if I understand it correctly.

Senator Hirono: Thank you.

Chairman Wicker: What sort of changes might necessitate that, Admiral?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, and we had some background discussion in terms of the number of tests that we have done in the past, which forms a pedigree for us to continue the stockpile stewardship program. But as our weapons age and go beyond their design lifetimes, there are a number of effects, aging effects, that you may bump into the limits of your science to understand and predict where they're going to go.

So, there are both technical reasons, and I alluded to political reasons, actions by your opponents, both of which may make it advantageous us to reconsider our testing decisions.

Chairman Wicker. Okay. Thank you. Senator Fischer.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the panel for being here today for this very important discussion.

Nuclear deterrence underpins our national security, and for the last 80 years, it has worked. Our deterrent strategy has also rightfully evolved over time. Back in 2010, when New START was being ratified and we were finalizing our nuclear modernization plans, the geopolitical environment was fundamentally different. All the assumptions made back then, they were wrong. Russia is not a friendly potential partner. China is not a lesser threat.

Here's the reality. Today, Russia has been in non-compliance with the New START since 2022, and continues to hold a massive numerical advantage in tactical nuclear weapons. China is growing its nuclear arsenal, as Admiral Richard likes to say, at breathtaking pace. Both countries are outpacing us in developing novel destabilizing weapons. Nuclear deterrence only works if our nuclear forces are safe, reliable, and credible.

In 2023, the Bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission released its final report. The commissioners unanimously agreed that our current nuclear modernization plans, which are predicated on New START limits, are not sufficient to meet the new threats posed by Russia and China. We cannot allow the credibility of our nuclear deterrent to erode.

Admiral Richard, great to see you here today. You were a strong supporter of developing the Nuclear Sea Launch Cruise Missile as a response to Russia's overwhelming

advantage in theater range nuclear weapons during your time as Commander at STRATCOM.

Since that time, this committee has received many reports that Russia and China are building large numbers of new novel nuclear weapons, including a wide variety of theater range systems. In your view, sir, should we be considering other additional types of weapons systems to enhance deterrent?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, I remain in strong support of the Sea Launch Nuclear Cruise Missile, and I think events in the time since I retired have borne out why I made that recommendation. It would've been a great utility to us already, and I think it'll be the same in the future.

But to answer your question, yes, I do think we need to be considering additional capabilities beyond simply supplemental capability of a Sea Launch Cruise Missile. To deter, the threat has to be credible, which means you have to pace the defenses of the states that you are in competition with.

So, I don't think it's too early to start looking at a nuclear capable hypersonic weapon for the U.S., an extension of our conventional capabilities in that area. I think in the future -- and there's several others we could discuss -- that will be an important addition to maintain our

deterrence against Russia and China.

Senator Fischer: As we look at the number of bombers, the number of submarines that are under production right now, do you think that our sizing of our force is based on deterring the current threat environment? Is that the best strategy we can have on this?

Admiral Richard: Senator, those numbers were developed back in 2010 timeframe under a very different strategic environment and strategic threat environment specifically. So, no, I think the numbers are insufficient on all portions of the triad, particularly on the bomber and the ballistic missile submarine leg.

There are additional capabilities that we should consider in addition to the recapitalization of the triad and increasing the capacity inside the triad. One challenge that we face, particularly on the ballistic missile submarine side is the time it would take to get additional ballistic missile submarines given the timelines involved in those productions.

But the answer to your question is, yes, we're going to need more capacity, particularly in the bomber and sea launch legs.

Senator Fischer: Thank you. Mr. Morrison, I'll try and do this introduction quickly. But as we approach the expiration of New START, we've seen a number of commentators

out there. They're lamenting the end of the agreement. They're predicting a terrifying new chapter in American history due to the end of this treaty.

What is notably, I believe, missing from these sentiments is the fact that the department and the intelligence community across the last three administrations have assessed that Russia regularly failed to uphold its obligations under the treaty. New START inspectors were temporarily halted during COVID. We've heard about that. Putin has suspended Russia's participation entirely.

So, Mr. Morrison, if Russia was not living up to its commitments when New START was enforced, do we think our security situation will be worse without it, or will the treaty and just give us freedom to effectively respond to Russia's bad behavior, and also to realistically acknowledge what China's doing in this regard?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I think the New START Treaty will go out with a whimper. Much has been made about the end of this chapter, but I think it creates an opportunity for the next chapter to look at all nuclear weapons across the nuclear players.

Senator Fischer: Thank you. And Ambassador, I appreciated your comments about to Senator Hirono's questions about the parallel track and the need for that. So, we aren't hamstrung trying to deal with Russia, and we

ignore the threat of China. Thank you.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Fischer. And let me say, I've been rather lax with the gavel on the five-minute rule. But I'm going to come down hard on Senator Kaine if he violates that.

Senator Kaine: He knows me from experience. So, thank you, Mr. Chair.

