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Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

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“Near-Peer Advancements in Space and Nuclear Weapons”

Chairman Cooper, Ranking Member Turner, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to testify today and for holding a public hearing on this most important topic. I’m pleased to be part of such a distinguished panel.

There is little more important to our national security, indeed, our nation’s existence, than the threat posed by foreign nuclear weapons development.

There is an arms race underway; today, the U.S. is sitting on the sidelines.

We have long known about Russia’s reliance on its nuclear forces. Russia is a failing state. A declining power. To paraphrase former Senator John McCain, “Russia is a mafia-run gas station with nuclear weapons.” Its nuclear forces are just another example of Putin’s need to cheaply create relevance for a formerly great power he is steering into the ground at an increasing rate of speed.

More recently, the activities of the Chinese Communist Party, including with respect to its nuclear forces, have become increasingly alarming to the U.S. national security apparatus.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) had been growing its nuclear forces behind what the then-Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control, Ambassador Marshall Billingslea, called the “Great Wall of Secrecy.”ⁱ

The prior administration, in which I served, made a concerted effort to reveal what it knew about the Chinese Communist Party’s plans to better inform Congress, the American people, and America’s allies.

Recently, in the U.S. Navy journal *Proceedings*, the Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, Admiral Charles Richards, U.S. Navy, wrote, “China’s nuclear weapons



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stockpile is expected to double (if not triple or quadruple) over the next decade.”ⁱⁱ

This statement ought not to have been a surprise, it is entirely consistent with the previous warnings of senior military and intelligence leaders.

For example, the previous director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General Robert Ashley, U.S. Army, stated in an event at the think tank at which I now work, “their trajectory is consistent with President Xi’s vision for China’s military, which was laid out at the 19th Party Congress, and stated that China’s military will be fully transformed into a first-tier force by 2050.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Who are the first-tier forces? Russia and the U.S., of course, at many thousands of nuclear weapons each.

General Ashley, at that event, provided additional details that the House Armed Services Committee should consider:

- “China has developed a new road-mobile ICBM, a new multi-warhead version of its silo-based ICBM, and a new submarine-launched ballistic missile”; and
- “With its announcement of a new nuclear-capable strategic bomber, China will soon field their own nuclear triad, demonstrating China’s commitment to expanding the role and centrality of nuclear forces in Beijing’s military aspirations.”^{iv}

So while some in this country suggest the U.S. has no need for a triad, the Chinese Communist Party proceeds in the exact opposite direction.

More recently, the Department of Defense found that:

- “PRC strategists have highlighted the need for lower-yield nuclear weapons in order to increase the deterrence value of China’s nuclear force”;
- “The DF26 is China’s first nuclear-capable missile system that can conduct precision strikes, and therefore, is the most likely weapon system to field a lower-yield warhead in the near-term”; and
- “Increasing evidence emerged in 2019 indicates that China seeks to keep at least a portion of its force on a LOW posture.”^v

Last year, the *Global Times*—a media outlet that answers to the Chinese Communist Party—called for the radical expansion of the PRC nuclear force and argued that that nuclear force should grow to at least 1,000 nuclear warheads, with a significant expansion of its nuclear missiles expressly targeted at the United States.^{vi}

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That General Secretary Xi Jinping would do this should not be surprising. It's been clear since he took power in 2012 that he was a Chinese leader who was done with the practice of the previous Chinese Communist Party leadership to "hide and bide".

General Secretary Xi promises the "eventual demise of capitalism". He promises that Chinese socialism will "win the initiative and have the dominant position."^{vii} This is not a promise of peaceful co-existence between competing world views.

We have not heard such rhetoric since Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev warned the West "we will bury you."^{viii}

Speaking of Soviet leaders, there is the nuclear program of Vladimir Putin to consider.

When the Obama Administration decided to negotiate that treaty, it maintained the Cold War legacy of only covering certain types of Russian nuclear forces.

At that time, 2009-10, it was already known that Russia possessed a ten-to-one advantage over the U.S. in terms of so-called "nonstrategic" or "unconstrained" nuclear weapons.^{ix}

Because of that Administration's misjudgment, the Senate's Resolution of Ratification for New START, which passed by the narrowest margin in the long history of arms control treaties, included a requirement that the Administration immediately seek to pursue a follow-on treaty that would capture those weapons.^x

Of course, the Russians saw no need to seriously consider any limit on them for the remainder of that Administration.

