

Statement by

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## **Introduction**

Chairman Cooper, Ranking Member Turner, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Department's nuclear policies and the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Budget Request for nuclear forces and our nuclear posture.

As Secretary Austin has stated, nuclear deterrence is the Department's highest priority mission. Our nuclear triad remains the bedrock of our national defense and strategic deterrence, ensuring that no adversary believes it can ever employ nuclear weapons against the United States or our allies and partners without risking devastating consequences. The FY 2022 budget request reflects this Administration's commitment to modernizing our nuclear triad to ensure a credible deterrent for the future.

Today, the United States faces a complex global security environment, in which the critical challenges to our prosperity and security include strategic competition with an increasingly militarily capable China and Russia, dangerous regional powers, and accelerating technological changes with potentially strategic effects. China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea have all demonstrated the capability and intent to advance their interests at the expense of the United States, its allies and partners, and their regional neighbors. In particular, China has rapidly become more capable and assertive, and its military modernization, including its expansion of its nuclear forces, presents an increasingly urgent challenge. Russia's comprehensive conventional and nuclear modernization programs are adding new systems that threaten the United States and its allies and partners. Deterrence becomes more urgent in this competitive global environment, as our rivals' foreign policies fueled by advances in technology and enabled by new frontiers for conflict increase the risk of escalation.

We are confronted with multi-faceted deterrence challenges including threats in the cyber, space, and nuclear domains, as well as heightened escalation risks. In a security environment where assertive competitors are expanding and modernizing their nuclear capabilities, we must maintain credible strategic deterrence against adversaries and protect the American people and our allies and partners.

## **The Nuclear Threat**

### China

The People's Republic of China (PRC) is continuing its rapid expansion and platform diversification of its nuclear arsenal. In this decade, the PRC is ahead of the pace necessary to double the size of its nuclear stockpile and will soon field a nuclear triad. The 2021 Threat Assessment Report of the U.S. Intelligence Community from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) states, "China is building a larger and increasingly capable nuclear missile force that is more survivable, more diverse, and on higher alert than in the past, including nuclear missile systems designed to manage regional escalation and ensure an intercontinental second-strike capability." The PRC probably seeks qualitative parity with selected key U.S. and Russian capabilities in the period of 2035-2050.

The People's Liberation Army Rocket Force (PLARF) is examining how lower-yield nuclear weapons and air-launched ballistic missiles fit into its expanding nuclear arsenal—an arsenal that includes a mix of strategic-range systems capable of striking the United States and theater-range

forces capable of threatening U.S. allies and partners, as well as U.S. bases and U.S. forces in the region. The PRC is fielding a new generation of mobile missiles, with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRVs) and penetration aids to overcome perceived missile defense capabilities. The PRC has also fielded a new road-mobile strategic intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and is planning to arm its ballistic missile submarine with new submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Like Russia, the PRC is also committed to the development of hypersonic strike systems, including nuclear-armed missiles.

In addition to its land- and sea-based components, the PRC has announced development of a new nuclear-capable strategic bomber designed for stealth. The PLARF has also deployed a nuclear-capable precision-guided DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile capable of attacking land and naval targets. Although Beijing maintains its “No First Use” policy publicly, there is some doubt as to whether it intends to abide by it, and the PRC’s new nuclear weapons provide it with coercive options in a crisis or conflict.

### Russia

Russia continues to invest in its strategic nuclear forces, in new capabilities to enhance its strategic deterrent (and place the U.S. homeland at risk), and in capabilities that improve conventional warfighting. According to the 2021 ODNI Annual Threat Assessment, Russia will remain the largest and most capable nuclear rival to the United States for the foreseeable future as it expands and modernizes its nuclear weapons capabilities and increases capabilities of its strategic and non-strategic weapons.

Russia’s comprehensive nuclear modernization program not only includes replacement of legacy systems, but includes fielding new, so-called “novel” nuclear systems. To date, Russia has recapitalized more than 80 percent of its strategic nuclear forces, prioritizing this effort.

Russia has also modernized and improved the capabilities of its theater and tactical nuclear forces. It is assessed to have between 1,000-2,000 non-strategic nuclear weapons of more than a dozen types. Moreover, according to an April 2021 Defense Intelligence Agency assessment, the number of Russia’s non-strategic nuclear weapons is expected to grow significantly over the next decade. These tactical nuclear weapons are currently not limited by any arms control agreement.