How about just for each of you, what would be the downside to the United States, if any, of the President extending New START for a year?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: To me, Senator, there's no downside. I do agree with both of my colleagues that it is, yes, very necessary to respond to the Russian and the Chinese threats. I know that we are preparing and planning to upload. I agree with that activity. I think it's very important.

But in my view, we can take another year limited by New START, continue our planning and preparing to upload, and at the same time, then have an opportunity to try to get to the negotiating table and see if we can put in place some new restraints at the negotiating table with both China and Russia.

So, in other words a year-long delay in ending the limitations of the New START Treaty would not prejudice important work we need to do.

Senator Kaine: Now, how about to Admiral Richard and Mr. Morrison? What is the downside, if any, of the U.S. President agreeing to a one-year extension

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, absent a verification mechanism, a one-year extension gives you very little confidence that the Russians are actually adhering to it.

Senator Kaine: And we have no confidence now. So, that wouldn't change on February 6th.

Admiral Richard: That wouldn't change. Exactly. But we would be constrained ourselves from reposturing the forces that we have today to better address the challenge presented to us by China.

Senator Kaine: Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senato, Senator during the, the Trump 45 administration, the President was willing to entertain a one year extension of the agreement, but we got something for it. We got Russia to come to the table and agree to negotiations on total force caps. So, in the present case, I haven't heard what we get for it.

So, if the President proceeded to tell President Putin that he is willing to discuss a one-year extension on the condition that Putin come to the table and agree to negotiate on a total cap to cover all nuclear weapons, not just the 45 percent of nuclear weapons, Russia's nuclear weapons that are covered today, that might be a deal worth

making. That is not the deal under on the table today.

Senator Kaine: I understand your point. You've expressed a position that I think everybody would share. It would be great if there were an upside.

I asked a slightly different question. What's the downside to an extension? Is there unanimity among the panel that a New START framework should now include tactical nuclear weapons? That that should be one of the issues as we get into discussing any future chapter in New START?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Yes, Senator. As I spoke earlier this morning, I do agree with the Trump administration's proposal in their first term to go after all nuclear weapons, including non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next.

Senator Kaine: And I assume Admiral Richard, Mr. Morrison, you believe the same?

Admiral Richard: Yes, Senator. But there's an important point. There's more to it than just New START and tactical or non-treated accountable. There's the novel weapons systems that Russia has that are strategic but not covered by the treaty that I would include on that list.

Senator Kaine: Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I agree with the idea of trying to negotiate a control on all nuclear weapons. I don't think the New START framework would itself be adequate

because among other things, the verification and telemetry measures would not be what is required to go at -- to trust but verify Russian non-strategic force limits.

Senator Kaine: And then, Ambassador Gottemoeller, as somebody who's been at the table with the Russians, how do you think the Golden Dome announcement, how would that factor into behavior at the negotiating table? And you answered a question that I asked you on the record after a Foreign Relations Committee hearing on this topic, which I really appreciate, and that's why I asked you today.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Thank you, Senator. I absolutely agree that our two top objectives, and Admiral Richard mentioned the second one, which is to go after the exotic nuclear missile systems that the Russians have built in the last few years.

They know about those two objectives. They're ready for them. They're going to be ready for us because they're going to raise questions about Golden Dome, and they're going to be concerned about what that system represents. So, it's going to be a negotiation right back and forth, and back and forth.

I think in that case, we need to be very clear with them that they, too, are developing modern missile defense systems. Their S-500 interceptor is excellent going after, if they want to, our ballistic missiles. So, we need to be

ready to come back at them. It's a negotiation. We ask for what we want, they ask for what they want, and we go back and forth.

But they need to be told if they want to limit missile defenses on our side, we're going to have something to say to them about their modern missile defenses.

Senator Kaine: Thank you. 10 seconds. Back to you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much for adhering to the time limit, and let's see if Senator Sullivan can possibly do that.

Senator Sullivan: Oh, thank you, Mr. Chair. I know I have a very good reputation on this committee of making the timeline. I never get gaveled by you or the ranking member, so I'll try as well.

I'm going to throw a curve ball at our distinguished witness panel, moving from national security experts to movie critics. Did either of any of you see the movie, the House of Dynamite, and give me a one sentence review from each of you? Quickly, Admiral, we'll start with you.

Admiral Richard: I'll start that. Yes, I have seen the movie. I think the producers were attempting to start a conversation that I would support having that conversation. That said, I would not have made those decisions as the U.S. Strategic Command Commander. And second, we don't rely on

the military aid to explain the way we put our plan together and what it's designed to do. That was my job at STRATCOM.

Senator Sullivan: Good critique. Ambassador?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: I can only agree with Admiral Richard, sir. I absolutely agree with his comments.

Senator Sullivan: Okay. And Mr. Morrison? Good movie, good conversation, accurate?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I tried, but my children suggested Frozen 2 again, so.

[Laughter.]

Senator Sullivan: Good you have your priorities squared away, and so I appreciate that.

