

TRANSCRIPT

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DWG: Thank you everybody for braving the elements, especially to our guest this morning, Lieutenant General Stephen W. Wilson. He's the Commander of Air Force Global Strike Command from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, to enjoy our fine Washington January weather. And thanks to all of you for braving the elements and coming in this morning as well.

The general wanted to kick things off with a brief opening statement, and we'll go from there.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Good morning. Thank you all for being here. I think we have a pretty good story to tell about some of the events in the last year. If I look back a year ago today, almost to the day, it's when we had our unignorable moment in the nuclear enterprise, and we've been putting a lot of focus and light on that, and I'll be glad to talk about some of that and the changes we've been making over the past year.

As we also look back the last year, we look at the unprecedented change that's happened in the world. I don't think anybody in this room was talking Ukraine or Crimea. We weren't talking about Boko Haram. We weren't talking about ISIS or Ebola. So it's a complicated world we live in and I would say the one constant we have is the new normal is the pace of change. Certainly we're seeing that in our enterprise.

We command, I command two legs of the triad -- the bombers and the ICBMs. And I think what's also important to note, our command's name is Air Force Global Strike Command. So that is our job, our mission, to provide global strike options for the president and the combatant commanders any place, anywhere, any time. That's our job.

To do that we do a really important assurance and deterrence mission, so it's important that those two legs of the triad remain credible always. So that's what we're focused on, to have a ready force that's capable of executing the president's directions anytime, anywhere. With that comes a lot of responsibility, all the way down to the young airman level, and they understand that.

I think if you listen to the reports that came out this last year, both the internal and external reports, they would all say in essence the same thing. That our airmen are really amazing. They are committed to this mission. They believe in what they're doing. Some of the things that happened this last year were the result of leadership losing attention and focus over the years for the mission; that they had a culture of micro-perfection, zero mistake mentality where inspections became the mission. I can talk about the changes we've made along those lines, but today the focus really is on a combat ready force, able to do the mission whenever and wherever our nation asks.

So we've started that force improvement program that I've told people it's not really a program, it's a philosophy. I'd add one extra word. We're doing a continuous force improvement philosophy, so that every day we wake up, try and identify mistakes, make it better in everything we do. So we'll talk a little bit hopefully on the human weapon system and how we go about improving that, as well as how we sustain and modernize our force across the different areas. I think this last year was one of unprecedented change, unprecedented change in our command, all for the good.

With that let me stop and see what's on your mind, what questions I can answer about things.

DWG: Let me begin with a big picture look at where the command is right now. The Air Force has always said that its nuclear mission was a top, the top priority, but between 2007 when you had the nuclear weapons incident between Minot and Barksdale, and last year, seven years elapsed. Why has it been so difficult to change the culture and the mission in the nuclear area? And what makes you confident that things are different going forward?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Certainly changing any big organization as anybody knows, is tough. It takes time. What I tell people is what we're working on now in terms of change is that we've had our [inaudible] moment. So we have a sense of urgency. We're building a common understanding across the force that everybody, a common vision, something everybody can believe in. But it's more than knowing it's the right thing to do. They have to believe it in their heart. And we have to remove the obstacles for people's success. And once we remove those obstacles for people's success and they can see the incremental changes happen, they start believing in it. Once they start believing it, it becomes part of their routine, part of their habit.

I would say what's changed in the past is we went through and we had all kinds of reports. People identified things and we in essence went down a little laundry list. We checked it off. There wasn't sustainment or follow through. So that's the part that we're working on hard now is how do we make sure that all the things that we've said we're

doing, that we assess them and are they working, and are they making a difference. I think we've got tremendous momentum right now. The challenge will be on the follow-through, the sustainment and the commitment to this over the long term. That's what we're working on. So whether it be in the sustainment, the modernization, the education, the training, the manning, the infrastructure, those are all things that we're now, in addition to saying yes, we've accomplished this, we will go back and follow through and say okay, we did this -- Let me give an example.

One of the things we did is we added two major level folks unique to the operation squadrons in the missile units. We call this the director of operations.

We saw a gap between the young lieutenants in the squadron and the lieutenant squadron commanders, there was no mid-level leadership. In any organization, if you don't have that mid-level leadership there's going to be challenges. So we put two ADOs in each of the squadrons. Now we'll go back and assess, okay, how's it working? Is that helping fix the problem? But it wasn't good enough to say okay, we've done this, check. Now it's the follow through. Okay. We did this, is it working? If not, we're going to readjust and go on. That's a long answer to your question.

DWG: I'll piggyback on that a little bit. As you know, I just got back from Malmstrom and my take-away there was that people have a lot of faith in the current leadership and they really appreciate all of the changes that are happening now from the new equipment and uniforms to the new manning, the quality of life. But they're kind of holding out hope, it's like cautious optimism. They're holding out hope to see how that sustainment piece plays out.

