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THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

OF THE

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON

FY 2027 BUDGET REQUEST FOR NUCLEAR FORCES AND

ATOMIC ENERGY DEFENSE ACTIVITIES

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Introduction

Strategic Systems Programs' (SSP) mission is to deter strategic attack by providing credible and affordable nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities to the Warfighter to underwrite the security of our Nation. As the Navy command that provides cost-effective, safe, and secure sea-based strategic deterrence solutions, the SSP team is entrusted to provide cradle-to-grave lifecycle support to three critical programs: the TRIDENT II D5 Strategic Weapon System (SWS), Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) hypersonics, and the Nuclear-Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM-N) programs.

The U.S. nuclear triad's most survivable leg is provided by the sea-based strategic deterrent (SBSD). The TRIDENT II D5 represents over two-thirds of our Nation's deployed nuclear warheads, providing an unyielding foundation for assured response against any adversary. The SBSD encompasses a formidable network of assets: the strategic nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) force, the TRIDENT II D5 and its associated nuclear warheads, the Navy Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications systems, and the crucial shore-based maintenance and security infrastructure.

SLCM-N is intended to expand the President's options for responding to limited nuclear use and strategic non-nuclear attacks with a theater-level option. SLCM-N enables a persistent, survivable, regional, nuclear presence without dependence on allied host nations, giving the President more options in a conflict. The capability also provides a valuable regional deterrent.

Underpinning these capabilities is a wide-ranging industrial base, ensuring the sustainment and modernization of this vital deterrent for decades to come.

Maintaining Unmatched Strength and Lethality

A key component of an effective deterrent is an assured second-strike capability, which is exactly what the Navy's submarine-launched nuclear weapons provide. SSP's core mission supporting the sea-based leg of the nuclear triad comprises two fundamental lines of effort: the safety and security of our Nation's strategic assets entrusted to the Navy; and the design, development, production, sustainment, and disposal of the Navy's SWS. We strive to maintain a culture of excellence, underpinned by rigorous self-assessment, to achieve the highest standards

of performance and integrity for personnel supporting the strategic deterrent mission. We focus unrelentingly on our tremendous responsibility for the custody and accountability of our Nation's nuclear assets. The men and women of SSP, our Sailors, our Marines, our Coast Guardsmen, and our industry partners remain dedicated to supporting the strategic deterrence mission, ready to respond to the emerging needs of our Warfighter, and committed to protecting and safeguarding our Nation's assets with which we are entrusted. We are grateful to congressional defense committees for their unwavering support for our critical mission.

SSP Priorities: Lethality, Warfighting, Homeland Defense

SSP approaches our mission through the lens of our three main priorities:

- **Lethality:** SSP ensures the highest levels of readiness for our systems, providing critical support to the U.S. national strategy to deter any adversary who threatens the United States, our allies, or our interests.
- **Warfighting:** Our unwavering focus on designing, developing, and deploying the most advanced SLBM, SLCM-N, and hypersonic technologies ensures the U.S. Navy maintains its competitive edge in an increasingly contested maritime domain.
- **Homeland Defense:** As the most survivable leg of the nuclear triad, the SBSD, under SSP's stewardship, stands constant, providing an unshakeable deterrent against attack on our homeland.

State of the Program

Today's nuclear triad is built upon the foresight and decisions of those who have come before us. Deliberate investment into a nuclear weapons support infrastructure promoted both the safety and reliability of the SWS as well as the high levels of security required for weapons of such importance. After seven decades of use, the Navy must revitalize and build the capacity that will allow this infrastructure to continue to meet Warfighter requirements in the face of evolving threats. In addition to revitalizing legacy infrastructure to sustain SWS shore operations, the Nuclear Enterprise, and SSP in particular, must prioritize both expanded and new infrastructure

to promote the safety, security, efficacy, and credibility of the SWS through 2084. These investments must be made in weapon design and development capacity, transportation and storage infrastructure, technical operations, and security facilities.

The safety, security, and reliability of the Navy's nuclear weapons is SSP's highest priority. The SSP flight test program measures performance and reliability of the SWS in order to ensure operational effectiveness. SSP has accomplished 197 successful flight tests of the TRIDENT II missile – the most recent of which occurred in April 2025. Furthermore, the Navy strictly complies with the Nuclear Weapons Surety Standards for all nuclear weapons in its custody and regularly evaluates itself to ensure we are meeting those standards. The TRIDENT II program is safe, secure, and highly reliable.