Well, look, one of the places in the movie that played an important role was Fort Greeley, Alaska. As you know, Alaska is the cornerstone of our nation's missile defense with all the ground-based missile interceptors, with the exception of four, located at Fort Greeley. And most of our radar systems on the Aleutian Island chain, clear space force, ground long-range radar system.

So, I have a question on what's going on at Fort Greeley. In my 2018 Advancing America's Missile Defense Act, we worked with the President and his team on getting that passed. We decided, and I think it's a very bipartisan view here, to expand the capabilities at Fort Greeley. The 49th Missile Defense Battalion often refers to themselves as

the modern-day Spartans, because it's about 300 soldiers protecting 300 million Americans.

Yet, in that bill, we got 20 more silos built a number of years ago for more GBIs, and they sit empty still, which is an enormous frustration of mine given that we have a shot doctrine that says, hey, you need to send up a certain number of missiles to take out rogue incoming missiles like you saw in that movie.

So, the latest is there's -- they think they're going to fill these silos by 2030. In the meantime, in last year's NDAA, as part of my Golden Dome Act legislation, the Congress strongly suggested in additional 20 silos at Fort Greeley. So, now we have 40 that are full, 20 that are built, but empty, and the Congress saying 20 more. So, for a grand total of 80.

Can you give me your assessment on the importance of Fort Greeley as it relates even in the world of Golden Dome? We're going to integrate ground base and space base sectors, but what we should be doing to at least speed up the deployment of more GBIs when we have the missile systems and silos ready to go, but the Pentagon seems to be slow walking this.

I'd love any of your views on the need for speed to get more missiles in the ground at Fort Greeley. Admiral, why don't we start with you.

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, you have spoken eloquently in the past about the strategic value of the location of Alaska, specifically in the Arctic, more generally. And I think Fort Greeley's contribution to our current missile defenses is an example of that.

Going back to the movie, which I don't think did justice to the capabilities of our current missile defense system, if that had been successful, you wouldn't have had a movie. That is the value that those missile defenses bring to our security.

So, I would defer to the Department of War in terms of the actual pace, but I would certainly endorse the value of having sufficient capacity in the GBI system to pace the threats that we face.

Senator Sullivan: Yes, sir. And the threat's increasing.

Admiral Richard: Yes.

Senator Sullivan: Ambassador, any views? Do we need to get the 20 silos at Fort Greeley filled up here fast? 2030 is too long.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Sir, I've been at Fort Greeley myself, and I greatly respect the teams there. I have to say that was an aspect of the movie that disturbed me as well. But I will say I stand by what we said in the Strategic Posture Commission Report, which is in looking

ahead and looking toward Golden Dome, and considering the capability we already have in our defenses at Fort Greeley, that we need to really focus on denying our potential adversaries opportunistic opportunities to go after critical targets in the United States in both integrated air and missile defense.

So, we need to also be thinking about all the air threats that will be coming at us in future.

Senator Sullivan: And Mr. Morrison, if you can answer this in 30 seconds, the chairman will probably forgive me,

Mr. Morrison: Sir, geography matters and magazine depth matters. When you look at the key threats, Alaska is ideally situated to deal with threats that will transect the North Pole. And so, yes, geography and magazine depth are critical.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Wicker: Senator King, I understand you're yielding back your time. Is that correct? I've been misinformed. Senator King.

Senator King: Are you trying to tell me something, Mr. Chairman?

Admiral Richard, first, I want to appreciate the fact that, apparently at your urging, Naval intelligence was not able to find my senior thesis on nuclear deterrent. So, just let's keep it that way.

Extended deterrence, we've touched on it, but here's my concern. There's a tremendous emphasis in the National Security Strategy on burden-sharing appropriately to have our allies meet their responsibilities. The problem is, when burden-sharing sort of moves over into undermining our allies confidence in our nuclear umbrella, the result is going to be, as I think you said, Admiral, our allies, particularly in Asia, Japan, South Korea, thinking about their own development of a nuclear deterrent.

Ambassador, this strikes me as a very serious issue at this particular moment. That burden sharing is fine. Percentage of GDP is fine. But when it intimates a withdrawal of extended deterrence or the nuclear umbrella, so-called, it invites proliferation to currently non-nuclear states.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Senator, it has been my concern that thus far the administration has emphasized with our allies that they'll be responsible for their conventional defense in Europe, particularly United States paying more attention to the Indo-Pacific now.

But at the same time, the Secretary of War has stated that the United States will continue to extend the nuclear deterrence to our allies. But the fact that we are not seeing the administration really articulate this policy at a high level, neither the National Security Strategy nor the

National Defense Strategy addresses it, so in my view, raising a lot of questions among our allies.

Do they need to think about extending nuclear deterrence themselves? And how would they go about that? Is it the UK and France as the other nuclear weapon states under the NPT and the other nuclear weapon states in NATO who would play that role? How exactly would they go about it? And that's where the questions arise.

You are right. Admiral Richard is right. There is no active announcement yet from any NATO ally, but there are many, I would say, debates and discussions that have surprised us among our NATO allies.