According to the 2021 ODNI Annual Threat Assessment, Russia “believes such systems offer options to deter adversaries, control the escalation of potential hostilities, and counter U.S. and allied forces near its border.” Some of Russia’s stated drivers of its modernization for its newer systems include perceptions of U.S. missile defense and Western conventional force superiority. However, although Russia may claim these weapons are defensive in nature to address conventional imbalances with the United States and its allies, this nuclear arsenal provides Russia with a multitude of options to coerce or threaten the NATO alliance and our Asian allies and partners.

### North Korea

North Korea continues its unlawful production of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile capabilities in violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions. North Korea’s nuclear capabilities constitute a significant and evolving threat to our allies, and its tested ICBMs are designed to strike anywhere within the continental United States.

Between 2006 and 2017, North Korea conducted six progressively more sophisticated nuclear explosive tests and three ICBM flight tests that demonstrate its ability to reach the U.S. homeland. It continues to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons. Most recently, in January 2021, North Korea unveiled a new type of submarine-launched ballistic missile, which it declared to be “the world’s most powerful weapon.”

North Korea’s continued development and deployment of nuclear weapons threatens its neighbors and the United States.

### Iran

Iran continues to engage in destabilizing regional activities, pursue advanced military capabilities and technologies, and threaten U.S. allies and partners. Iran has developed and fielded a substantial arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles that can strike targets at ranges up to 2,000 kilometers throughout the region. According to the Defense Intelligence Agency in April 2021, Iran continues to deploy an increasing number of more accurate and lethal theater ballistic missiles, as well as pursue technical capabilities that could enable it to produce an ICBM if it chooses to do so.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) effectively blocked Iran’s potential pathways to a nuclear weapon and enabled robust international monitoring of all aspects of Iran’s nuclear fuel cycle. Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities needed to produce a nuclear device, according to the Intelligence Community. However, since the United States exited the JCPOA in May 2018, Iran has taken steps to expand its nuclear activities in excess of the JCPOA’s limits and now is much closer to having the fissile material required for a nuclear weapon than it was prior to taking these steps. Iran is also advancing its research and development on other capabilities of concern, such as the production of uranium metal, and is now doing so without the full benefit of the intrusive verification and monitoring measures that were in place when Iran was complying with its commitments under the deal. The Department supports the Administration’s strategy of pursuing principled diplomacy to again constrain Iran’s nuclear capabilities. The President has been clear about returning to compliance with the JCPOA if Iran resumes full and strict compliance with its commitments under the deal.

In addition, Iran’s development of more capable ballistic missiles makes it critical that the United States closely monitor developments in Iran to ensure our ability to deter its destabilizing and aggressive behavior.

### **Deterrence Policy**

As the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance states, “we will address the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons,” and the United States “will take steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, while ensuring our strategic deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective and that our extended deterrence commitments to our allies remain strong and credible.”

## Strategic Reviews and Integrated Deterrence

In keeping with past practice for incoming administrations, the Department is launching a nuclear posture review, nested within the National Defense Strategy (NDS) review, to ensure that we have the right capabilities matched with the national nuclear strategy. This review will consider and assess U.S. strategy, posture, and policy adjustments, and consider program execution risk—all with a goal of maintaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent, ensuring strategic stability, and reducing risks of mistake and miscalculation in crisis and conflict.

This process will be informed by the 21st century security and fiscal environment. It will align and be closely integrated with the NDS review, which began on May 3 and will be delivered to Congress in January 2022.

As reflected in his recent speech at U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and in a *Washington Post* op-ed, Secretary Austin's priority has been to focus on "integrated deterrence" to address threats and opportunities to strengthen deterrence across conventional, cyber, space, hybrid, and nuclear domains. He has asked the Department to think through our capabilities and operational concepts and determine how we use our cyber, space, and nuclear capabilities to create a more credible and resilient deterrent against our competitors. We are eager to build out this approach. As Secretary Austin recently testified, the FY 2022 budget request will help us achieve this new vision of 21st century deterrence.

The review will include this integrated approach to deterrence by considering how we maintain our deterrent capabilities within and across domains to strengthen U.S. national security and our extended deterrence commitments with allies and partners. We look forward to advancing this work, and ensuring our nuclear capabilities are matched with the challenges we face and aligned with the President's priorities.