One of the questions that somebody asked me is, does the new ICBM, or the ICBM follow on have any [inaudible]. It's not super popular in Congress right now, and we know that it's necessary.

I guess my question to you is, where does that stand?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Amy, that's a great insight, because as I go out and visit the force I can hear in essence that same thing. People are cautiously optimistic. They maybe have seen this before and they're optimistic but it's kind of a wait and see still. Are we going to sustain this?

The ICBM weapon system is different than the B-2. The B-2 I have a very visible symbol that flies around and people notice it. In the missile fields, people often don't notice what happens, what goes on every day.

Our missiles, if we look at our history, is those missiles are part of the Minuteman I, were built in 1965. The last Minuteman III's came on active duty in 1973. They've been on alert 24x7x365 since then. That same infrastructure that was designed in the '50s, built in the '60s, needs to be replaced. So that's what our new ground based strategic deterrent is all about.

It's not just a replacement for the missile. It's a replacement for the infrastructure that supports it, the command and control that surrounds that. And I've told people, we're going to do it differently. Today in each of the missile wings we have 150 launch facilities and they're controlled by launch control centers. There are 15 in each wing, so there are 45 of those. All that's connected by thousands of miles of underground cabling called HICs Cabling. Hardening Interconnected Cabling. As we built the new system it's all of that. It's the command and control, it's the launch facilities, it's the launch control facilities, and it's the missile. So that's what's going to be replaced. That's what we're going around telling people about is what's included in this ground based strategic deterrent, because it's more than just a missile.

Certainly the missile will upgrade from everything from the solid rocket motors to the guidance. In essence the missile components, but it's to refurb the launch facilities as well as all the other pieces to that.

It's required. We need to do that.

DWG: Would the new GBSC use the existing launch facilities once it's upgraded?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Right.

DWG: How long would they be operational with the upgrade?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: We're planning for the new system to be for 60 years beyond that. This is the new system we designed.

DWG: For all those pieces you mentioned?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Uh huh. And if you go and look at one -- Give me a quick show of hands. Who's been to a missile wing and seen what exists there? Has anybody gone there? Some of you. You'll see pretty old equipment. You'll see racks of equipment that today we could take five or six racks with today's technology and put it easily in one rack of equipment. There are a lot of improvements we can do. It's the infrastructure of the launch facilities. And I tell people, just, the way we built it and designed it in the '50s, we wouldn't do that today. So we're looking at all kinds of ideas, and we've thrown out, cast a wide net for all the research labs and DARPA and all kinds of people to help us think through what will it be in the future? Will we command and control it? Fiber optics, wireless, laser, you name it, we're looking at all kinds of options. But I can promise you we won't do it like we're doing it today. We'll move forward in the future.

DWG: Sir, I was hoping you can speak a little about the conventional Prompt Global Strike Programs. What is the United States focusing attention on now? Is it the conventional strike missile? Or booster glide technology?

The other part of the question is the Russians of course are [inaudible] concerned about this. For what the United States is planning to use this weapon system against? What is the current thinking on that?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Dmitri, that will be easy for me. I'll refer you to OSD/AT&L. They're the guys that are driving all the work in that endeavor. We're not involved, only on the periphery of that. So those would be the people I'd have to send you to to ask about that.

What I would tell you, though, is we look around the world, we see lots of people modernizing their force. We see the Russians specifically modernizing all of their legs from submarines. I think there's a recent article about the number of new submarines and classes of submarines that will be out by [2015]. We know they're modernizing their missiles, we know they're modernizing their mobile missiles.

I had dinner with the head of the Long Range Aviation a few years ago at my house and he told me about their new bomber that they're building that they hope to have operational in the early 2020s. So we know that they're modernizing their force.

But beyond Russia, we know there are lots of other nations. The Chinese are modernizing their sub force, their missiles, their bombers and their fighters. So we, again, all of our systems that we're using today are old. Our Minuteman's, Wing 1 at Malmstrom Air Force Base, the missiles were put in in 1962. Our bombers, our B-52s, the tail numbers that we're flying are tail numbers that are 1960 and 1961 tail numbers. The first B-52s came off the production line from Boeing in 1952. We've got some old equipment. We're certainly sustaining that but we need to modernize it.

DWG: Good morning, sir. I've heard you talk about the importance of replacing the ALCM. I think at one time you said that LRSO's are going to be perhaps even more important than the bomber to you. I just wonder what you think it's going to give you technologically that you don't have already.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Our ALCM today, and that's a great example of a terrific weapon system that we've had. Designed in the '70s, built in the mid '80s, designed to last for ten years. Today we'll use the current ALCM through 2030, so we're on the service life extension program number five going forward on that. So at some point we have to be able to design a new standoff missile that provides the President with options. We're underway to be able to do that as a replacement for the ALCM.