Senator King: And part of the essence of deterrence, whether it's ordinary deterrence or extended deterrence, is communication. The adversary, and in this case, the allies have to understand that this is in fact our policy that we will abide by.

Here's the next step that really worries me. The more nuclear states there are, the more nuclear materials there are, the more nuclear technology there is. My nightmare is a terrorist organization getting a hold of a nuclear weapon in the hold of a tramp steamer on its way across the South Atlantic to the Port of Miami or New York.

Deterrence doesn't work with people who have no capital city at risk and who don't care about dying. Admiral, give

me your thoughts about deterrence in the world of potential nuclear capacity in terrorists hands, particularly in the age of AI. When you can accelerate technical development extraordinarily.

Admiral Richard: Senator, first I applaud your leadership in a number of areas here, including your question in the nuclear command and control in particular. To go back to your first question, right? The National Defense Strategy does talk about, in a number of areas, critical contributions that we will make to our allies, even as they carry an additional burden. I would think that our nuclear deterrent and extended deterrent guarantees would be at the top of the critical contribution that we will be making to those allies.

Senator King: I just wish that was be being made more clear. That's all. Because It's only the word extended deterrence only appears once in the document. Burden-sharing appears 10 or 15 times.

Admiral Richard: My experience in terms of what causes allies apprehension, particularly in the Asia Pacific, has to do more with our capabilities and in particular, our lack of theater systems available in the Indo-Pacific, and our modest contribution to NATO with the dual-capable aircraft. That is of greater concern than any of the other aspects of this that we're talking about.

And to your question, to me directly, because that has long been a concern in terms of how do you deter a terrorist other or non-nation state organization with a nuclear weapon, and I was always go back to Admiral Haney's comment when he was Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, everybody values something. Holding that at risk is the key to deterring them.

Senator King: I think this is a topic that requires and suggests further discussion and analysis because the whole -- as you-all have testified, our whole basis of our National Defense Strategy for 80 years has been deterrence. How does that apply to people who conventional deterrence does not seem to be necessarily an effective tactic?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd love to talk about deterrence in cyberspace, but we'll save that for another time.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much, Senator King. What grade did you get on your college paper?

Senator King: That's classified, Senator.

[Laughter]

Senator Warren: Over classification. Happens all the time.

Chairman Wicker: We've had complaints about that from both sides of the dais. We might want to enter that as part of the record. So, let's visit among ourselves. Senator

Cotton.

Senator Cotton: Thank you. Welcome to our witnesses.

I'd like to ask each of you about a Russian proposal to have the United States and Russia make a political commitment to abide by the central limits of the New START Treaty for one year. Hypothetically, if I told you Russia was already uploading and busting through that central limit and its caps, how would that affect the advice you might provide to the President on whether to take this Russian offer? We'll start with you Admiral Richard.

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, we don't know for sure that they're not already doing that. Probably not. Might. No verification mechanism in place for us to know one way or the other. I think, fundamentally, agreeing to an additional year constrains us relative to China and the actions that we need to be taking in the very near-term to address that threat while providing us little benefit with Russia.

Senator Cotton: All right. Admiral -- or Ambassador? Sorry.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: I'd love to be an Admiral, Senator. Thank you for your question. I really do believe that the Russians have the ability to upload very rapidly. We spoke about this, concluded it in the Strategic Posture Commission report.

My whole view of keeping the U.S. and Russia under New START limits for the coming year is to prevent them from sprinting away from us in an upload campaign. So, I do think we have to watch, carefully use our national technical means to determine, if we can, if they are uploading. But that's been my view, that we need to prevent their rapid upload now.

Senator Cotton: Thank you.

Mr. Morrison: Senator, as you know, there is already a serial pattern of non-compliance, so I would not be surprised if Russia was doing that. And I already believe it's a bad idea without that information to extend the treaty for one year.

Senator Cotton: Okay. Mr. Morrison, let's stick with you. President Trump announced rightly, in my opinion, late last year, the United States would resume nuclear testing activity on par with Russia and China.

We know from statements from Lieutenant General Ashley and CIA Director Ratcliffe, that both Russia and China have conducted non-historical tests that exceed the zero-yield standard of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

President Trump's critics claim that it's not necessary for the U.S. to conduct such a test. What do you think Russia and China could be gaining from conducting yield

producing tests?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, there's two issues at the heart of the debate over nuclear testing. One, does the current U.S. nuclear stockpile require it for credibility? And two, why are Russia and China doing it if they are doing it? It's that second question, and what we may not know, and if we do know, likely can't talk about in this environment, that causes me the most concern. Not because of the credibility of our deterrent, but the risk of strategic surprise.

Senator Cotton: You don't think Russia and China is just doing it for fun?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I assume that's rhetorical, but no, I don't think they're doing it for fun. It would no doubt be a significant expenditure of resources on their part.

Senator Cotton: Okay. Admiral Richard, you'd like to take a crack at that one?