A minimum of 12 COLUMBIA-class SSBNs will replace the current fleet of 14 OHIO-class SSBNs. The continued demonstrated high performance of the SWS will ensure the COLUMBIA-class meets U.S. Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) direction to meet requirements derived from Presidential guidance, which establish the minimum force necessary to deter adversary attack against the homeland and to provide the President with an assured survivable second-strike capability. For this reason, the Navy must maintain a robust OHIO-class SSBN age management program to avoid a degradation in mission capabilities as the COLUMBIA-class SSBN prepares to enter service.

The SBSD stands at a critical juncture. Decades of strategic foresight have delivered an unparalleled capability. But, to maintain our advantage in the face of evolving threats, we must build on these decisions and prioritize the modernization of our nuclear infrastructure and industrial base. SSP will continue to balance the following priorities as we move into a new era of sustainment and new programs:

- **Prioritizing Modernization:** With its advanced capabilities, the COLUMBIA-class SSBN combined with its TRIDENT II D5 represents a generational leap forward in our undersea deterrent. With improvements in the SSBN platform come upgrades to the SWS – both the TRIDENT II D5 missile and its warhead. SSP is fully committed to ensuring a seamless transition from the OHIO-class SSBN, leveraging existing infrastructure while modernizing the SWS to meet the demands of the future.

- **Revitalizing the Industrial Base:** A strong and resilient domestic industrial base is the bedrock of a credible deterrent. SSP is actively working to revitalize this vital national asset, ensuring the timely production and delivery of critical SWS components while fostering American jobs and technological superiority.
- **Confronting Emerging Threats:** In light of the ever-evolving threat landscape, SSP is fully committed to investing in necessary deterrence technologies, including SLCM-N and conventional hypersonics, and in strategies to protect our strategic assets from those who seek to undermine our national security.
- **Systems Integration:** SSP is the system of systems integrator for the SWS, SLCM-N, and CPS, meaning we have technical cognizance of, and integrate, the subsystems that make the entire weapons systems work. We also own cradle-to-grave responsibilities. This requires our civilian workforce to have the requisite expertise and critical knowledge of the design development through sustainment and disposal to support nuclear modernization in collaboration with our industry partners.

SWS Sustainment on OHIO-Class SSBN and Procurement for COLUMBIA-Class SSBN

The 14 ship OHIO-class fleet remains the backbone of U.S. strategic deterrence, carrying approximately 70 percent of the United States' deployed nuclear warheads in the form of the W76/Mk4 and W88/Mk5 families of reentry systems. Originally designed for a 30-year service life, the OHIO-class submarines were called upon to extend this service to 42 years, supporting a delay in investment in the next generation of SSBNs.

To account for this extension in service life, SSP embarked on a life extension program for the TRIDENT II D5 missile to update critical, aging missile electronics systems. SSP introduced the first TRIDENT II D5 Life Extension (D5LE) missile to the fleet in 2017 and the missile will remain an effective and credible SWS into the 2040s – supporting the OHIO-class submarine through end of service life and serving as the initial SWS for the COLUMBIA- and UK DREADNOUGHT-class SSBNs.

SSP's program efforts and collaboration with the UK through the 1963 Polaris Sales Agreement, as amended (PSA) and 1958 Mutual Defense Agreement, as amended (MDA) support the UK's

Continuous At Sea Deterrent through VANGUARD-class SSBN end of service life and the transition to a DREADNOUGHT-class SSBN fleet.

To meet these critical program responsibilities, SSP maintains the security of not just the systems themselves, but for the processes surrounding them. We will sustain our deployed systems and modernize for our new ones, ensuring that we continue to keep the Navy's nuclear weapons safe and secure. We also will develop and protect our logistics supply chain. Through these measures, SSP will continue to unlock new capabilities that the Warfighter can leverage to enhance strategic deterrence and act decisively should deterrence fail.