I'm also asked often about do we think there will be a conventional variant, and I say absolutely. So just like we have a CALCM that was a spinoff for the ALCM, conventional air launched cruise missile, we see going forward there will be a long range standoff missile and there will be a conventional variant that will follow to be able to buy at numbers and reduce the cost.

DWG: So it's just the age of the ALCM that's a problem. You're looking for additional technology as the main variant?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Absolutely we'll have to look for new technology. Today as we look around the world, the integrated air defenses are getting more and more sophisticated

as technology improves. So I'm going to need a missile that will be able to penetrate any of the most sophisticated air [trends] going forward.

DWG: What have you been doing with the industrial base to keep it alive? Are you working on any specific --

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Certainly our industrial base is really important for our nation. As a diminished manufacturing capability and the industrial base goes down, this is a national priority to be able to have a robust industrial base.

DWG: It's been said by independent analysts that the \$500 million figure for the new long range strike bomber, that will be the final price tag. That's not at all accurate because it doesn't take into account the research that will come in at the front side. Would you agree with that?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: No. I think we've been pretty clear on the requirements, the requirements haven't changed. The competition is ongoing. We think that sometime this next year there will be a down select there. But they've been given a price target and everything I'm hearing is that industry will be able to do that.

DWG: One other thing linked to Russia. At a House hearing in the last month, in December, the Pentagon's Bryan McKeon said that the U.S. was preparing military responses to Russia's violation of the INF Corps which would essentially negate any strategic advantage Russia thought it might incur from having its ground launched intermediate range missile. Could you elaborate on what kind of military response that would be and would it involve the U.S. developing, you know, an intermediate range missile that's [inaudible]?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I certainly can't comment on any plans going forward with events in Russia.

What I will say is that I think it's important that we maintain mil-to-mil relationships with countries. Russia and China specifically. With mil-to-mil relationships we have a common dialogue, understanding, shared experiences, and we can avoid any type of miscommunication and misunderstanding. Those have been lacking as of recent. I think those are important to have going forward. So at the most senior levels, again, there's no misunderstanding between our countries.

DWG: General, this is the Better Homes and Gardens portion. I think a lot of Americans were struck over the past year to see how decrepit a lot of the launch control centers were and how rusty, how aged they looked. I noticed in your RFI the last week to renovate them, you're talking that the government is exploring options to renovate the LCCs to like new condition, undergo selective modernization and receive enhanced security features. I'm wondering if you've thought a little bit about the selective modernization and enhanced security features that you feel might be needed in the next generation of LCCs.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I'll give you a couple of examples. We've done the first deep cleaning of these launch control facilities ever, so when you look at it, they really were rusty and had plenty of use on it. So we put a deep cleaning in place for each of those and we're systematically going through each of those to deep clean them.

When you look at the equipment, and you talked about some of the things. One of the recent reports we had out there showed some of the phones, for example. There's a perception that I can just go -- hey, why don't you just fix the phones? Well, I can't go to Target and Walmart and buy a phone and just plug it in. I've got a copper system, analog system, that has to be converted to a signal to be able to make it and go through command and control. So we've got a replacement program in place but it's going to take us a couple of years to replace all the phones and the backing behind that to take an old system and make it modern in a digital world. But that's an example of some of the equipment upgrades that we'll go through into the LCC.

In terms of enhanced security, whether it be at the LF's now, we've got remote visual assessment at all of the launch facilities so that from a capsule the operators on duty can observe operations going on at any of the sites they're responsible for. That didn't exist a year ago. It does today. That would be an example of security enhancements that we're doing now.

We've also done at the launch facilities thing we call fast-rising B plugs. There's an access part. Now I've got a barrier and a quick way to block that. So between fast rising B plugs and some remote visual assessment we're putting added security at the launch facilities. We're systematically going through all of the equipment and seeing how we can both sustain it as well as modernize it.

DWG: Going back to my Better Homes and Gardens, is it going to be nicer for the missileers?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Yes.

DWG: Higher grade sheets? [Laughter].

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Quality of life is important. I tell people the story of the missileer that [inaudible], and people don't understand. When our missileers report for dinner, the missileers, the maintainers, or the security forces who do it. The security forces and maintainers will typically go out to the field on a four day cycle, then they'll come home for three days. Then they repeat that. The missileer will go out there for 24 hours but the 24 hours is different than what you and I would expect. An example, so today they leave Washington, DC and their job is at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. It's about the distance that some of them travel at Malmstrom to go to the 490th Missile Squadron. It's about a 3.5 hour drive.

