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THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTE ON STRATEGIC FORCES  
UNITED STATES SENATE

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE  
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTE ON STRATEGIC FORCES  
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: Strategic Forces Programs in Review of the Defense Authorization Request for  
Fiscal Year 2011 and the Future Years Defense Programs

STATEMENT OF: Major General C. Donald Alston  
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Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration

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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.

Twenty months ago, the Air Force began taking comprehensive action to strengthen performance in the nuclear mission area and to determine the long-term actions necessary to build a culture of excellence within the Air Force nuclear enterprise. Credible and reliable nuclear deterrence is essential for our security and that our allies and friends, and the Air Force have a pivotal role in this vital mission area. Air Force senior leadership continually emphasizes that there is no mission more sensitive than safeguarding nuclear capabilities and maintaining nuclear deterrence, and that the Air Force has a sacred trust with the American people to safely operate, maintain and secure nuclear weapons. The strategic plan we developed nearly a year and a half ago provided the initial direction and framework to begin addressing the findings and recommendations from a variety of internal and external reports. I intend to use the six strategic objective of our roadmap to update the Committee on the initiatives underway to support the Secretary of the Air Force and Chief of Staff's number 1 priority, which is to continue to strengthen the Air Force nuclear enterprise.

**REBUILD A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND RIGOROUS SELF-ASSESSMENT DEDICATED TO HIGH STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE IN THE AIR FORCE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE**

Regardless of the size or structure of our nuclear force, every action by every Airman must be executed with precision and reliability. Perfection is the standard each and every time and a robust self-assessment and inspection process to effectively uncover, analyze, and address systemic nuclear weaknesses is an important tool in our effort to rebuild a nuclear-aware and focused culture.

The Air Force Inspector General (IG) has implemented centralized, independent oversight of Air Force nuclear inspections and assessments, while preserving major command (MAJCOM) authorities and responsibilities for training and readiness of their assigned forces.

To robust our inspection process, we have developed standardized/centralized training for all IG team members with nuclear inspection duties, and a MAJCOM certification program for nuclear inspection teams. We also formed a core team of inspectors that accompany major command inspection teams to ensure consistent application of standards. We have also mandated an increase in no-notice inspections.

Inspection policy changes include increasing the frequency and intensity of inspections while limiting or eliminating advanced notice. Other changes include:

- Ensuring 100% oversight by the Air Force Inspection Agency of all nuclear inspections
- Re-emphasizing no- and limited-notice inspections
  - Mandating a no-notice Limited Nuclear Survey Inspection be executed between each full-scale Nuclear Surety Inspection (NSI)

Increased depth and rigor of nuclear inspection activities have enhances our ability to identify and document discrepancies as a means to improve processes and procedures.

In the exacting world of nuclear weapons, a perfect pass rate would not be realistic or desirable. A unit must have 750 items in 100% compliance with established standards in order to receive a “satisfactory” rating, therefore an “unsatisfactory” rating does not directly translate

to an inability of a unit to accomplish its mission nor does it indicate a compromise of the safety, security and reliability of nuclear-responsible forces. Instead, it indicates a deviation from the extremely high standards we demand and expect in this mission area and we are committed to finding those deviations, determining what caused them, and correcting the deviations as a means of enhancing our stewardship of the nuclear deterrence mission.

## **REBUILD NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE AND CODIFY CAREER PATHS**

Credible deterrence requires capable systems and competent people. To overcome the erosion of nuclear expertise, the Air Force set forth a path to examine education and training across the enterprise, improve identification and tracking of nuclear experience and expertise, and establish a force development governance construct to ensure continual, formalized senior leadership involvement in the development of future nuclear leaders.