TRIDENT II D5 Life Extension and Life Extension 2

The TRIDENT II D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) subprogram is essential to maintaining a credible strategic deterrent through the life of the COLUMBIA-class SSBN. In mid-2025, D5LE2 was instantiated as a major subprogram having successfully completed Milestone B, with an Acquisition Program Baseline approved by the Navy. The D5LE2 program will:

- **Extend Service Life**: D5LE2 will replace the D5LE missiles to align with the COLUMBIA-class planned service life, ensuring a credible at-sea deterrent for decades to come.
- **Enhance Capabilities**: Using a hybrid approach of leveraging existing reliable technology and integrating cutting-edge advancements, D5LE2 will have the adaptability to counter emerging threats throughout its service life.
- **Strengthen the Industrial Base**: D5LE2 is a critical driver in revitalizing our domestic industrial base, ensuring the availability of critical components and supporting American jobs.

As the Navy carefully manages the approach to end of life of our OHIO-class SSBNs, we have assessed how we can ensure the SWS is available throughout the life of the COLUMBIA-class SSBNs. A minimum of 12 COLUMBIA-class SSBNs will replace today's 14 OHIO-class SSBNs; and, beginning in FY30, we will load current D5LE missiles on Hulls 1 through 8 of COLUMBIA-class SSBNs. Production of additional D5LE missiles is not practical due to

obsolete parts and the current lack of a robust industrial base, though investments made in FY26 have enabled increases to processing capacity at our facilities.

To meet inventory requirements and maintain a credible strategic deterrent in the face of evolving threats, we are designing, engineering, producing, and deploying D5LE2 in time for strategic outload of COLUMBIA-class hulls starting in 2039. All future COLUMBIA-class hulls will also be fielded with D5LE2 for their initial outload. D5LE2 will be backfitted into initial COLUMBIA-class hulls during their Extended Refit Period from FY39-49. D5LE2's architecture will ensure the weapon system maintains demonstrated performance and survivability while facing a dynamic threat environment driven by multiple near-peer adversaries until COLUMBIA-class end of life.

Supporting the modernization transition, D5LE2 is also focused on recapitalizing required infrastructure across the Navy's Nuclear Enterprise. The Strategic Weapons Facilities (SWFs) at Kings Bay, GA and Bangor, WA, and the Naval Ordinance Test Unit at Cape Canaveral, FL, are required to support SSBN operations in addition to their missions to develop, produce and support operational testing throughout the service life of D5LE2. Constant support is required to maintain our continuous presence at sea in accordance with U.S. Strategic Command requirements.

D5LE2 is a hybrid of existing, cost-effective technology (e.g., solid rocket motors, ignitors) and redesigned and updated components (e.g., avionics, guidance, system architecture). It is structured to maintain today's unmatched reliability and demonstrated performance while unlocking untapped system potential to efficiently respond to emerging needs and to maintain a credible strategic deterrent. Maintaining full support of D5LE2 is vital to achieving 2039 Initial Fleet Introduction and to embarking on a path that maintains an SLBM deterrent capability through the service life of the COLUMBIA Class SSBNs.

Industrial Base and Infrastructure

The Nation requires a modernized nuclear force and supporting infrastructure to execute our national strategy. Years of heavy focus on sustainment, vice focusing on both sustainment and development, as the program had in the past, has led to D5LE2 being unable to rely on a healthy

defense industrial base built on simultaneously maintaining production and continuous development. Our modernization needs cannot succeed without investing in research and development, critical skills in the workforce, and the facilities needed to produce, sustain, and certify our nuclear systems. Ensuring robust defense and aerospace industrial base capabilities—such as radiation-hardened electronics, strategic inertial instrumentation, and solid rocket motors (SRMs)—remains an important priority in conjunction with sustainment of deployed flight and shipboard systems and research and development investment. Due to these realities, we are actively engaging with industry partners and across Military Services to proactively identify and assess known and unknown risks and opportunities for investment.

SSP has placed particular emphasis on the SRM industry and its sub-tier suppliers. We appreciate Congress' support for the continuous production of these vital components. Over the past 15 years, the SRM industrial base waned following the completion of the Space Shuttle missions, Minuteman III re-graining, and disruption of the space launch market by new Liquid Rocket Engine entrants. However, SRM demand is increasing due to competing programs (CPS, Sentinel, Next Generation Interceptor) and production rate increases for TRIDENT II. In addition, the TRIDENT II SRM production line is aging and requires modernization in order to ensure production can continue well into the 2060s.