Once they get on duty, then their 24 hour day starts. Twenty-four hours later they get off duty and they travel back. So I tell people, it's like waking up in Stafford, Virginia, reporting to the Pentagon, getting your orders and knowing where you're going to go,

get your equipment, your secrets. You drive to Langley Air Force Base, and that's when your 24 hour day starts.

So in reality they leave early in the morning on one day and get back from work late in the afternoon on the second day and they're going to do that eight times a month. So they're 16 days a month doing that mission.

It's hard on families and it's hard on the missileers. So the things that we can do to improve their quality of life, everything from comfort in the facility, making sure everything works properly, making sure they get good food, all of that quality of life is important to them and it's important to the maintainers and the security forces who are out there away from their family.

Often people don't see that and they don't equate the missile force to being deployed. I tell them oh, no, they're deployed. As anybody at this table knows, if you're not home tonight sleeping in your bed, even if you're only an hour away, you're gone. Gone is gone. Even though you only may be 100 miles away, if you're not there for the PTA or the sick kids, you're gone. And being able to do that repetitively, week after week, is hard on families. So the things that we can do to improve the quality of life, we're working hard on to make it better for our airmen and their families.

DWG: Good morning, General. I also wanted to bring the question of the ALCM replacement. In your comments earlier it sounded like a decision has been made that the LRSO is the route you're going to take, is that correct? Or is the decision still --

Lt. Gen. Wilson: We finished the analysis of alternatives. It's up with the Secretary of Defense. Coming forward, we're proceeding on track. Proceeding with an LRSO. We're working the phasing and the timing and the funding for all of that coming forward.

DWG: Those aren't set yet.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Right.

DWG: Were there other options considered other than the LRSO? What else were you considering as part of that? As a potential replacement?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: We went to the analysis of alternatives for the LRSO. We looked at a variety of alternatives. We've narrowed our focus to what we currently have, and beyond that I can't get into specifics about -- We looked at a variety of options. Different capabilities, different speeds, lots of different options and decided on the path we're going forward with.

DWG: I'm going to try. Is long range strike still a mix of manned and unmanned?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Let me see if I can rephrase the question a little bit, Colin. Is the long range strike bomber is what you're asking. AS we go through the design it will be optionally manned in the future. It will be manned to start, for sure. Will technology

allow it at some point in the future to be unmanned? Potentially. So I think they're keeping options open on that.

DWG: There was talk of being a mix of drones [inaudible] maybe commanded by the bomber or someone on the ground. Is that still part of the mix?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I'm not really at liberty to talk anything more on that, on long range strike bomber.

DWG: Sir, a lot of us in town are looking forward to next week when the budget comes out, and one of the things we're expecting is for the Defense Department to take up the base closure issue with Congress again. In your answer to Amy you talked about the long term vision for the ICBM especially for the next 60 years. Does it make sense to try to close some of those bases as possible or as practical as you look at changing that force and [inaudible] it down for treaty requirements and other purposes? And what complexities does it cause when Congress won't let you actually close and change around the facilities out there?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: In our case, the issue with strategic deterrence and the number of weapons -- Those weapons are weapons of statecraft. So the decisions on numbers are presidential level and congressional level decisions.

We think, I think the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force would say that there's, and the Secretary of Defense would say we have excess capacity in our bases. We need to proceed forward with a BRAC in the future. I don't think that's gotten much traction with anybody, but I think they're going to continue to say that. That we've got excess infrastructure.

In terms of our bases, our bases become, they're presidential level decisions on what happens with the numbers of weapons involved.

I also tell people that we often forget we've reduced the number of weapons that we've had by 85 percent from its high. So the number of weapons have come down, they continue to come down. And all those have been in accordance with -- Direction from the President was consultation with Congress, but the number of weapons has come down 85 percent since its peak.

DWG: Does it hurt or help the future if you have to keep open, for example, FE Warren, Malmstrom and Minot? Or does it make sense if you're going to a smaller force if you have excess capacity for one of those bases to go away? [Inaudible] an ideal scenario.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Right now we have the right number of missiles for the mission that we've been given. Our ICBMs are what John F. Kennedy called the ace in the hole. They're the thing that prevents the first strike against the United States. They're the national insurance policy of our nation. Right now we have the right number by both

presidential direction, by treaty and by Congress. The number of missiles that we need to do that.

DWG: To follow up on that a little bit, if you look just within Air Force Global Strike Command and the force structure that you command today, does AFGSC have excess capacity?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I don't believe we do. I look at the number of bombers that we have and the commitments that we have to STRATCOM and other combatant commanders and I don't think we have a bomber, excess bomber capacity. Right now we have the required number of missiles to do our mission.

We're doing some reorganization. It will take part this next year, and people have heard about it or read about it this week. Made some changes in the Air Force Materiel Command. And the things that happened, happened at Kirtland Air Force Base. So they're doing some changes to the Air Force Nuclear Weapon Center and combining organizations there as well as the mission there, the 377th Wing, will fall under Air Force Global Strike Command in essence because it's a very like mission, so we'll take responsibility for that over this next year.

