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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: Status of Eighth Air Force Nuclear Enterprise Improvements and
Strategic Systems

STATEMENT OF: Major General Richard M. Clark, Commander
Eighth Air Force

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Introduction

Chairman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to represent the over 12,000 men and women of the Eighth Air Force. I will use this opportunity to update you on our mission, our actions as a result of the Nuclear Enterprise Review, and the status of our forces.

Eighth Air Force Mission

The Mighty Eighth Air Force serves as the steward for our nation's B-52H Stratofortress (B-52) and B-2A Spirit (B-2) bombers. This includes maintaining the operational readiness of both the bombers' nuclear and conventional missions. The B-52 serves as the Eighth Air Force's most versatile and diverse weapon system by providing precision and timely long range strike capabilities. Meanwhile, the B-2 can penetrate our adversaries' most advanced Integrated Air Defense Systems to strike heavily defended targets. We look forward to incorporating the B-1 Lancer into Eighth Air Force later this year. This move will bring all of our long-range strike bombers under a single command.

It is our mission to safeguard America's interests through strategic deterrence and global strike on demand. For us to be effective across the spectrum of conflict from deterrence operations, to conventional strike, to full nuclear engagement, our Airmen must be ready and equipped with the right tools to do the job.

Nuclear Mission

Our flexible dual-capable bomber fleet is the most visible leg of the nuclear triad. We provide decision makers the ability to demonstrate resolve through

generation, dispersal, or deployment, and the ability to quickly place bomber sorties on alert thereby ensuring their continued survival in support of the President.

Conventional Mission

The Eighth Air Force focus on nuclear operations must not come at the cost of our conventional mission. Our conventional bomber forces defend our national interests by deterring or, should deterrence fail, defeating an adversary. Through the Bomber Assurance and Deterrence (BAAD) mission, we exercise with every combatant command and every joint partner annually. These exercises take place all over the world and are an example of the versatility that B-2 and B-52 bombers provide in the conventional mission arena. Two capabilities are fundamental to the success of our bomber forces: our ability to hold heavily defended targets at risk and our ability to apply persistent combat power across the spectrum of conflict anywhere on the globe at any time. Our bombers carry our latest high-tech munitions in sufficient quantities to ensure the Air Force can meet our nation's global responsibilities.

Nuclear Enterprise Review

This past November, DOD released two reports that analyzed the nuclear mission for areas of concern and improvement. The internal and external reports were extremely thorough, and I thank all those involved in helping make our nuclear forces better. The reports' findings reiterated many of our existing internal Force Improvement Program (FIP) recommendations. As a result of these investigations we have taken several steps, and in many cases fully implemented, force improvement and quality of life measures. There was a common thread throughout the last year with regard to the nuclear enterprise – senior leader

support. We neglected our nuclear forces for decades; our current leadership recognized this fact and moved decisively to correct the shortcoming. We look forward to continuing along the path of improvement and instilling it as a core philosophy in the nuclear enterprise.

Manning

With support from Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) and the Secretary of the Air Force, we funded an additional 156 positions across our 3 bomber bases to provide relief to our most understaffed specialties.

We are looking at our Continuous Bomber Presence (CBP) program at Andersen AFB, Guam to ensure we are manning the mission appropriately while providing much-needed stability for our Airmen. We have improved the quality of CBP lodging by repairing existing quarters, designating additional housing units for deployed members, and instituting a mold control program. Additionally, later this year, we will stand up a 34-person permanent party operations and maintenance detachment to provide continuity during rotations of our deployed personnel.

Training

This spring we started our first B-52 initial qualification class under a new training syllabus. The new syllabus is designed to ensure quality nuclear training without losing focus on the conventional mission. We are promoting unit cohesiveness by bringing our different crew positions together for academic training before beginning the flight phase of training. Then, on the flight line, the crews will receive much more one-on-one training than in previous syllabi. The end result is a better trained combat aviator in a shorter amount of time and improved squadron morale.

Career Progression

We are developing a force of leaders who understand nuclear strategy and policy, and are capable of thoughtfully articulating what deterrence means in the 21st century. We are utilizing expertise both within the Air Force and in industry to develop Airmen with the skills and knowledge necessary lead and shape deterrence theory and policy. AFGSC and the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) teamed up to provide a new masters-level developmental education course for nuclear officers. The inaugural class starts in August 2015 and the graduates will integrate back into the nuclear community in summer 2016.

Eighth Air Force Status of Forces

B-52H

The B-52 may be the most universally recognized symbol of American airpower; its contributions to our national security through the Cold War, Vietnam War, Desert Storm, Allied Force, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom are well documented. The B-52 has been the stalwart of American strategic airpower for over 50 years, but over the last 2 decades has been erroneously treated as a “sunset” platform and has not competed well for needed upgrades. The B-52 is forecast to remain a key element of our nuclear triad until 2040; we must invest resources into this aircraft now to keep it viable in both conventional and nuclear mission areas for the next 25 years. A new radar as well as more modern and fuel efficient engines are essential to maintaining the B-52’s continued combat capability. We are currently in the study phase for a B-52 radar modernization program and have placed a high priority on new engines that will greatly improve the B-52’s operational capability and pay us back in fuel savings and reduced maintenance costs after the initial investment. These two programs are absolutely necessary to keep the B-52 a combat ready deterrence tool for the nation.