Admiral Richard: Well, and I certainly endorsed the idea that we should be testing to the level that Russia and China are doing. And I also go back to my recommendations back when I was on active duty several years ago, that we need to improve our overall test readiness, should conditions change either technical or political, that warrants us considering that.

Senator Cotton: Okay. Admiral, given the growing

nuclear threat environment now without the bounds of the New START Treaty, there's many steps we could take. These might include remerving our ICBM forces, reconverting tubes on SSBNs, reconverting heavy bombers, developing a suite of non-strategic weapon systems, and making sure that NNSA is changing the way it does business in a more rapid and streamlined manner.

If you were asked to provide options to the President what to do in this new environment, what would be your top priorities?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I'd go right down the list that you just offered. But it would start with, I would put the highest priority actually on removing the four-missile tube covers on our Trident submarines and returning them to 24 tubes, vice 20 uploading intercontinental ballistic missiles, remerving up to the appropriate point. And again, I would just go down the list that you just described.

Senator Cotton: Okay. Thank you all for your testimony.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Cotton. Senator Warren.

Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So, it is hard to imagine the destruction that nuclear war would bring, and that's why the U.S. has worked to prevent a nuclear arms race through arms control agreements,

including negotiating New START with Russia.

But this week's expiration of New START pushes the world closer to the edge. These are agreements that facilitate data exchanges and put American inspectors on the ground at Russian nuclear facilities. That verification has provided years of insight into things like the number of warheads on each Russian missile, reducing guesswork on our military planning. And I think we can all agree nobody wants to be guessing with nukes.

Russia suspended verification during its war of aggression against Ukraine, but recently has expressed interest in extending tenets of New START. However, the Trump administration has been unwilling to use U.S. economic, diplomatic, and military leverage to advance an agreement that would restore verification and help keep Americans straight safe.

So, Admiral Richard, you were the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command. Do arms control agreements like New START strengthen transparency and predictability with Russia?

Admiral Richard: Senator, as I testified back when I was on active duty, arms control agreements that involve all parties, which in this case would include China, Russia, and the United States, include all weapons, all types of weapons, and have verification mechanisms like you just

described, with consequences for failing to uphold the agreement, do enhance strategic deterrence and national security.

Senator Warren: Thank you. You know, the State Department knows why these verification regimes are important. It said in its annual report that it cannot confirm Russian compliance without onsite inspections that this kind of verification permits.

Inspectors can conduct short notice, surprise visits, look at things like how many warheads are on a missile. And without that visit, we might get lucky. We might be able to spot one from satellite, but we wouldn't know if it could hit one target or multiple targets. And that means we're guessing. We usually have to assume the worst, and our enemies do the same. And before you know it, we are in a more dangerous arms race.

Ms. Gottemoeller, you were the chief negotiator for New START, and then responsible for doing the annual compliance reports. If we lose verification due to New START's lapse, can current intelligence capabilities fully plug that hole?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Ma'am, the New START monitoring regime, verification regime, has not been implemented since February of 2023, you mentioned that in your remarks. And so, we have been dependent on our national technical means of verification.

I couple that -- I marry that with the compliance report that is now coming out of the Department of State where they say that essentially, they see that the New START limits continue to be maintained by the Russian Federation.

Now, they have raised a concern about whether the Russians might be going over the warhead operationally deployed warhead limit. But that is a concern. They haven't been able to confirm that.

And I'll be frank with you; I do think that it may be associated with the so-called deployed and undeployed launcher limit. We have an undeployed launcher, a possibility where if they were notifying us, they could tell us that they were removing certain platforms, SSBMs, for example, from deployment. And therefore, that would account for if there is some kind of differential in the number of deployed warheads.

So, I just use this as an example to say that these negotiated verification measures are really important. Its onsite inspection is vital, but with us, our ability to notify each other of exactly what we're doing right. And we did that under New START. There were 25,000 notifications of the movements of our strategic forces exchanged on a regular basis.

Senator Warren: Thank you. I appreciate that. And I want to slip in one more question quickly, if I can, and

that is, if the U.S. gives up on restraining Russia's nuclear arsenal through a new deal, does that make China more or less likely to come to the table?

Ambassador Gottemoeller:

I think the Chinese will only come to the table if the United States is engaging with Russia, in my opinion.

Senator Warren: Okay. That's very helpful. Thank you. You know, the United States should be using its position now, and using all of its economic and diplomatic powers to try to get Russia to the table, ultimately to try to get China to the table. I think it is a mistake to let New START expire and to walk away from an agreement that gives us valuable intelligence information. We need to do better. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you, Senator Warren. Senator Banks.

Senator Banks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Morrison, China's in the middle of a massive nuclear buildup, as you've said. Yet, the department has consistently underestimated the speed and scale of that buildup. Why is that? Why do we keep underestimating them?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, they are an incredibly complicated intelligence collection target.

Senator Banks: But why would we underestimate that? Why would we underestimate the increased speed and capacity

that they've built up. It seems year after year, our projections underestimate where they are and how fast they've grown.

