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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: Air Force Strategic Programs

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Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration

June 3, 2009

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Introduction

Chairman Nelson, Ranking Member Vitter, distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss Air Force strategic programs.

In the Executive Summary of the Final Report of the Congressional Commission of the Strategic Posture of the United States, the commission stated: “In addressing the challenges of nuclear security for the decades ahead, the United States must pursue a comprehensive strategy. So long as nuclear dangers remain, it must have a strong deterrent that is effective in meeting its security needs and those of its allies.”

The Air Force contributes to effective deterrence by operating, maintaining, securing, and sustaining ICBMs, dual-role bombers and dual-capable fighter aircraft. And although the numbers of systems are dramatically smaller than at the height of the Cold War, the Air Force provides national leadership with the most responsive, flexible and visible nuclear deterrence capability.

Strategic deterrence is in an Airman’s DNA; we were born with this mission in 1947. For the past 61 years, we have successfully provided our nation and our allies diverse and effective nuclear deterrence capabilities. Today, the international security environment is more complex than during the Cold War, with more nations in possession of nuclear weapons and non-state actors in pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

Our continued ability to provide a safe, secure, reliable and credible nuclear deterrence capability underpins our national defense, a sober responsibility that the Air Force, with responsibility for two legs of the traditional TRIAD, executes with skill and commitment on a consistent basis.

The Air Force depends on a nuclear enterprise that involves thousands of professionals to include dedicated Airmen operating, securing, maintaining and sustaining our operational forces;

our partners in the industrial base; the exceptional capability at the national laboratories; and our NATO partners.

The airmen and civilians involved in the nuclear mission area are uniquely qualified to execute the significant responsibilities associated with nuclear weapons and are known for their discipline, rigor, precision and reliability. Thousands are certified under the Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) and many others have critical duties supporting PRP. All our nuclear units across five different Major Commands undergo rigorous and unforgiving Nuclear Surety Inspections with necessarily high standards that demand consistent precision and reliability. It's a tough business, but the stakes are too high for it to be any other way

Over this past year, the Air Force made a series of key decisions to address systemic weaknesses in its nuclear mission area. The US Air Force Posture Statement 2009 states: “Through a back-to-basics approach, the Air Force is re-emphasizing accountability, compliance, and precision in the nuclear enterprise. We are reorganizing our nuclear forces in a manner that reduces fragmentation of authority and establishes clear chains of supervision for nuclear sustainment, surety and operations. These changes include: 1) consolidating all nuclear sustainment matters under the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center; 2) establishing a new Air Staff nuclear directorate responsible for policy oversight and integration of our nuclear enterprise activities; and 3) standing up Air Force Global Strike Command, which is already operating in a provisional status at an interim location. Global Strike Command will consolidate Air Force Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and nuclear-capable bombers under a single command, and is on track to activate later this year.”

The basis for these 3 key organizational decisions, as well as additional institutional direction can be found in the nuclear roadmap published last fall, “Reinvigorating the Air Force

Nuclear Enterprise.” The roadmap represents a comprehensive approach to address root causes of documented deficiencies to ensure we are aggressively working to reclaim our legacy of excellence in the nuclear mission area. The Roadmap-related efforts well underway in the Air Force to reinvigorate the nuclear enterprise can be categorized into six broad strategic objectives: 1) Develop adequate nuclear-related expertise and properly man the enterprise: right experience, right job; 2) Implement a process for ensuring sustained advocacy, focus, and commitment; 3) Establish clear lines of authority; 4) Implement a disciplined, comprehensive enterprise system-of-systems methodology to ensure day-to-day sustainment excellence; 5) Implement processes to uncover, analyze, address and review systemic weaknesses; and 6) Sufficiently invest in the nuclear deterrence mission area. By accomplishing these objectives, we will continue to build on the confidence that our nation and allies have in our commitment to this critical mission.

Our first strategic objective, to improve the professional development of our nuclear experts, is a multi-year effort involving education, training, and the assignment process.

All professional military education courses, both officer and enlisted, have been reviewed and modifications are underway to ensure the appropriate level of content regarding the nuclear mission area. Additionally, Air Force nuclear doctrine has been updated to include a greater focus on deterrence.

It is vital to assign the best qualified people to key positions. We are aligning our training, education, and career force development with significant work completed by our personnel directorate on the Air Staff in conjunction with the Air Force Personnel Center in San Antonio, Texas; truly an ongoing effort that must be continually re-evaluated with the ultimate goal is to ensure the right expertise is matched to the right job. Also, the Air Force has

identified billets both inside the AF and across joint and interagency positions that require key nuclear expertise, and these authorizations will be given priority for filling. Additionally, nuclear experience identifiers are being added to personnel records to ensure we are able to track individual experience levels, which aids our efforts to properly develop our people to take on positions of greater responsibility in the future.