DWG: General, we've seen with sequestration this Congress and maybe it's not just this Congress, are willing to go below on defense spending where I think a lot of [inaudible] were willing to go and accept risks that we didn't think they'd be willing to accept. You've also talked about how hard it is to modernize a force that has allowed all three triad legs to get very old. And you're also talking about forces 85 percent smaller. Is there some point where the triad stops to make sense and you consider two legs of the stool instead of three?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: James, I think there have been lots of reports over the years, Blue Ribbon commissions, the new Posture Review, the Schlesinger report have all validated the need for a triad and it makes sense for our nation and our responsibilities of our nation. But you're getting on lots of challenges, and what sequestration provides. I used an example that often we don't talk about. Here it is.

April 2013 we did a B-2 mission, what we call an assure and deter mission. A B-2 left Whiteman Air Force Base and flew to South Korea and flew by Osan Air Base at high noon and then returned home to the States. It was a 38 hour mission. It involved five air refueling, it involved a million pounds of gas being transferred, it involved some amazing coordination between everybody from the White House to the Joint Staff, STRATCOM, PACOM, USFK, the different air operation centers involved to do that mission. I think it was a resounding success. It assured our allies, South Korea and Japan, Australia, as well as sending a very powerful deterrent message to Kim Jong-un.

Because of sequestration we canceled all overseas training for a year following that. So every major exercise that we've been expected to participate in for a year was canceled.

So my concern was the next time, and again, our force has to always be ready. If the President directs something, we'll have had crews that won't have done that for a year. I now have a lieutenant or a captain that's flying in the middle of the Pacific, in the middle of a dark stormy night, it hasn't got the number of refueling practice that he needed to because we've cut back on all types of training, and this time it's for real. I'm not comfortable with that. We're taking some excessive risks.

So we put in place plans now that, we fixed that, but we're taking that -- That's the type of training that it's really important that we continue that we didn't do because of sequestration.

DWG: You got your sequestration pitch in, and I couldn't agree with you more. But my earlier point was, so when you go down -- Arms control takes you down to five bombers. It takes you down to some low level. You're struggling with your budget. You would hang onto the triad if you had three nuclear weapons left, to have one in a submarine, one in a bomber and [inaudible]. Because seemingly as you get lower numbers and as you struggle more with modernization and funding, at some point you would at least look at -- Everyone concedes that the ICBM is the weak link of the triad. It has very few conventional uses other than sort of, as you said, the final assurance against a first strike. Some people think [inaudible]. But if you can articulate, other than say just you know, [inaudible].

Lt. Gen. Wilson: That's part of our challenge. The American public writ large doesn't see the ICBM. They don't see that that is the bedrock for strategic stability.

Let me switch this a little bit and tell you personal observations over a couple of visits I had to Europe over this last year.

Last summer my French counterpart invited me to France as part of their Bastille Day celebration. It was the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I. It was the 70th anniversary of the French Air Force. It was the 50th anniversary of the French Strategic Forces.

So while I was in Paris for a couple of days last summer, we went to lay a wreath at the Lafayette Escadrille where our Air Force got its start. I was struck by the sense throughout all of France about the attitude of, this is the 100th year since the start of World War I.

So I started doing a little bit of research on World War I, and I'd forgotten that 16 million people were killed in World War I, with 20 million injured. And yet less than a generation later, we were engaged in another great war in Europe, in World War II. In that war 68 million people were killed. That's a conservative estimate. With 100 million injured. I'm going to say World War II started actually in 1939 and finished in 1945. So if I do my little math, the world was killing each other at the rate of 1.1 million people a month for 60 months, and that stopped in 1945.

Since then we haven't had great wars between great powers. There's lots of reasons, one of which is because we have this weapon now that makes more -- It deters war. It says not now, not ever. That's what ICBMs provide is that ability to say we're not going to have great power between great wars. [sic].

We often forget that. I think back -- I try to imagine a place where the world was losing, killing each other at the tune of 1.1 million a month for 60 months. It's hard for me to fathom. And I know that there are lots of Americans who never think about it. They don't think about the national insurance and the price that we pay. That's why I tell people, the price for our two legs of the triad is less than one percent of the DoD budget. It's a fraction of the federal budget. And nobody likes paying insurance, they don't like paying life insurance or health insurance or whatever insurance. This is an insurance that we need to pay, I think. And it's for the American people to decide ultimately, but I think it's great value for our nation, for the insurance that it provides, for our way of life.