In short, full support of D5LE2 today is vital to achieving Initial Fleet Introduction in 2039 and to embarking on a path that maintains an SLBM deterrent capability through the service life of the COLUMBIA-class SSBNs. If the Nation does not continue to address these concerns, no amount of money will be able to mitigate the realized risk of an inadequately prepared industrial base.

In addition to SRMs, we also need a national capability to build aeroshells, which protect the payload upon re-entry to the atmosphere. The Navy has not delivered an integrated aeroshell since the 1980s and needs to reinvigorate a production capability that only resides in a small cadre of highly skilled experts in an exceptionally niche industry. Aeroshell investment supports the Navy but will also be cost-effectively leveraged by our colleagues in the Air Force and our strategic partners in the United Kingdom as they pursue their sovereign warhead program endeavors.

Strategic radiation-hardened microelectronics and inertial instrumentation are foundational to mission success, but in recent decades, the industrial base has aged and become sole source. SSP, in partnership both with other government agencies and with industry, is attempting to stabilize the industrial base; however, vulnerabilities persist, as we remain dependent on sole-source suppliers for critical components of the system. The entire base is challenged by aging infrastructure, intermittent demand, and a workforce losing vital skills. For both strategic microelectronics and inertial instrumentation, we depend on small teams reliant on niche labor types and processes. Their resiliency, skilled workforce, and supply chain depend entirely on consistent and predictable demand signals from programs such as ours. Our deliberate engagement and investment are essential to sustain these critical suppliers for decades to come.

The program's infrastructure is also at an inflection point, as existing facilities are reaching their 30-year recapitalization windows as we enter into a once-in-a-generation transition of both the weapons system and platform. The Navy relies on a limited footprint in Kings Bay, Georgia; Bangor, Washington; and Florida's Space Coast to process missiles and outfit the SSBNs. Maintaining and sustaining facilities is critical to meeting U.S. Strategic Command and Fleet mission requirements, as well as providing new capabilities through military construction. We must make smart investments to address capability gaps, throughput constraints, and design for surge capacity to address requirements presented by new and emerging threats. Our Nation and the Navy must continue to prioritize and resource the sustainment and modernization of its nuclear infrastructure enterprise to provide an effective and flexible deterrent now and into the future.

As the Navy executes the modernization and replacement of the SSBN and associated SLBM leg of the nuclear triad, the Department of War (DoW) and the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration's (NNSA) infrastructure must be prepared to respond in tandem to the evolving needs of the Nation. We must have an effective, resilient, and responsive plutonium pit production capability. This capability can address age-related risks, support planned refurbishments, as well as prepare for future uncertainty. Additionally, tritium, lithium, and uranium, and high explosives and energetics, among other strategic materials, are vital to ensuring the Navy can continue to meet its strategic deterrent requirements.

The Navy is developing the SLCM-N airframe and launcher through a competitive strategy using Other Transaction Authority (OTA) to quickly award multiple missile concept design and prototype contracts. This process allows for a full and open competition among both traditional and non-traditional defense contractors during the Technology Maturation & Risk Reduction (TMRR) phase in order to meet an aggressive timeline. By competing the development of the SLCM-N flight system, SSP is able to find where capacity exists within an already burdened cruise missile industrial base.

Efforts to sustain and modernize the deterrent industrial base and infrastructure must be addressed with a sense of urgency. Our strategic forces underpin every military operation around the world, and we cannot afford to delay investments given the increasing threats facing our Nation.

Warhead and Reentry Body Activities

The Navy is also working in partnership with NNSA to refurbish our existing reentry systems and develop new reentry systems in response to U.S. Strategic Command requirements. As the threat environment faced by the nuclear enterprise continues to evolve, it is critical that the Navy designs, develops, and deploys programs that meet the needs of the Warfighter.

Today, the TRIDENT II D5 missile is capable of carrying two types of warhead families, the W76/Mk4 and the W88/Mk5. SSP is designing and developing a new reentry system: the W93/Mk7. It will be designed for use on both the D5LE and D5LE2 missiles and, through support to the United Kingdom, and the Mk7 reentry body will support the UK's sovereign Replacement Warhead program as well.

