

**Opening Statement
Chairman Frelinghuysen
Budget Hearing on Nuclear Nonproliferation and
Naval Reactors Programs
February 26, 2013, 1:00**

The hearing will come to order.

We opened our hearing season a few weeks ago by examining what I consider to be the most critical responsibility of the Department of Energy: your programs to sustain our nuclear weapons stockpile. Today, we will explore the Department's two other major national defense programs: nuclear nonproliferation, and naval reactors.

I'd like to welcome back the Honorable Neile Miller, Acting Administrator for NNSA, welcome back. Ms. Anne Harrington, it's good to see you again, as well.

Admiral Richardson, I'd like to both welcome you to your first appearance before the subcommittee, and express our support for you in your new position. The Director of Naval Reactors is an eight-year tour, reflective of the time it takes to develop the expertise and leadership to

be selected for this post. I think I can speak for my colleagues when I say that you have this subcommittee's full support for your critical work.

Before we begin, again, I would note that the Administration is nearly a month late in submitting its budget request for fiscal year 2014. While we would all appreciate the input of the Administration in the bills that we are charged to write, we will move forward, if necessary, without it. This lack of information becomes even more problematic when seen through the lens of the CR and sequestration, which is projected to take effect in a matter of days.

With no budget request, we are robbed of the input of the thousands of professionals who have dedicated their lives to keeping this country safe.

Recent events have reminded us how challenging this work is. North Korea has detonated a third nuclear device. Iran, a close ally of the Syrian regime and international terrorist groups, continues to push forward on its enrichment activities, unabated. And we must always be on guard for criminal and terrorist groups searching for the material to build the ultimate weapon – a nuclear weapon.

The nuclear nonproliferation programs of the Department have been developed to track and respond to these challenges, and today we'll discuss their effectiveness. Last year, the Department proposed a cut to the core nonproliferation program budget which you have avoided, thanks to the CR. Yet, as budgets get tighter, the costs of your major construction project – MOX – are getting higher and higher. I expect that we will hear today what the Department is doing to constrain the costs of this project so our nonproliferation programs do not suffer.

Our nonproliferation programs are able to operate thanks to the strategic stability that our nuclear triad has provided for this country and our allies for over 60 years now. The programs of naval reactors support the most stealthy, enduring leg of that triad – our submarines. They also ensure that our aircraft carriers have the power to provide American air superiority where needed to keep the peace – and respond to trouble if it arises.

Admiral, last year the Ohio-class replacement program was delayed by two years due to budget pressures – and this was before the threat of sequestration. Many of us have made it our priority to ensure that American

security is not weakened as a result of further budget cuts, but I'm concerned that our operational readiness may be affected. I hope we get your sense of how we will continue to meet such challenges.

Once again, welcome to our witnesses, and I'll turn to the Ranking Member for any comments she may have.