It's important to understand how we got to where we are with Russia's nuclear forces today: New START was a one-sided deal.

The Russians grew their nuclear force to reach the central limits of that treaty (up to 1550 strategic deployed nuclear warheads and up to 700 deployed strategic delivery vehicles); only the U.S. was obligated to cut those weapons.^{xi}

What has Russia done in the intervening ten years since New START entered-into-force?

Indeed, a decade after New START was ratified, Russia's accomplishment was clear: Putin had managed to exempt from arms control the bulk of his nuclear modernization program.

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I previously mentioned Admiral Richard's statement from *Proceedings*; his warnings about Russia were just as attention-worthy as his warnings about China:

“[m]ore than a decade ago, Russia began aggressively modernizing its nuclear forces...Russia is building new and novel systems, such as hypersonic glide vehicles, nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered torpedoes and cruise missiles, and other capabilities.”^{xii}

Further, according to the U.S. Intelligence Community Russia has built up an enormous capability to deploy a stockpile of non-deployed strategic nuclear warheads in the event it chooses to do so.^{xiii}

Likewise, “Russia possesses up to 2,000 such non-strategic nuclear warheads not covered by the New Start Treaty” and has “dozens of these [nonstrategic delivery] systems already deployed or in development”.^{xiv}

Among these weapons,

“Russia is adding new military capabilities to its existing stockpile of nonstrategic nuclear weapons, including those employable by ships, aircraft, and ground forces. These nuclear warheads include theater- and tactical-range systems that Russia relies on to deter and defeat NATO or China in a conflict” and many are fielded on delivery systems that have a “dual-capable nature”.^{xv}

Fielding these “new military capabilities” may explain why Russia (and apparently the People's Republic of China) is assessed to be conducting low yield nuclear weapons tests in violation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as it is understood to apply; these are tests the United States last conducted in 1992 and foreswore in 1995.^{xvi}

Then Secretary of State Pompeo stated, “[o]nly 45 percent of Russia's nuclear arsenal is subject to numerical limits...[m]eanwhile, that agreement restricts 92 percent of America's arsenal.”^{xvii xviii}

It's the simple fact that virtually every nuclear weapons delivery system the U.S. can deploy, and every type of nuclear weapon we deploy, is limited by arms control; that is simply not the case with the Russian Federation.

We have recently seen the Biden Administration pursue the five-year extension of the New START Treaty. We have locked in these Russian advantages for five more years. I believe this was a mistake.

I encourage you to also consider the role adversary chemical and biological weapons and weapons related activities play with respect to our nuclear posture.

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Since joining the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention, and eliminating our related weapons capabilities, the U.S. has deterred attacks on itself, and its allies, with these weapons with its nuclear weapons.

Understanding the rapidly materializing threats from these weapons is directly in your jurisdiction, even if some of the defenses and responses belong within other committees and subcommittees.

It is increasingly clear that the COVID-19 pandemic originated from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, likely accidentally, reminding us of the intrinsic risks of dual-use biological research.

This is a good reminder that the U.S. Department of State, in its annual arms control compliance reports, has never, not once, been able to certify that the People's Republic of China^{xxix} (nor the Russian Federation^{xx}, for that matter) is in compliance with its Biological Weapons Convention obligations.

Of course, Russia's flagrant disregard for its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention^{xxi}, (CWC) and the conduct of its puppet in Syria^{xxii}, show that these weapons are, sadly, still with us. Likewise, the Islamic Republic of Iran continues to be in violation of its commitments under the CWC^{xxiii}.

As I mentioned, these are matters, the consequences of which, directly relate to this subcommittee's jurisdiction.

For example, many ideologues in the disarmament community feverishly proclaim the need for the United States to forswear the use of U.S. nuclear weapons other than in response to a nuclear attack.

This so-called "Sole Purpose" doctrine would have you overlook these adversary weapons programs along with assurances made at the time of the ratification of the CWC, for example, that the US would always possess nuclear weapons and therefore these other types of weapons of mass destruction were simply no longer needed.^{xxiv}

But there is a bipartisan approach to defend the United States and its dozens of allies from the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction that I urge you to continue to support.