DWG: General, the Force Improvement Program identified I think it was eight career fields that are undermanned across the command. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that. How are these identified, what are the risks your command faces with these fields being undermanned and how are you going to address bringing them up?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Great questions. There are certainly more than eight career fields that affect our enterprise. These were the most critical to accomplishing the mission and they were often the hardest to man. So everything from command post controllers to missile maintenance folks to security folks to security forces to the aircraft maintainers, the missileers. So we're making sure that we've got a good baseline of what's the right number. We're putting in place plans to make sure that we get at least in the short term to what the Air Force averages are manning, but the goal to get those to 100 percent manning by skill and location.

So we often in a big enterprise will give a snapshot of we have the right number of security forces. Security forces are manned at 90 percent as an average. But within some bases, Minot Air Force Base as an example, it may be more challenging and they may be manned at 85 percent. Then when we look at that 85 percent manning, overall manning in the security forces squadron, you'll see that there's more brand new recruits, there's not quite the number of mid-level supervisors, and there's certainly not the right number of senior level supervisors. So when we talk about that 100 percent effective manning by skill and location, it's to make sure we've got the right experience level at each of the bases in each of those critical emphases.

We started off on the assessment of follow through. That's one of the pieces. To make sure that we're doing a, it's okay to forecast that we're going to get better, but okay, today how do we sit with the right number of faces and spaces and the right skill and the right location across the force. So we're intensely tracking that and focused on that.

DWG: Some of these jobs and especially some of the locations aren't really -- If somebody's starting a career they're not saying I want to really start right off at Minot

Air Force Base. How can you convince people to enter these fields? How are you going to go about filling up to these 100 percent levels?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: We're an all-volunteer force. We've got a lot of different personnel policies in place to try and see how we can effectively do that, but I'll give you an example today.

I think today if I were a young 18 year old joining the Air Force and I was going to go to Security Forces, I would look at Global Strike Command and I would say I want some of that. Here's my example.

I'm kind of a national mission force. I've got very good gear. I've now got the best gear available in terms of cold weather gear and gear for my mission. I've got the best weapons with the best optics. I'm going to do exciting things like be part of a convoy response team or a tactical response force. Oh, I'm getting extra incentive pay as a result of that. That would be something I would want to do.

We put in place a training program that's going to tier the training much like we've done in the aviation world so that when you start off now coming out of security force training there at Camp Willis and move forward to one of our bases, everybody's going to get a nuke fundamentals course. We've got a great training location at Camp Gurnsey in Wyoming that provides some terrific training opportunities. They'll show up at their base, and then as they progress down their upgrade they'll do touch points at Gurnsey to refresh that training and get enhanced training. Whether it be in convoys or tactical response force. I would look at that as something really positive.

Sure, some of our bases are remote. You were at Malmstrom. It's a remote base there, Amy. But there's a sense of commitment, there's a sense of team there. You're kind of all in this together. So there's also a lot of -- There's pockets of morale that have challenges but there's also good morale there going on in terms of the mission and the people and we're all in this together at our northern tier bases.

At Minot, they had the wing commander, a couple previous, had this mantra, own it. You make a place what it is. So there's a perception that some people have about all bad, but I think when you go there and see people, and see people in action, you'll find there's a lot of people that are happy with -- They enjoy going to their assignments, they enjoy the sense of purpose, the job that they do, the camaraderie, the squadron that they have, the sense that we're all in this together.

Now that's not universal, but there's certainly a lot of that that goes on in our northern tier bases.

My point, there's a lot of pride in what they're doing. You'll see me talk about our key to success in the future. We start with good people. We make sure they've got the right education, training and experience. They're confident and proud. They're personally and professionally fulfilled. We get mission success to this end. And certainly we hit all of those buckets. And if we miss parts of that, then we get something less over here. So

those are the areas we're focused on. Making sure we get good people from the start. I can follow on to that. Making sure they've got the right education, training and experience, confident and proud, personally and professionally fulfilled.

DWG: The Navy [inaudible] sea-based deterrent [inaudible] Ohio replacement. In the past there's been I guess some -- Is there any traction on that in the Air Force to pay for kind of what's needed with the ICBM?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: We're watching that real closely and how the Navy's doing that, and we think that there may be -- Yes. So the answer is yes. We're looking to see how we can do something like that.

We think we need a sustained commitment of both resources and attention of focus across a period of years going forward. So we're keenly watching how the Navy's doing this. We have a great relationship and partnership with our Navy counterparts, whether it be [inaudible] and SSP or [inaudible] Center or [inaudible] going forward, but we're paying attention to how they're doing that.

DWG: How soon could something like that come out for the Air Force?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: It's being -- Deputy Secretary Work is being involved with, has been running what we're calling the Nuclear Deterrent Air Powers Review Group. So he's put in place a framework where very month senior members of the nuclear enterprise meet and every quarter we meet with the Secretary of Defense and we just met with him last week, Secretary Hagel, and gave him an update on where we're headed. But he is working closely with the Secretary and the Chief as to the investments for the nuclear enterprise going forward.