W93/Mk7 will provide flexibility and adaptability to meet future Warfighter needs. The W93/Mk7 will ensure an uninterrupted at sea deterrent for the sea-based leg of the nuclear triad. In March 2025, the W93/Mk7 program entered Phase 2A, with plans to enter Phase 3 in FY2027. The W93/Mk7 will not increase the size of the deployed stockpile and will not require underground nuclear explosive testing. The Navy will work in close coordination with the DoW, NNSA, Nuclear Weapons Council, and Congress as this effort matures.

SSP is working closely with NNSA on adapting a W80 family warhead for use on the SLCM-N.

Polaris Sales Agreement (PSA) and Mutual Defense Agreement (MDA): Support to the United Kingdom

Fundamental to U.S. strategic and extended deterrence policies is the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom through the 1958 MDA and the 1963 PSA. Under the PSA, the United States sells the TRIDENT II SWS, minus warheads, to the UK along with associated support, testing and training equipment, and defense services. This sales agreement allows the United States to procure for the UK on U.S. contracts under the same terms and conditions as those for the United States, allowing for increased economies of scale and sharing certain costs and liabilities.

Under the MDA, the United States cooperates with the UK on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defense purposes. The PSA and MDA agreements are complementary, and together enable the U.S. Navy to sell SWS delivery system and reentry body equipment to the UK, as well as to exchange controlled unclassified and classified information, including atomic information, with the UK. This decades-old framework facilitates U.S. support for the UK's strategic capabilities and ensures the UK continues to field a robust, sovereign nuclear deterrent.

SSP's key responsibility associated with the COLUMBIA-class program is the integration of the SWS onto the new SSBNs. A critical aspect is the Common Missile Compartment (CMC) that will support TRIDENT II SWS deployment on COLUMBIA-class SSBNs and the UK DREADNOUGHT-class SSBNs. The CMC represents the most recent example of the PSA partnership, in which our nations established a cost-sharing arrangement to design, develop, and produce common shipboard infrastructure that improves comingling of TRIDENT II D5 missile inventory and sets the stage to improve maintenance system consistency across the two fleets.

SSP also supports the SSBN Program Executive Office as it oversees U.S. industry's delivery of CMC components to both U.S. and UK Navies for installation into their new SSBNs. Full lead ship construction is in progress along with delivery of SWS equipment to the UK in support of construction and outfitting efforts under the authorities of the 1963 PSA.

As with the COLUMBIA-class SSBNs, the UK DREADNOUGHT-class SSBNs will initially carry the TRIDENT II D5LE missile. The development of the Mk7 reentry system to support the

U.S. W93 warhead program is also critical to the UK's development of a next generation nuclear warhead and reentry system. Our nations are working separate and sovereign nuclear warhead programs that will leverage the Mk7 reentry system. SSP will continue to nurture and safeguard this special relationship with the UK, supporting the UK's Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD) while modernizing and building flexibility, adaptability, and resiliency into the UK's future CASD.

Sea-Launched Cruise Missile, Nuclear

Over the past year, Navy has made incredible progress moving forward with development of the SLCM-N as the program moves at an extremely aggressive pace to deliver an initial operational capability by 30 September 2034. The program is on track to meet this requirement. Our nation's adversaries have a theater nuclear capability for which the United States has limited response options. SLCM-N will provide a flexible, credible, and survivable sea-based regional deterrent capability designed to complement existing capabilities and to expand Presidential options.

SLCM-N development includes the missile flight system, fire control, launcher system, platform integration, warhead integration, ashore infrastructure, and enablers for SLCM-N deployment. SSP is the SLCM-N weapon system integrator and we are working with government and industry partners to develop the constituent subsystems. Given the program's highly compressed schedule, the program is taking a novel approach to early risk reduction through the use of a limited operational capability to drive early learning and risk mitigation across the weapon system, including warhead integration, warhead interface unit development, fire control prototyping, SWF handling and processing, system life-cycle supportability, and VIRGINIA-class submarine integration.

In early 2025, the SLCM-N program concluded assessments of potential flight system materiel solutions and determined the program would take a competitive approach to SLCM-N flight system development. The program has awarded multiple OTA task areas for initial concept design and prototyping. The use of OTAs enabled the program to rapidly get industry partners on project agreements and provides the program the flexibility to carry forward multiple vendors and to select the most promising partners, including both traditional and non-traditional defense contractors, while maximizing contracting flexibility. Phase I issued design project agreements

to four missile vendors, one missile technology vendor, and two launcher design vendors. The SLCM-N program continues to work with our NNSA partners to integrate the SLCM-N warhead into candidate flight system designs.