We are achieving our second strategic objective -- to implement a process for ensuring sustained advocacy, focus, and commitment for the nuclear enterprise – with a series of process changes. The internal AF resourcing process has been changed to now include a new Nuclear Operations Panel, whose role is to ensure a thorough assessment of nuclear funding requirements. The Air Force Strategic Plan, a key planning document to link future capabilities to the programming process, established reinvigorating the nuclear enterprise is the #1 priority of the AF. Additionally, the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of staff, at their initiative, established and co-chair the Nuclear Oversight Board, composed principally of the nuclear Major Command Commanders, to ensure proper focus and advocacy is maintained Air Force-wide.

To effectively manage the nuclear enterprise, it is necessary to ensure our third objective is achieved, establishing clear lines of authority. Discussed earlier, these changes include: 1) consolidating all nuclear sustainment matters under the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center; 2) establishing a new Air Staff nuclear directorate responsible for policy oversight and integration of our nuclear enterprise activities; and 3) standing up Air Force Global Strike Command.

A significant force-wide challenge is encompassed in the fourth objective, implementing a disciplined, comprehensive system-of-systems methodology to ensure day-to-day sustainment excellence. A large component of this effort is being achieved by consolidating our nuclear

sustainment activities under the AF Nuclear Weapons Center. The Center is working in conjunction with our Air Staff maintenance and logistics experts on a comprehensive positive inventory control methodology and a fusion center for maintaining continuous oversight of nuclear weapons related material.

Critical to our day-to-day excellence in the nuclear mission area is our fifth objective, implementing processes to uncover, analyze, address and review systemic weaknesses throughout the nuclear enterprise. Regardless of the size or structure of our nuclear force, every action by every Airman must be executed with precision and reliability. The Air Force is rebuilding a nuclear culture with a robust self-assessment and inspection process in order to effectively uncover, analyze, and address systemic weaknesses within its nuclear enterprise. The Air Force has developed standardized training, qualification, and certification requirements for nuclear inspection team members. Where appropriate, common checklists will be used across all nuclear commands. When significant deficiencies are noted, common root cause analysis techniques are implemented to fix the problem and improve related processes. Today, every AF Nuclear Surety Inspection (NSI) is performed under the oversight of the AF Inspection Agency. Also, a core team of inspectors will be attached to each MAJCOM NSI team to ensure consistency across all MAJCOMs. In addition to the increased depth of inspections, “no-advanced-notice” inspections are now occurring across nuclear major commands.

The Air Force has taken aggressive actions to achieve our sixth objective, sufficiently investing in the nuclear deterrence mission area, an area that numerous studies have identified as being significantly under-resourced. Ensuring continued reliability and credibility of our nuclear systems requires a sustained commitment to funding weapons and platforms while simultaneously investing in a credible deterrent capability for the future. We have already

programmed resources to address many of the recommendations provided by the various assessments of the nuclear enterprise and continue to focus and prioritize future investments.

Expanding upon our sixth objective, the FY10 PB represents significant progress toward addressing many issues and recommendations made by numerous internal and external reviews and investigations. This includes funding and investment to bring all 76 B-52s in our inventory to a common configuration with updated communications and flight systems making all aircraft capable of nuclear and conventional missions. We are revitalizing our intercontinental ballistic missile force, the Minuteman III, with additional resources for sustainment, aging and surveillance. We have funded improvements to the rural missile complex gravel roads to bring them up to standards which ensure safe transport of our critical systems to and from base, as well as our most precious asset, our Airmen, who travel thousands of miles on these roads every day. Other initiatives include the AF study of the B61 Life Extension Program that will look at options to extend the service life of the oldest weapon in our inventory. Finally, we are introducing a program to replace our Vietnam-era helicopters for missile field complex security operations with an airframe that will provide required lift capacity, speed and range.

Additionally, with your support, we requested and received permission to reprogram over 100 million dollars to address immediate and achievable needs to the nuclear enterprise in fiscal year 2009. With these funds, we were able to accelerate procurement of armored security vehicles for the missile complexes and weapons storage areas, complete overdue electromagnetic pulse protection work on critical infrastructures, upgrade weapons security systems in Europe, and develop software that will enable our Nuclear Weapons Center to track all Nuclear Weapons Related Material from cradle to grave.

Closing

According to the Report of the Secretary of Defense Task Force on DoD Nuclear Weapons Management, “the strategic role of nuclear capability is to deter and dissuade current and emergent enemies from attacking the United States and its vital interests. To be successful in this critical national objective, the nation’s nuclear forces must be demonstrative and credible, and be survivable against a preemptive attack. This combination of capability, credibility, and survivability presents high uncertainty to a potential adversary in attempting to anticipate the success of executing one or more courses of action.”

Collectively, all of the actions described above are ultimately focused on deterrence. Strategic deterrence is vital to America’s security, and the AF is an essential provider of strategic deterrence. Our actions will ensure the Air Force continues to deliver the unique, effective strategic capabilities of stable, flexible and visible nuclear deterrence, thereby instilling confidence in the American people and national leadership; assuring allies; and dissuading and deterring potential adversaries. The Air Force is fully committed to the nuclear deterrence mission.

Thank you for the committee’s continued support of the US Air Force.