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I think we have never seen a buildup that is proceeding as comprehensively and at the speed that we're currently seeing. So, I think maybe it breaks some of our models.

Senator Banks: Talk about what's driving that buildup.

Mr. Morrison: Sir only, only General Secretary Xi really knows the answer to that question. It could be a perception of what it takes to be considered one of the great powers. It could be other insecurities.

I think this is one of the fundamental challenges with the deterrence is not thinking in terms of what we value, but in terms of what our potential adversaries value. So, we can try to predict General Secretary Xi's thinking, but truly only he knows.

Senator Banks: Can you help us out a little bit? Explain to us what are the consequences if China achieves their goal to build a nuclear arsenal that rivals the United States?

Mr. Morrison: Well, Senator, and I think Admiral Richard talked about this earlier. It's not just China, it's also Russia, it's North Korea. It could one day be Iran. But when we think in terms of sizing our nuclear

force, when we think in terms of deterrence policy and strategy, we can't just think about one of these parties. We now have to think about potentially two peer rivals. And that's not something we think about collectively.

Senator Banks: Collectively, what they can achieve together.

Mr. Morrison: The collective action or sequential action, but this is not a problem we've really previously dealt with.

Senator Banks: But talk about what China gets out of it.

Mr. Morrison: Sir, again, it could be a sense for General Secretary Xi of more security. It could be a sense that he's now one of the first, you know, among equals, first-tier powers. But it certainly requires a President to think in terms of additional problems that General Secretary Xi can pose.

Senator Banks: So, the warning to us, to this committee, is it smart to limit our nuclear forces when China just keeps building and building at the pace that they are?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I think we have to think in terms of both the Russian force, and the Chinese force, and our own production complex.

Senator Banks: Understood. Do you think China's

nuclear buildup is meant to give them leverage over us in an event of a Taiwan conflict?

Mr. Morrison: Sir, I think it plainly would give China that additional tool.

Senator Banks: Okay. And then, how do we prevent Xi from thinking the nuclear buildup makes an invasion of Taiwan easier for them?

Mr. Morrison: Sir, I think it's making sure that he doesn't have any doubt in terms of our ability to deter that action, if that was our policy.

Senator Banks: Mr. Morrison, how ready are we to expand our own nuclear forces if the Chinese keep expanding at the pace that they are?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, I talked earlier -- you know, if you step back, Secretary Hegseth has brought the Arsenal of Freedom to the Department of War. The National Defense Strategy that just came out talked about the imperative of expansion of our weapons lines and other associated lines.

I would like to see if the Arsenal of Freedom come to the NNSA. We have to get back to a position at the NNSA similar to where we were at the end of the Second World War where we built at the pace of speed and urgency.

Senator Banks: The Nuclear Sea Launch Cruise Missile, or SLCM-N, will be one of our best tools to deter conflict with China or Russia. What capability gaps, Mr. Morrison,

are you aware of that SLCM-N will help us address, and why is that so important?

Mr. Morrison: Senator, if I may, I'm going to answer in terms of additional capability tools. I'd rather not talk about gaps. But it gives us an -- it gives the President an additional tool, and frankly, it's a tool we needed during the Cold War. We had these weapons at the end of the Cold War. We eliminated these weapons through something called the Presidential Nuclear Initiatives. But it is an additional tool for the commander-in-chief and for our military forces.

Senator Banks: Mr. Morrison, you're very succinct in your answers. It's very impressive. That's all I have, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. Senator Kelly.

Senator Kelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for being here.

Admiral Richard, during your tenure at STRATCOM, you underscored the growing challenges of deterring two nuclear armed pure adversaries at once. That challenge is getting more complex as New START approaches expiration. At the same time, this administration is trying to throw billions or hundreds of billions, eventually, at this Golden Dome concept; a homeland missile defense supposedly scaled to counter full salvos of nuclear ballistic missiles from both

Russia and China.

Physics favors the offense. Intercepting ballistic missiles with decoys present at hypersonic speeds, and midcourse or terminal phase is extremely hard. Countermeasures are cheap. Tests are scripted, and real adversaries adapt. A defender must stop everything. The attacker only needs a few to get through. In my view, missile defense can undermine mutual deterrence, and I think a shield can be a false sense of security.

So, here's the question. In a world without arms control limits, and with two major adversaries potentially expanding their nuclear arsenals, what are the strategic implications for pursuing this kind of defense?

Admiral Richard: Senator, first, I would support additional defenses, air and missile defenses, for the United States in terms of the way it enhances our security. I think the success of the Israeli system is an example of -- the technical challenges that you just described can be addressed.

Senator Kelly: Do you feel they can be addressed at scale --

Admiral Richard: I do think they can --

Senator Kelly: -- with the full salvos of ICBM?