DWG: Good morning, General. I want to follow up on something you said earlier. Did you say that you had your Russian counterpart over for dinner previously?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: 2012, I believe, is when --

DWG: That's interesting. I wonder, did you get any indication at the time that Russia was going to be on the verge of where they are now, calling NATO an existential threat to their country? That must be quite a [inaudible], seeing what's happening today versus your dinner experience then.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: It is. I had a terrific dinner and a very good conversation. It was obvious, the Russian long range strategic aviation had gone through a decline. They fly Bear bombers, for the most part, TU-160s. He was one of the individuals who flew President Putin in a Black Jack. He showed me pictures of him flying President Putin. He also told me that President Putin realized the importance of strategic bombers and the signal that they sent around the world. He said, so you'll see an increased investment in our bombers going forward. I think he was true to his word. We're seeing the Russians upgrade all aspects of their bomber force. Modernizing their Bears.

They've certainly been flying them a lot more recently. He was also the one who flew down to Venezuela and met with President Chavez.

But the importance of that meeting was, it was the first time I'd met him. When we talk about relationships, the relationship involves a mutual understanding, shared experiences, dialogue, and we haven't had one since. I'm trying. I think it's important that we continue the dialogue and discussion. I know we are at various levels, but my counterpart -- and it's not just me. Ultimately I would like to see majors build a relationship further, deeper in their careers and understanding between Russia, China and others. It's good to have generals talking to one another, but ultimately whether it be professional military education, other forums, there's goodness to building that mil to mil relationship with counterparts.

DWG: So have you tried to reach out to your Russian counterpart since?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I have been unsuccessful.

DWG: -- invite President Obama to fly in a B-2?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Sure, we invite lots of folks to fly in a B-2. If he'd like to, we can make that happen.

DWG: Thank you, General. Just to return to sequestration. If you had to make a choice on one of the three legs, not to eliminate one or keeping the other two, but if you had to lead with one because of the needs across all three right now that are billions of dollars in the future, where do you lead?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: That's the Sophie's choice that I don't believe is -- I go back, two legs to the Air Force's triad. The Air Force spends about five percent of its budget. It's about one percent of the defense budget. I would venture to say the Navy's in that same ball park when you add up all the legs of the triad. The works in the labs and NSA warheads, it's still a fraction, a small percentage of the defense budget and it's a very very small percentage of the federal budget.

The strategic choices that we have to make are many, but I would not do anything to -- I think -- We [need] priorities, and I think strategic deterrent and the value that we provide our nation are places we shouldn't have to choose from.

DWG: A follow-up on the LCCs, the refurb. What was the ball park cost for that?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I can get you the number. I think we spent \$7.9 million in '14 to do LCC refurbs. I can get you the exact number going forward for that.

Between parts and deep cleaning and some modernization efforts underway, we're spending a significant amount of money, but we'll get you the exact number of that.

DWG: Thank you. I think you said that you have [inaudible]. I wonder what kind of [inaudible].

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Let me caveat too. We canceled our exercises that we had with different partners and we still, for 11 years now we've had B-52s in the Pacific doing the continuous bomber presence, and there's been a red line that those are really important as we train with allies and partners in the region, whether it be Japan, Korea, Australia, and others, those bombers there in the Pacific are really important. But we canceled B-2 participation in any exercises, we canceled B-52 participation in all overseas exercises except those that were involved in the continuous bomber presence and they flew in support of PACOM objective.

What we've done recently, we had both B-2s and B-52s in Europe this last summer. We had B-2s that we sent out to the Pacific this last year and we'll do that again this next year.

I think it's important. Any time we send out bombers anywhere in the world people pay attention. It's great training for our crews for the missions that they do, the experiences they get. I haven't flown a 47 hour mission, I've only flown upper 20 hour missions. Those are hard. I'm just telling you, those are hard to do. Certainly when you're doing multiple refueling in the middle of the Pacific or the middle of the Atlantic or wherever it is, in the middle of the night, in weather, they're challenging. So the experiences we gain for those crews are all very beneficial. Not to mention the interoperability and the training with partners on how do we do this together and how do we do it better. So I challenge the folks out in the Pacific every time they fly, every single sortie, it's what am I doing to improve my A2AD capability? How do I interoperate better with our allies and partners? And we're doing that in the Pacific.

DWG: So have you got any responses from the counterparts in those countries?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I think that everybody we disappointed when those large exercises didn't happen.

DWG: [Inaudible] Russia and China. Those problems continue in the current days. How long [inaudible]?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Strategic deterrence is really important. It's having the capability, the will, and an incredible force that will do that. It's something we're thinking a lot about.