## Taking Steps to Reduce the Role of Nuclear Weapons while Ensuring a Safe, Secure, and Effective Strategic Deterrent through Nuclear Modernization

In the coming months and in line with the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, we will also begin to explore the steps that can be taken to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, while continuing to ensure our strategic deterrent remains safe, secure and effective and our extended deterrence commitments to our allies remain strong.

Our review of U.S. nuclear strategy and posture will assess the U.S. nuclear modernization programs to ensure that they deliver on time and are aligned with policy priorities and operational requirements.

One of the key priorities across the Department is to drive innovation and modernize our capabilities to meet our future needs. As Secretary Austin recently testified:

"We must modernize our aging capabilities to ensure a credible deterrent for the future. As we do, we will review ongoing programs to assess their performance, schedule, risks, and projected costs. The FY 2022 budget invests in nuclear modernization efforts, and the Department will always seek to balance the best capability with the most cost-effective solution."

This Committee is well aware of the age of our nuclear systems and DoD's challenge in sustaining them as we simultaneously proceed with modernizing U.S. nuclear forces after decades of deferred recapitalization.

Effective deterrence requires a robust and credible nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) system that ensures the President has the ability to direct U.S. nuclear forces at all times, even under the most challenging circumstances. NC3 will continue to be a top priority as the Department replaces an aging NC3 system and considers future architectures.

The United States is making significant investments in recapitalizing nuclear delivery platforms. The Department has embarked on several on-going concurrent programs, many of which plan to begin deliveries in the 2030 timeframe, to replace aging systems including: the Columbia-class ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBNs); modernization of the associated D5 submarine launched ballistic missile and new reentry bodies; the replacement and modernization of land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), with the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD); a nuclear long-range stand-off (LRSO) cruise missile; the current and future bomber (B-52); a modern bomber (B-21); and nuclear-capable fighters (F-35).

The Department appreciates Congress's recognition of the importance of modernizing U.S. nuclear forces after decades of deferred recapitalization, and we request continued support to modernize and sustain the Nation's nuclear deterrent.

The FY 2022 Budget Request funds all critical DoD nuclear modernization requirements, helping to ensure that modern replacements will be available before the United States' aging systems reach the end of their extended service lives.

The FY 2022 Budget Request for nuclear forces is \$27.7 billion. This includes \$15.6 billion to sustain and operate our current nuclear forces and \$12.1 billion for recapitalization programs.

The OSD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) Office assesses that nuclear forces, including modernization, only accounts for approximately 6-7 percent of the DoD budget over the next decade. This aligns with the recent May 2021 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report, which says that "nuclear forces account for roughly 7 percent of the total 10-year cost of the plans for national defense."

The U.S. stockpile strategy must continue to evolve to enable the United States to field a modern deterrent fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) life-extension, modifications, and nuclear weapons programs are designed to address DoD military requirements. Today's dynamic security environment requires a mix of weapon attributes, and weapons modernization and sustainment programs—all of which must be backed up by world-class personnel and a resilient infrastructure. The United States has adopted a stockpile strategy that will ensure our nuclear weapons remain safe, secure, and effective against current and future threats. The imperative behind this strategy is to meet current and future military requirements with higher confidence and without explosive nuclear testing.

## Renewed Focus on Strategic Stability, Risk Reduction, and Arms Control

The 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance also stated that “we will endeavor to head off costly arms races and re-establish our credibility as a leader in arms control.” President Biden has demonstrated his commitment to re-establishing U.S. credibility and leadership on arms control by concluding an agreement with Russia to extend the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) for five years.

The New START Treaty extension provides stability and predictability in addition to retaining limits on Russian systems that pose an existential military threat to the United States. It ensures legally binding constraints on a substantial portion of Russia’s nuclear warheads, with an upper limit of 1,550 nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, on deployed SLBMs, and counted for deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments (each such heavy bomber is counted as one warhead toward this limit). The Treaty also limits both deployed and non-deployed heavy bombers and launchers of ICBMs and SLBMs. And it keeps in place an important inspection and notification regime to verify that Russia remains in compliance with its obligations under the New START Treaty.