Admiral Richard: Absolutely. Because the goal is not to -- you're not going to intercept every single weapon

1 going in, but you will intercept enough of them. That one
2 will drive your opponent to have to consider a much larger
3 attack than they might otherwise have.
4 There's a deterrent value in that alone, and then
5 introducing a lack of confidence on the part of your
6 opponent. Their attack is going to be successful, yet, they
7 will carry all the consequences of having started it, I
8 think enhances our security.
9 Senator Kelly: But Admiral, would you agree decoys are
10 pretty cheap?
11 Admiral Richard: I would agree decoys are pretty
12 cheap. I would agree that there are ways to discriminate
13 through that. I also think directed energy is pretty cheap.
14 And so, I think there is a technological competition, not
15 unlike other ones we've had in our history that we can win.
16 Senator Kelly: Yeah. And I'm not opposed to a missile
17 defense. I mean, what we have at Fort Greeley, having 44
18 interceptors for a rogue nation concept makes perfect sense
19 to me, and I think that's where our investment should be. I
20 think the risk -- I think we often underestimate that risk.
21 But when you look at the math on this, the number of
22 interceptors, especially if we're going to put them in
23 space, space-based interceptors, the math becomes unworkable
24 rather quickly. And all Russia or China needs to do is
25 expand their magazine depth. And in my view, and I want to

get the ambassador's opinion on this, Ambassador, do you feel this is a destabilizing approach?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: It depends on what the -- this is, Senator.

Senator Kelly: Well, the Golden Dome system that we could spend upwards of $1 trillion on to build a system of space-based interceptors to try to intercept a full salvo of nuclear weapons from Russia and or China.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: I support what we agreed and recommended in the Strategic Posture Commission Report, that is limited missile defenses against conventional and nuclear threats to the United States, integrated air and missile defense.

I stress because there are also a lot of air breathing systems. We spent a time this morning talking about Russian exotic systems. These new nuclear-propelled systems are not on a ballistic trajectory, right. They are air breathers and they come in under that ballistic trajectory. So, I think we need to take a comprehensive look at this, including the very long experience the Russians have with countermeasures of all kinds, and figure out what will bias the most effectiveness in encountering limited opportunistic attacks on our critical targets.

Senator Kelly: Yeah. I agree with you on the limited opportunistic attacks. We need something. I am very

concerned that we could throw $1 trillion at a problem that ultimately, we will find is unsolvable, that we will not be able to get a 99.99 kind of reliability out of it, and we just wind up encouraging our adversaries to build more ballistic missiles, more warheads, and then this problem ultimately grows out of control.

I mean, we've seen this before. We've got the numbers down. And I really worry about the future for our kids and our grandkids living in a world where we have multiple countries with potentially thousands and thousands of nuclear weapons. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you to the panel. We need to drill down on this. I'll start with you, Admiral Richard. Is Golden Dome intended to intercept a full salvo of nuclear weapons?

Admiral Richard: The actual capacity of Golden Dome hasn't been specified. But your answer is, no, it's not designed to stop an entire salvo to 100 percent effectiveness. But we don't need 99.99. Right? 99 would go a long way in terms of giving us more options, more decision space. We still retain and will need to retain our strategic deterrent in our conventional forces --

Chairman Wicker: Which is why we're having this hearing.

Admiral Richard: Yes.

Chairman Wicker: Yes, sir. Is that correct, Admiral Gottemoeller -- Ambassador Gottemoeller.

[Laughter.]

Chairman Wicker: You'd make a fine Admiral.

Ambassador Gottemoeller: I get to be admiral again. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will only say that what I remarked to Senator Kelly is my point of view, and it's consistent with what we recommended in the Strategic Posture Commission Report.

Chairman Wicker: Which is not designed to be a surefire --

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Yes, sir.

Chairman Wicker: -- shield against the full --

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Integrated air and missile defense. I stress air and missile defense against opportunistic attempts to attack us with even either conventional or nuclear missiles.

Chairman Wicker: Mr. Morrison?

Mr. Morrison: Senator -- Mr. Chairman, excuse me. I think the other dynamic of this question is what do our adversaries think of Golden Dome? I haven't had a conversation with President, and I haven't had a conversation with General Guetlein.

But from the perspective of what our adversaries think about this, is it a worthwhile investment to pursue and a

worthwhile strategy to pursue to get Russia and China to come to the table out of their fear that we may actually be able to build it? I wonder if we would've had Start One if we hadn't had Star Wars.

Chairman Wicker: Well, thank you. And Senator Rosen, you were recognized.

Senator Rosen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Wicker. Appreciate this. And thank you to the witnesses for your service to our country.

And so, I want to talk a little bit about the Nevada National Security Site, formerly known as the Nevada Test Site. That's what we refer to it in Nevada. Those of us who've lived there a long time, it has and continues to play a critical role in nuclear weapons development. It was ground zero from the majority of the United States explosive nuclear testing from 1951 to 1992, when 100 atmospheric tests and 828 underground tests were conducted.

Since President George H.W. Bush signed the testing moratorium in 1992, the U.S. developed the Stockpile Stewardship Program and subcritical experiments where the Nevada National Security Site has continued to certify the reliability, the safety, the effectiveness of our nuclear stockpile, but without the need for nuclear testing.

