

STATEMENT OF
ROBERT WORK
DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
AND
ADMIRAL JAMES WINNEFELD
VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
BEFORE THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

JUNE 25, 2015

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Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on nuclear deterrence and what we in the Department of Defense are doing to ensure that it remains effective in the 21st century security environment.

We want to address three subjects: the critical role our nuclear forces play in our national security strategy, in accordance with the Nuclear Posture Review and the President's Employment Guidance; circumstances and recent changes in the security environment that underscore the continuing importance of nuclear deterrent forces in the future; and what we are doing to ensure that, as the President has directed, the United States will retain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear force for as long as nuclear weapons exist.

The Role of Nuclear Weapons in U.S. National Security Strategy

Survival of our nation is our most important national security interest. The overriding goal of our national policy is to reduce the nuclear dangers facing us and our allies. The President's policies enshrined in the Nuclear Posture Review and the Nuclear Weapon Employment Guidance lay the foundations for our efforts in these areas. We remain committed to the President's standing direction that we will seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, but that as long as nuclear weapons exist, we will maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal.

Our nuclear deterrent force is the ultimate protection against a nuclear attack on the United States, the one known existential threat to the nation. Additionally, our extended deterrence strategy provides protection to our allies and enhances alliance cohesion.

U.S. nuclear forces play two other limited but critical roles in our strategy.

First, our nuclear forces help convince potential adversaries that they cannot escalate their way out of failed conventional aggression. This enhances our ability to project power in the face of escalatory threats, and indirectly enhances the deterrence of large scale conventional war between nuclear-armed states. Second, our nuclear forces provide the President the means to achieve his or her objectives should deterrence fail. While we continue to seek to create the conditions under which we could declare that the sole purpose of our nuclear forces is to deter nuclear attack on the United States, today's security environment does not meet those conditions.

A Dynamic Security Environment

The members of this Committee are well aware of the pace, scope, and magnitude of change in the 21st century security environment in which we live. We want to call the Committee's attention to continuing circumstances relevant to the subject of this hearing.

In the wake of the Russian Federation's violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity, senior Russian officials have made numerous statements regarding Russia's nuclear forces, their capabilities, and intentions. Those statements constitute veiled, and not so veiled, attempts to intimidate our allies and us. Threatening and cavalier language like this has no place in the responsible dialogue between nations. Neither the United States nor our NATO and Asian allies need to be reminded that Russia is a nuclear-armed state. But it appears that Russia must continually be reminded of NATO's lack of aggressive intent on the one hand, and unwavering determination to defend its members on the other. Russian actions, including its irresponsible nuclear saber rattling have, if anything, strengthened Alliance solidarity and led us to take a number of measures to deter further Russian aggression and reassure our allies.

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The Russian Federation remains in violation of its obligations under the INF Treaty. Despite Russian claims to the contrary, we remain in full compliance with our obligations. Our goal is to return Russia to compliance and preserve the viability of the Treaty. However, as Secretary Carter said, the INF Treaty is a two way street. As we have told both the Russians and the members of this Committee, we will not allow the Russian Federation to gain a significant military advantage through their violation of an arms control treaty. We are developing and analyzing response options for the President, and will consult with our Allies. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Russian nuclear force modernization continues, within the limits of the New START Treaty. We assess that the Russians remain in compliance with New START, which remains in our mutual national security interest, and intends to adhere to the central limits of the treaty when they come into effect in February 2018. To date, the Russians have not shown interest in further reductions of our respective nuclear forces as proposed by the President in Berlin in 2013. That proposal remains on the table should they desire to engage.

Russian military doctrine includes what some have called an “escalate to de-escalate” strategy – a strategy that purportedly seeks to deescalate a conventional conflict through coercive threats, including limited nuclear use. We think that this label is dangerously misleading. Anyone who thinks they can control escalation through the use of nuclear weapons is literally playing with fire. Escalation is escalation, and nuclear use would be the ultimate escalation.

We also remain watchful of China’s continuing modernization of its nuclear force. The Chinese are deploying multiple warheads on some of their silo-based ICBMs. They continue to expand their mobile force, while developing a new mobile ICBM that may carry multiple warheads. China also continues to develop and field a sea-based element of their nuclear forces.

