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THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE HOUSE
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The Administration has consistently expressed its support for a full-scope Life Extension Program (LEP) for the B61 nuclear gravity bomb as part of its long-term strategy for a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent for the United States and its Allies and partners. This past June, the President signed new nuclear employment guidance that re-emphasized the U.S. commitment to the nuclear Triad and introduced a new approach to hedging with a more reliable, but reduced stockpile. The new hedging guidance informs the long-term strategic plan developed by DoD and the NNSA to sustain the stockpile and revitalize the supporting infrastructure in the most efficient manner possible. The baseline modernization strategy, also known as the "3+2" strategy, would consolidate the twelve unique warhead types used today into three interoperable warhead designs that function with both submarine and land-based missiles and an additional two aircraft delivered weapons. This consolidation, modernization, and reduction in warhead types would set the stage for a reduction in the total numbers of weapons in the stockpile and increased confidence in newly refurbished weapons.

The B61 is the oldest warhead design in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, with several components dating from the 1960s. Its modernization is the first full-scope LEP the nuclear enterprise has undertaken since new warhead production was suspended in the 1990s. The B61-12 LEP will address multiple components, nuclear and non-nuclear, that are currently hampered by aging issues; it will meet military requirements and guarantee an extended service life coupled with more affordable sustainment costs; and it will incorporate the upgrades that NNSA deems mandatory to provide a nuclear stockpile that is safe, secure, and effective. A successful B61-12 LEP facilitates consolidation of four of the currently deployed non-strategic and strategic B61-weapon types into one variant and allows for the eventual retirement of two other strategic air-delivered weapons, the B61-11 and the B83 nuclear gravity bombs. We believe it should

reduce stockpile sustainment costs and the strain on surveillance resources, and ultimately it will be the only nuclear gravity bomb available for use in the air leg of the nuclear Triad.

A key component of the B61-12 LEP is the newly designed guided Tail Kit Assembly. It allows the obsolete and prohibitively expensive parachute system to be replaced, and will result in a more accurate system. The improved accuracy will allow the B61-12 to achieve the same military effects of today's highest-yield versions, while incorporating the smallest yield design available. By balancing lower yield with increased accuracy we are maintaining current military capability of today's B-61, with lower yield and less nuclear materials. The improved guidance contributes to overall weapon readiness, which in turn will allow the number of B61 weapons that we maintain in the inventory to be reduced without negatively affecting capabilities. Finally, the new tail kit is vital to the successful integration of the B61-12 with the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft. . This feature is doubly important because the F-35 is destined to become the only dual-capable fighter aircraft in U.S. and many Allied air forces. I must emphasize that without a fully funded and successful U. S. Air Force acquisition of the guided tail kit, the B61-12 will not meet the military requirements that Commander, U.S. Strategic Command (CDR USSTRATCOM) has identified.

The Selected Acquisition Reports (SARs) for NNSA provide a total estimated cost of approximately $8.1 billion through 2024. With the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) in the lead, several offices within the DoD are working diligently with NNSA to improve management and generate operating efficiencies in order to deliver the B61-12 on schedule and budget. However, the impacts of sequestration threaten to undermine these efforts and contribute to further unplanned cost growth by extending the development and production periods. In Fiscal Year (FY)2013 sequestration reduced

NNSA's total resources by 7.8 percent and stressed the nuclear enterprise's ability to support the long-term aspects of the "3+2" modernization strategy in order to try to protect its near-term efforts like the B61-12 LEP. Sequestration has already resulted in a roughly six-month delay to the first production unit of the B61-12 from late 2019 to early 2020. Without a solution to the current fiscal crisis in FY2014, the DoD and DoE will be forced to make even more difficult decisions that could reduce the long term financial benefits of the "3+2" strategy. Despite these challenges, the Administration remains committed to completing a full-scope B61-12 LEP and the long-term fiscal and national security benefits that the "3+2" strategy presents.

There are some who believe that there is a less expensive alternative to the B61-12 that was never considered, but I can assure you that each and every modernization design proposal available was presented to the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC) during its decision process. Only after rigorous and thorough evaluation of each possibility did the Council unanimously conclude that the B61-12 full-scope LEP was the least expensive long-term option that could meet military requirements. The less expensive alternative, also known as the "Triple Alt," would severely restrict the modernization to just a few select non-nuclear components, and would cost more than the just one fourth of the B61-12 LEP, as some advocates claim. The triple-alt option, considered and rejected as part of the B61-12 selection process, does not meet military requirements. Over the long term, it would actually increase the overall cost of maintaining the B61 and the inventory of gravity weapons by requiring up to two additional LEPs for the B61. It would also prevent the planned consolidation or retirement of several hundred weapons previously mentioned, including the B83, the last megaton weapon in the U.S. stockpile. Given the additional LEP requirements, inefficient sustainment costs, and the sunk

costs already applied to the B61-12 program, the Triple Alt would actually be the more expensive program overall and not meet military requirements.

The role of nuclear weapons in NATO was examined just last year in NATO's Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) and was not changed by the newly issued nuclear employment guidance. The DDPR confirmed that nuclear weapons are a "core component" of NATO's defense; that the supreme guarantee of Allies' security is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States; and that "NATO will remain a nuclear alliance" as long as nuclear weapons exist. The DDPR also sets the goal of "creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons," which is consistent with the U.S. goal. Moreover any changes in NATO's nuclear posture must be decided jointly by the Alliance.

The President reaffirmed this commitment in his June 2013 Berlin speech and announced his intent to work closely with Allies to seek bold reductions with Russia in non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe. He also reiterated our commitment in the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review to maintain the capability to forward-deploy nuclear weapons with heavy bombers and dual-capable aircraft. Make no mistake, even if the NATO Alliance struck an agreement with Russia to mutually reduce tactical nuclear weapons, we would still need to complete the B61-12 LEP on the current timeline.

The commitment we make to refurbish this nuclear weapon system will serve as a concrete signal to the world of our commitment to the nation's security, and our position as a guarantor of nuclear deterrence and assurance to our Allies and partners.

The B61-12 LEP is an important component of our commitment to the revitalization of the nation's nuclear deterrent; it is the first of several refurbishment programs that make up our

long-term “3+2”modernization and management strategy; and its role in providing nuclear deterrence throughout the globe is extremely important. The DoD and NNSA will continue to work together to manage costs and maximize available efficiency measures and practices, while working to offset the negative effects of sequestration. The Administration is committed to making the necessary investments in our nuclear deterrent and the “3+2” modernization strategy, and the B61-12 LEP is the first tangible demonstration supporting this strategy. The value and importance of its success cannot be overstated.