Today, the site's underground laboratory is undergoing major mining and construction to provide enhanced

capabilities for subcritical experiments. And it will host in the near future two of the most capable weapons radiographic systems in the world.

Together with other efforts, these machines will provide greater certainty and data about the performance of the U.S. nuclear stockpile, far better data experts say than the information that could be gleaned if the U.S. were to break the moratorium and conduct an explosive nuclear test as the President and some in his orbit have advocated.

So, Admiral Richard, for decades, the directors of the National Laboratories, Commander of USSTRATCOM, including you during your command, and the Secretaries of Defense and Energy, have annually certified the military effectiveness of our stockpile, and certified that it does not require resumption of explosive testing with over 1,000 subcritical experiments and robust computer modeling providing the data to support those positions.

So, I'm going to build upon your answer to Senator Hirono, where you said that you stand by your own certifications of the stockpile, that you are confident in the certification process, and that you believe we need better test readiness to be able to conduct a test if the President were to give the order.

Do you, sir, see any technical or strategic justification for resuming explosive testing, and do you

agree with the data and formed assessments that it is unnecessary for the United States to presume explosive nuclear testing?

Admiral Richard: Senator, I certainly stand by my certifications back when I was on active duty, as we have just discussed. That was four years ago. So, I would defer to Admiral Corell, current Commander of U.S. Strategic Command who has access to that information that I no longer have to see --

Senator Rosen: But up to four years ago, you were quite confident.

Admiral Richard: Up to four years ago, I was quite confident.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. I'm going to move over to you, Ambassador, because it's likely that a nuclear test would be followed by testing by Russia and China, probably others, increasing global nuclear security risks.

Russia and China stand to benefit from testing more than the United States, given our advanced scientific and technical capabilities, meaning that resumed testing would actually weaken our position vis-a-vis our two major competitors, and allow our adversaries to close the nuclear gap.

Resuming testing also risks a new arms race, which is inconsistent with President Trump's stated vision of

reducing nuclear escalation through dialogue with Russia and China. Ambassador, if President Trump were to order a nuclear test, in your opinion, how would you expect Russia and China to respond?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: They've been quite clear Senator, that if the United States resumes explosive nuclear testing, they will do so as well. President Putin himself said that they would only resume testing on a reciprocal basis with the United States.

So, I would expect that to be the outcome, and I do expect that it would disadvantage us. You know, because we conducted more explosive nuclear tests than any nuclear weapon state, we have more data available to us with which we are able to do a massive amount of calculation and other activities in order to assure our stockpile is safe, secure, and effective.

Senator Rosen: And can you add in the last few seconds, what do you think about North Korea, Pakistan, and India? How would you advise managing the national security risks of testing by these states?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: You know that DPRK is the only country that has tested in this century. I would expect they'd be glad to return to testing. Their program is still in infancy compared to ours, although they're rapidly developing and improving it. I would also expect to

see Indian and Pakistan return to testing.

Senator Rosen: Thank you. Thank you, both, for your time.

Chairman Wicker: Let me ask each of you this about our industrial base. The Congressional Commission of Strategic Posture in their final report talked about proposals that would reform national and workforce development. I want to ask you about that, and particularly shipbuilding, and start with you, Admiral, and then go to you, Ambassador, and then Mr. Morrison.

What does shipbuilding industrial base have to do with what we're talking about today? Can we effectively compete with China and Russia without expanding our shipbuilding? And critical?

Admiral Richard: The short answer question Senator, is no, you're not going to effectively compete with Russia or China without expanding your shipbuilding industrial base.

I was very pleased to hear you mention the National Defense Strategy Commission, another congressionally-directed commission, that I think also had some very important conclusions that got largely overlooked.

But to your point, yes. I'm encouraged by the current National Defense Strategies called to turbocharge the defense industrial base. I would specifically point to the shipbuilding industrial base inside that. That's where the

Columbia comes from, along with any number of other maritime, Navy, and Marine Corps forces necessary to deter aggression.

Chairman Wicker: So, if we're serious about this, we're going to have to get ready to expand our shipyards and our industrial base?

Admiral Richard: Expand the shipyard, expand the workforce, fix the supply chain problems, waive burdensome regulations, and take more risks to start acknowledging that we have operational risks that we have to account for that will warrant taking greater technical and programmatic risk.

Chairman Wicker: Ambassador Gottemoeller and Mr. Morrison, do you want to wholeheartedly agree with that statement?

Ambassador Gottemoeller: Yes, sir, I can but agree.

Mr. Morrison: Mr. Chairman, our industrial base, and especially our shipbuilding industrial base, is a critical part of our deterrence.

Chairman Wicker: Thank you very much. And I want to thank members of the committee. I need to make an announcement about questions for the record. That'll be due to the committee within two business days at the conclusion of this hearing.

[The information referred to follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]

Chairman Wicker: This has been a great panel, Mr. Ranking Member. And we are adjourned, with the thanks of the committee.

[Whereupon, at 11:26 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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