We must look to build on the New START Treaty’s foundation. This will be a difficult endeavor, but the scope of Chinese and Russian nuclear modernization and expansion makes the task of seeking progress on further arms control, nuclear security, and risk reduction measures all the more necessary. In addition, the increasing potential for conduct in the cyber, space, and information domains to have strategic effects (with consequent escalatory risk) underscores the importance of meaningful dialogue with Russia and China on the range of emerging military technological developments that could threaten strategic and regional stability. Presidents Biden and Putin have already decided to hold strategic stability discussions. Similarly, the Administration will work to engage China with the goal of having it accept its responsibility as a nuclear-armed, technologically advanced power, which includes increased transparency and progress on nuclear risk reduction. The Department will support efforts to negotiate agreements and arrangements that make the United States and its allies and partners more safe and secure.

### **Commitment to Allies and Partners**

As competitors continue to invest in efforts to challenge the United States, we are harnessing our greatest strategic advantage—our network of allies and partners—both globally and regionally to deter aggression from China and Russia, and to contend with persistent threats from North Korea and Iran.

Working closely with key allies and partners in Europe and the Indo-Pacific region to enhance our collective defense efforts remains a core focus area for the Department. From a strategic standpoint, and as Deputy Secretary Hicks testified, cooperation in this area strengthens our common protection, enhances deterrence, and provides assurances essential to the cohesion of our alliances in the face of growing threats. The United States maintains extended deterrence commitments with our NATO allies, and key Indo-Pacific allies and partners, and we retain robust dialogue with these allies to ensure the continued strength of our extended deterrence commitments.

As the 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance stated, we will “stand behind our allies, work with like-minded partners, and pool our collective strength to advance shared interests and deter common threats.” No country should doubt the strength of our extended deterrence commitments or the strength of the U.S. and allied and partner capabilities to deter and, if necessary, respond should deterrence fail.

### The Republic of Korea, Japan, and Australia

In Asia, our formal relationships with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan are critical to regional security and stability and provide a critical deterrent to North Korean and Chinese threats. We have long-standing extended deterrence dialogues with the ROK and with Japan. Through regular bilateral meetings, site-visits, and table-top exercises, both dialogues have helped us to develop a shared perspective on deterrence principles and broader threats within the region. We also have meaningful consultation with Australia through the Strategic Policy Dialogue (SPD), which has deepened our understanding of Australian views on strategic and nuclear threats in the region. Moreover, we continue to use all of these venues to assure our allies regularly of the continued importance of U.S. extended deterrence commitments as a crucial part of our collective national security.

### NATO

NATO Allies in December 2019 reiterated that “as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance” and that “we are fully committed to the preservation and strengthening of effective arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation, taking into account the prevailing security environment.” The United States continues to make available its strategic nuclear forces for the defense of NATO, and they remain the supreme guarantee of the security of NATO Allies along with the independent strategic nuclear forces of the UK and France, which have a deterrent role of their own. U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe and the capabilities and infrastructure provided by NATO Allies also support NATO’s nuclear deterrence and defense posture, and provide an essential political and military link between Europe and North America.

Unique among all NATO allies, the United States has had long-standing strategic staff talks with the United Kingdom and France. The UK’s Continuous-At-Sea-Deterrent contributes to NATO’s defense and has underwritten our collective peace and security for over six decades. We maintain regular dialogue through Biannual Staff Talks and other technical engagements. The UK purchases and uses U.S. Trident missiles, equipped with UK warheads, onboard its VANGUARD-class SSBNs; and the new U.S. COLUMBIA-class and UK DREADNOUGHT-class SSBNs will share a common missile compartment. The UK’s parallel replacement warhead program depends on the U.S. technology development from the W93/Mk7. The UK’s nuclear forces remain and will continue to be a key contribution to NATO’s nuclear deterrent posture.

Similarly, France’s nuclear forces also contribute significantly to the overall security of NATO. The United States maintains a formal dialogue with France through Annual Staff Talks to facilitate understanding of each other’s threat perceptions and on other issues related to nuclear security.



## **Conclusion**

Mr. Chairman, let me conclude by stating that the challenges we face are many, but the FY 2022 budget will help to ensure the United States has a modern nuclear deterrent that is safe, secure, and credible to keep the United States and its allies and partners safe. As the Department begins its strategic reviews, enhancing deterrence and addressing strategic threats remain the highest priority. We will continue to address the existential threat posed by nuclear weapons, strengthen strategic stability, pursue efforts to reduce nuclear risks and engage with our allies and partners.

I thank this Subcommittee for its previous support for our nuclear programs and urge your continued support for these important capabilities contained in the President's FY 2022 budget request.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.