

Hearing of the House Armed Services Committee
On the posture of the
U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Pacific Command

March 5, 2013

I'd like to welcome everyone to today's hearing on the posture of the U.S. Strategic Command and U.S. Pacific Command. Unfortunately, we still don't have a budget from the President and sequestration has now taken effect. But this committee intends to move ahead with our annual posture hearings to ensure there are no gaps in the committee's oversight. With that in mind, I'd like to thank our two witnesses for agreeing to be the first to testify in our posture hearing line up. With us today, we have General C. Robert Kehler, the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, and Admiral Samuel J. Locklear, the Commander of U.S. Pacific Command.

General Kehler, I know you have many different hats you wear, from missile defense, to cyber, to nuclear deterrence. I am deeply troubled about what sequestration means to these areas of responsibility, which pose existential challenges to this nation. I also am very concerned by the direction the President wants to go in driving further U.S. nuclear reductions at the present time. I understand the President has been considering a new nuclear guidance document that will seek to reduce our nuclear forces even further. If that is in fact the case, nothing has been shared with this committee.

Furthermore, it is not clear to me why this is necessary--it certainly does nothing to deal with threats like North Korea or Iran. As for Russia, why would we believe we can trust Vladimir Putin to honor new arms control agreements when he has shown a consistent willingness to violate current arms control agreements, when he denies visas to Members of this body to travel to Russia, and when he uses adoptive children as props in his neo-nationalism? I am especially concerned and suspicious when the President appears to be attempting to avoid the Senate and the Congress in getting such an agreement. Without a formal, ratified treaty, any agreement will inherently be non-binding. We know the Russians will violate such an agreement, as they did when we tried this in the early 1990s. General Kehler, understanding that you must support your chain of command, today I hope to explore further why additional reductions are in our best interest, especially since we no longer have a production capacity.

Admiral Locklear, it's been over a year since the President released the Defense Strategic Guidance and outlined the rebalancing to Asia. I'm concerned about recent developments in Asia and how PACOM is postured to respond to a crisis. North Korea's threats and their nuclear and missile programs continue unabated. China's dangerous actions in the South and East China Seas pose a threat to our regional allies and partners, to U.S. national security interests, and to the sea lines of communication that are vital to global economic stability. This committee will continue to ask for more details on what the rebalancing means and how we can hope to deliver on the new strategy in light of other operational demands and lack of resources.

I want to thank you both again for being with us today.