Four JIN-class SSBNs are currently operational, and up to five may enter service before China begins developing and fielding its next-generation SSBN, the type 096, over the coming decade. China will likely conduct its first SSBN nuclear deterrence patrol sometime in 2015. China's modernization program seems to be designed to ensure they have a survivable second strike capability; we see no indication that they seek quantitative parity with the U.S. and Russia. They are an increasingly capable nuclear-armed state.

Meanwhile, several authoritarian powers have determined that gaining a nuclear weapon capability is essential to protecting their regimes. In this regard, the administration is working diligently to conclude an agreement that, in a verifiable manner, would prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs pose a serious threat to the United States and to the security environment in East Asia. The United States continues to expand and improve our national missile defenses, and our current plans are intended to ensure that we remain ahead of North Korean capabilities. At the same time, our own nuclear capabilities have an essential role in deterring North Korean aggression.

The situations described above demonstrate the wisdom of maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear force as long as nuclear weapons exist.

Maintaining a Safe, Secure, and Effective Nuclear Force

Given the importance of our nuclear forces to our national security interests, and the volatile nature of the 21st century security environment, the President has directed that we maintain a safe, secure, and effective triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems while also adjusting those forces to the levels required by the New START central limits. This is the highest priority in the Department of Defense.

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Based on that direction, we have developed a plan to transition from our aging systems to a modernized nuclear arsenal.

Our plan will replace our aging nuclear delivery systems, modernize our nuclear command and control systems, and extend the life of the associated nuclear warheads in accordance with our “3+2” strategy. The 3+2 Strategy is designed to transition the U.S. nuclear stockpile from 12 warheads types today (five ballistic-missile warheads, six gravity bombs, and one air-launched cruise missile) to a future stockpile with three types of interoperable ballistic missile warheads and two types of air-delivered warheads (one gravity bomb and one cruise missile). Consistent with the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, at this time the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads. Instead, it will pursue Life Extension Programs that use only nuclear components based on previously tested designs, rather than developing new nuclear weapons with new military capabilities.

This transition plan poses three central challenges for the Department of Defense. First, we must ensure we sustain our current force until it can be replaced. Second, we must find a way to pay for simultaneously modernizing all three legs of the triad, our dual capable tactical aircraft, and our nuclear command and control systems. Third, we must work closely with our partners in the Department of Energy to ensure warhead life extensions and other modifications keep pace with the needs of the platforms that carry them.

Our response to the recommendations made by the Nuclear Enterprise Review has put us on a solid track to address the first of these challenges, and we thank you for your support of our funding requests.

The second challenge is a very expensive proposition. Modernizing the triad requires concurrently replacing the Ohio class SSBN, recapitalizing the ICBM force, building the LRSB,

and moving ahead with LRSO. In addition, following the Nuclear Enterprise Review the Department launched a National Leadership Command Capability (NLCC) and Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) Enterprise Review to assess our current capabilities and identify modernization requirements. That review concluded that the nation's NLCC/NC3 system remains effective today. However, based on the Review's findings we are revising our modernization plans and reviewing the overall NLCC/NC3 structure. We will be providing the full classified report to Congress.

After adding the cost of making required improvements to our nuclear command and control systems, modernizing and sustaining our nuclear arsenal is projected to cost the Department of Defense an average of \$18 billion per year from 2021 to 2035 in FY16 dollars. This is approximately 3.4% of our current, topline defense budget. When combined with the continuing cost to sustain the current force while we build the new one this will roughly double the share of the defense budget allocated to the nuclear mission. This will require very hard choices and increased risk in some missions without additional funding above current defense budget levels.

We appreciate that you have recognized this problem, including your legislation to establish a strategic deterrent fund; we now need to decide how to resource the fund. As a nation we have always found a way to provide what we need for our defense. We need to start thinking about how to solve this particular challenge together.

As for synchronizing the modernization of our delivery systems with the Department of Energy's warhead programs, we are doing this through close cooperation on the Nuclear Weapons Council and earlier and more frequent collaboration during the development of our budgets. This approach worked well during the preparation of the President's Budget (PB) for

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Fiscal Year 2016, and we hope to improve on it as we tackle PB 2017.

Finally, we would like to thank this Committee for its abiding interest in our national security and the strength and health of our armed forces. The oversight you provide and the funding you authorize is critical to our success in ensuring that the American soldier, sailor, airmen and Marine are the best trained, best equipped, and best supported military in the world.

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