

FINAL VCJCS Opening Statement
House Armed Services Committee Briefing on NDS & NPR
6 February 2018

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to join Secretary Mattis to brief you on the National Defense Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Review.

General Dunford and the Joint Staff fully support the strategies outlined in the National Defense Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review. Both documents are a product of significant consultation and collaboration, and members of the Joint Staff were actively involved from the beginning.

The National Defense Strategy provides detailed defense policy guidance for military strategy, planning and operations. Therefore, the Chairman's 2016 classified National Military Strategy will require an update to maintain complete consistency with the National Defense Strategy and the President's National Security Strategy released in December.

Immediately after the National Defense Strategy published last month, General Dunford directed the Joint Staff to commence revision of the National Military Strategy, and that process is now underway. Other subsequent guidance and plans will be revised in turn to support the lines of effort outlined in the National Defense Strategy.

Additionally, we have begun a review of the Joint Staff's organization and processes to determine if we need to make adjustments to support the Chairman's global integrator responsibilities and to better position the Chairman to support the Secretary's decision making.

Refining the National Military Strategy and the Joint Staff's organization and processes are a step toward increasing the lethality and flexibility of the Joint Force in light of the reemergence of great power competition.

The Nuclear Posture Review also reflects the realities of today's security environment as well as projects the future environment and its potential impacts on U.S. nuclear weapons policy and strategy.

More specifically, the Nuclear Posture Review paid particular attention to what Russia, China and North Korea have been doing to develop, modernize and expand their nuclear weapons capabilities and integrate them into their military strategy and doctrine. The Nuclear Posture Review also took into account the potential for Iran to renew its pursuit of nuclear weapons capability in the future.

The Nuclear Posture Review determined our strategy must be tailored to each potential adversary to effectively communicate the costs of aggression, and this tailored strategy approach requires the United States to maintain a flexible and credible mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities that can address a spectrum of adversaries and threats over a significant period of time.

The Nuclear Posture Review reaffirmed the nation's nuclear Triad is the bedrock of our ability to deter aggression, assure our allies, and hedge against an uncertain future. And as the Secretary mentioned, it also reaffirmed the need to recapitalize each component of our legacy nuclear systems to ensure our nuclear capabilities remain ready, secure, capable, and credible now and in the future.

The two supplemental capabilities recommended in the Nuclear Posture Review – the nuclear-armed sea-launched cruise missile and the modification of a small number of existing submarine-launched ballistic missile warheads to provide a low-yield option – will enhance deterrence by ensuring no adversary under any circumstances can perceive an advantage through limited nuclear escalation or other strategic attack.

Fielding these capabilities will not lower the threshold at which the US would employ nuclear weapons. Rather, it will raise the nuclear threshold of potential adversaries, making nuclear weapons employment less likely.

Nuclear weapons pose the only existential military threat to our nation. Therefore, there is no higher priority for the Joint Force than fielding all components of an effective nuclear deterrent to deter potential adversaries from nuclear attack of any scale.

It's important to note the National Defense Strategy and the Nuclear Posture Review both make the assumption that the military will receive timely, predictable and sufficient funding to execute the strategies. As Secretary Mattis emphasized, we trust Congress will provide the funding we need to turn these strategies into reality.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to your questions.