B-2A

For over 20 years, the B-2 has defended America as our most modern strategic deterrent. In each of our nation's last four armed conflicts, the B-2 has led the way. We will preserve and improve the B-2's capability to penetrate hostile airspace and hold any target at risk without subjecting the crew and aircraft to undetected threats. To do this, we secured Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) validation of the Defensive Management System-Modernization (DMS-M) capabilities development document, which will allow the program to enter into the engineering and manufacturing phase. This upgrade provides the B-2 aircrew with improved threat awareness and increased survivability by replacing the current DMS with modernized and sustainable systems capable of addressing advanced threats, which will keep the B-2 viable in future anti-access environments. We also continue to work on the Common Very Low Frequency Receiver to permit aircrews to better receive strategic communication messages, as well as the B-2 Flexible Strike program that will allow future weapon capability upgrades.

B-2 conventional combat capability continues to evolve by fielding vital programs such as the Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP) weapon. Successful fielding of the 30,000-pound MOP bolstered our nation's ability to hold hardened, deeply buried targets at risk. Flight testing of the MOP was successful, and our aircrew have begun training and exercising with this new capability. I would like to thank Congress for your support of this critical program.

We are striving to maintain the proper balance of fleet sustainment efforts, testing, aircrew training, and combat readiness. The dynamics of a small fleet continue to challenge our sustainment efforts primarily due to vanishing vendors

and diminishing sources of supply. Air Force Materiel Command is working to ensure timely parts availability; however, many manufacturers do not see a strong business case in supplying parts for a small aircraft fleet. Shortages of a single part can have a tremendous readiness impact on a small fleet that lacks the flexibility of a large force to absorb parts shortages and logistics delays.

Long Range Strike Bomber

The combat edge our B-2 provides will be challenged by next generation air defenses and the proliferation of these advanced systems. The Long Range Strike Bomber (LRS-B) program will extend American air dominance against next generation capabilities and advanced air defense environments. We continue to work closely with partners throughout the Air Force to develop the LRS-B and field a fleet of new dual-capable bombers; scheduled to become operational in the mid-2020s. We request your support for this essential program to ensure we maintain the ability to hold any target on the globe at risk. It is imperative that this bomber be purchased in sufficient quantities to provide persistent combat power where needed as well as to guarantee an adequate parts supply throughout the aircraft life cycle.

Air Launched Cruise Missile

The AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) is an air-to-ground, winged, subsonic nuclear missile delivered by the B-52. It was fielded in the 1980s and is well beyond its originally designed 10-year service life. To ensure the B-52 remains a credible part of the triad, the ALCM requires Service Life Extension Programs (SLEP). These SLEPs need ongoing support and attention to ensure the ALCM will remain viable through 2030. Despite its age, last year we successfully conducted six flight test evaluations, and we plan seven this year to fully comply with USSTRATCOM directives.

Long Range Stand-Off Missile

The Long Range Stand-Off Missile (LRSO) is the replacement for the aging ALCM, which will have significant capability gaps beginning late this decade and worsening through the next. Replacement of the ALCM was identified by OSD in a 2007 Program Decision Memorandum and thrice reiterated in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, the Airborne Strategic Deterrence Capability Based Assessment, and the Initial Capability Document. The LRSO is necessary to ensure we maintain a credible deterrent with the ability to strike at targets from beyond contested airspace in anti-access and area denial environments. The LRSO will be compatible with the B-52, B-2, and the LRS-B platforms. The LRSO Analysis of Alternatives is complete and JROC approved, and in February of last year the Air Force Chief of Staff signed the draft capabilities development document. LRSO was selected by SAF/AQ as a pilot program for "Bending the Cost Curve" and "Owning the Technical Baseline," which are new acquisition initiatives and is currently planned for reaching Milestone A next fiscal year. We fully intend to develop a conventional variant of the LRSO in the future.

B61-12

The B61-12 life extension program will result in a smaller stockpile, reduced special nuclear material in the inventory, and improved nuclear surety. The B61-12 is needed for Eighth Air Force strategic bombers to meet USSTRATCOM requirements. The guidance system will allow for much greater weapon accuracy and, subsequently, reduced collateral damage. The B61-12 Tail Kit Assembly program is in the Engineering and Manufacturing Development Phase 1 and is synchronized with National Nuclear Security Administration efforts. The design and production processes are on schedule and within budget to meet the planned Fiscal Year 2020 First Production Unit date.

Conclusion

Your Eighth Air Force Airmen stand ready to execute their nuclear and conventional missions at a moment's notice. The state of our world does not allow for a grace period nor permit any delay in our forceful response. We know our adversaries will continue to modernize their own capabilities, and we also know that however we choose to mitigate these risks, fiscal headwinds will shape and influence our modernization decisions. The B-2, B-52, their weapons, and their capabilities won't last forever; it is imperative we prioritize our nuclear mission and the Airmen who execute it to ensure it remains our number one deterrent to adversary aggression.