Now-Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin stated to the Senate Armed Services Committee, "I agree that nuclear deterrence is the Department's highest priority mission and that updating and overhauling our nation's nuclear forces is a critical national security priority."^{xxv}

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He joins a long line of our nation's senior national security leaders, military and civilian, who have stated that nuclear deterrence is the top priority for the Department of Defense.

Four Secretaries of Defense from both political parties have endorsed the same principle in favor of the nuclear modernization program developed by President Obama and carried forward by President Trump.

What this subcommittee should do to counter the aforementioned threats is recommit to the bipartisan Obama-Trump nuclear modernization program.

This bipartisan plan means modernizing the complementary three-legged stool of nuclear weapons delivery systems – heavy bombers capable of fielding gravity bombs and air-launched cruise missiles and dual-capable aircraft; ballistic missile submarines, with missiles capable of carrying low-yield and larger-yield warheads; and, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles.

This bipartisan modernization program also includes the Manhattan Project era complex of nuclear weapons production facilities. A modernized plutonium pit production and uranium manufacture capability were integral elements of the bipartisan Obama-Trump nuclear deterrent modernization program.

While these programs are often far less visible in public debates than the higher-profile DOD weapons systems, they are the *sine qua non* of the U.S. nuclear deterrent.

If the National Nuclear Security Administration can't produce the weapons to put on top of the missiles and under the wings of the bombers, as our adversaries are able to do in great numbers, those weapons systems are not able to serve the purpose of nuclear deterrence.^{xxvi}

I'd be surprised if anyone in this room owns a car as old as any one of these delivery systems, all of which are beyond their design life.^{xxvii} A classic 1964 Ford Mustang would be a perfect exception, but probably not something you'd want to depend on. Also, that's likely younger than the B52s we operate today.

These systems either must be modernized or they will no longer be available to defend the American people.^{xxviii}

Allowing these systems to atrophy into irrelevance would mean disregarding the advice of the nation's senior military officer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General, Mark Milley, U.S. Army, who stated "[t]he nuclear Triad has kept the peace since nuclear weapons were introduced and has sustained the test of time."^{xxix}

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Likewise, this panel should make a bipartisan call for a new Nuclear Posture Review before any significant changes are made to the nation's nuclear force or its posture.

Presidents Clinton, Bush (43), Obama and Trump all undertook Nuclear Posture Reviews.

The question for the Biden Administration is whether it will undertake a similar review, and will it propose changes to the U.S. nuclear force and posture before or in the absence of one?

There is a loud disarmament clerisy that is arguing for adopting a series of destabilizing and reckless steps – like abandoning the modernization of the ICBM leg of the triad or adopting a so-called no-first use policy and even “de-alerting” our nuclear weapons – and simply bypassing the Nuclear Posture Review process.

Even the NPR process is not perfect: we saw during the Obama Administration a series of steps, idealistic and naïve, to show “moral leadership” to the world in furtherance of nuclear disarmament.

For example, the Obama NPR eliminated the TLAM-N cruise missile (at the risk of undermining confidence of key allies in the extended deterrent), de-MIRVed our land-based missile force, and adopted a narrower nuclear use policies.

None of these steps were reciprocated by a U.S. adversary; in fact, our adversaries proceeded in the opposite direction.

The world is decidedly less safe than it was prior to the Obama Nuclear Posture Review's decisions. No other nuclear power followed President's Obama's lead.

I encourage the subcommittee to consider these facts as you undertake your oversight this year, as you consider the appropriate level for the budgets for the Department of Defense and the National Nuclear Security Administration, and as you draft the National Defense Authorization Act.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

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ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.hudson.org/research/15063-transcript-the-arms-control-landscape-ft-dia-lt-gen-robert-p-ashley->

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xv Id.

xvi <https://www.dia.mil/News/Speeches-and-Testimonies/Article-View/Article/1875351/dia-statement-on-It-gen-ashleys-remarks-at-hudson-institute/>

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xviii <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/u-s-russia-close-to-a-deal-on-nuclear-arms-control-says-special-envoy>

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xx Id.

xxi <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-10C-Report-Unclassified-Version-for-H.pdf>

xxii Id.

xxiii Id.

xxiv <https://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/104th-congress/executive-report/33/1>

xxv Austin Advanced Policy Questions responses, Senate Armed Services Committee, January 15, 2021.

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xxviii <https://www.airforcemag.com/Hyten-Says-Nuclear-Modernization-Cannot-be-Delayed/>

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