This year our focus is kind of on education and training and it's a focus on what is strategic deterrence in the 21st Century? What does that really mean? We're sending some of our young folks to some of the best institutions in the country. They're going to Harvard and Stanford and the national labs and we're thinking hard about this. We've got some other programs in place to try and even expand upon this. But strategic deterrence, I think we as a nation and as a military haven't thought deeply about it since the early

1990s and it certainly involves all aspects of our force. It involves cyber and space, it will involve nuclear, but we need to think deeply about it. And to go back to that World War II example, so that we never have that again. We never do that as a nation again. Our role is to deter war. To deter war I've got to have a credible force that knows, somebody has to know that the costs of doing that aren't worth it. I go back to, around the world as I visit places I often go to monuments and battlefields and we've got memorials spread all over the world from conflicts, conventional conflicts that have happened over the past and the thousands of lives lost. Our goal is to deter war so that we never have that again, and to do that we have to have a credible force.

DWG: So you [inaudible].

Lt. Gen. Wilson: We've got some really good positive momentum. We've got commitment by the most senior levels of the department on the nuclear enterprise. The important part now will be the sustainment and follow through, and to ensure this commitment happens over time. That will make us successful.

DWG: We're down to the final two minutes here so we'll de-merv the questions and have Mark Thompson do one and Amy McCullough do one and then we'll have to wrap things up.

DWG: General, here's a [inaudible], Huey helicopters. You mentioned your security forces and the [inaudible] all-weather gear. You didn't mention [inaudible]. Are they adequate? Are they up to the task?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: I tell people the Hueys have served us really well. Unfortunately they don't meet any of our speed, range, payload or survivability requirements that we need. So we're looking at options for a new helicopter, to be able to invest in that in the future.

So I can't give you specifics. We're looking at UH-60 variants and how do we get there and what's the timing and phasing of that. But again, we're flying 1969 helicopters that everybody --

DWG: But they're defending 1961 -- [Laughter].

Lt. Gen. Wilson: It's true. And we're trying to make it better for both. We're trying to bring a new ground based strategic deterrent on board over the next ten or so years, and we're also trying to bring on new helicopters.

DWG: General, I understand the three points to your program that was implemented this year and the reason behind it, and it makes sense that you need to have a deep understanding of the weapon system before you start training it. But the missileers I talked to are a little bit hesitant about that. There's still this like kind of dread of having to pull alerts for three years in a row without having the opportunity to do some of those extra support missions.

Are you concerned at all that that could create new morale issues?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Amy, I think this 3+3 concept, for those who don't know what we're doing is we're spending the first three years in the missile business learning the business, getting steeped in the understanding of it. So you'll start out about 18 months as a deputy commander and then 18 months as a [crew] commander. Then for the majority of them, we'll PCS them to another missile base where they'll become an instructor, an evaluator, or a flight commander. In which case we then take those, and right now we have more people that want to stay in missiles than we have room for. Then we're going to send those to places like Vandenberg where they'll be able to do the launch stuff out of the 576th or the training school house there at Vandenberg where we train all the new missileers or come to our command. We've got some other new exciting programs to be able to do some internships with national labs, but we want to build a depth of understanding of people who understand not only the system, but about strategic deterrence. I think we've got a good path going forward with that.

Let me highlight one more recent success. We went out this last year and took our young missileers from all of our bases and we went to some of the major ROTC detachments across the nation as well as the Air Force Academy. What we've seen is a huge spike of people who are now putting in the top three, in the top six of their dream sheet to go do. When you bring the young lieutenant doing the job and you let them tell the story through their words and their, here's what I'm doing, you get a lot of people that don't have all the preconceived ideas that are written about it and they go okay, I can be part of that.

The Secretary tells the story about the captain she met at Malmstrom who as a 3.8 physics major from the Academy, doing great, could have taken on anywhere. He said I want to stay in this. I see the changes happening. I see it's bigger than me. I want to be part of this, to bring a new generation forward. That's one data point, but it's out there. I think there are people excited about the future going forward with this and the 3+3 is part of that.

DWG: So you're not getting any push-back from the lieutenants and captains that are already there?

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Again, part of it is, it's an unknown for them. But I think as we talk through it and they understand it, they're believing in it.

DWG: I wish we had more time but you've got places to do, so we appreciate it this morning.

Lt. Gen. Wilson: Thank you. Let me wrap up, because I think you all are an important part of this going forward. So I encourage you, if you've got questions for us, we really are happy to answer your questions. Come to us and we'll give you whatever we can because this strategic narrative, you all helped shape it. You're part of this. You're part of the change going forward and we welcome what you do. What I'd ask is really, come to us and ask us and we'll give you unfettered information on what's going

on the best that we can. You're the ones who are going to help shape the story going forward and the narrative and the importance of strategic deterrence. So thank you all for what you're doing.

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