The program continues to focus on integrating SLCM-N into the VIRGINIA-class submarine. Navy is developing a nuclear fire control solution that fully meets nuclear surety requirements, and the program is working closely with other undersea warfare program offices to integrate SLCM-N while minimizing impact to VIRGINIA-class readiness and operations. The program is continuing to work to integrate SLCM-N into the existing infrastructure at Navy's SWFs where SLCM-N will be stored and loaded. The program will leverage a combination of existing, modified, and new facilities at the SWFs.

In November 2025, Navy provided an initial, service-level validation of the SLCM-N program's requirements, and in December 2025, the SLCM-N program achieved Milestone A – four months ahead of schedule. This significant event marks the program's entry into the TMRR phase where the program will continue to develop and mature the SLCM-N weapon system.

In accordance with the FY26 NDAA's requirement for a SLCM-N limited operational capability by 30 September 2032, the program is working to plan and execute an accelerated capability development process within SLCM-N's already highly compressed schedule. The program is on track to deliver a limited number of assets to meet the NDAA's intent. Consistent funding resources are critical to the program's ability to deliver a system for both this limited operational capability and to meet the initial operational capability by FY34.

As the SLCM-N program executes the TMRR phase, our planned activities over the next fiscal year will advance development across all weapon subsystems, infrastructure, and operational enablers in accordance with the Department's acquisition best practices. We are maintaining robust vendor competition, with multiple contractors advancing SLCM-N missile designs and refining prototypes. This competitive approach ensures we mature critical technologies while managing cost and schedule risk. Our platform integration and nuclear fire control development efforts are focused on seamless integration into the submarine force architecture, minimizing operational impacts and leveraging existing infrastructure where possible. System integration across the non-materiel critical enablers – including doctrine, training, and policy – will ensure all elements are in place to make Navy and the Joint Force prepared to receive and operationalize

SLCM-N when it is deployed. The SLCM-N program remains on track to deliver limited operational capability by FY32 and to meet its initial operational capability by FY34.

Workforce

SSP's mission – strategic deterrence – is critical to this Nation. It is the foundation of the National Security Strategy and is the top priority of the Secretary of War. Based on the success of the TRIDENT program, SSP has also been tasked with rapidly developing and producing the Navy's first hypersonic weapon system, CPS, which is also the Army's first long range hypersonic weapons system. At the same time, SSP is currently developing the SLCM-N. This is a new capability that required the organization to establish a new program office, along with corresponding staff. Finally, I have Echelon I command responsibilities for the personnel that execute regulatory oversight of the Navy Nuclear Deterrence Mission and technical authority on Department of the Navy Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Weapons systems, an effort that provides a holistic Navy view of the no-fail mission.

But systems do not design, test, and build themselves – people do, which makes our people our greatest asset. SSP's workforce size has been growing and requires continued growth to execute these programs. SSP must recruit, train, and retain some of the most sought-after skills in the U.S. job market to support the breadth and complexity of SSP's strategic deterrence mission. SSP requires a workforce comprised of highly specialized, technical experts. Failing to appropriately staff this command would be catastrophic to TRIDENT II D5 SWS, CPS, and SLCM-N programs.

History reminds us that the swift, successful creation and execution of the Fleet Ballistic Missile program in the 1950s was truly a result of national commitment, congressional support, and a cadre of hand-selected scientists, engineers, and inspirational leaders. Though process will always underpin our efforts, our dedicated predecessors—civilians, military, and industry partners alike—responded to the national need with focused determination and propelled the program forward with a vision. People are as fundamental to our nuclear deterrent as the SWS itself. Today, SSP and its industry partners are focused on inspiring, growing, and retaining a generation of workforce that did not live through the darkest days of the Cold War. Connecting

a new workforce to this fundamental global security mission remains an important task shared among the entire nuclear enterprise.

Our mission has grown significantly, while our workforce size has not grown in the same proportion. Additionally, as the global threat environment has changed and the operational tempo has increased, the workforce is challenged to manage the increased strain on an already aging deployed weapons system. In order to accomplish SSP's sustainment and development missions, SSP must have trained, skilled employees on-board and able to work independently. SSP has gone to significant lengths to optimize the size of the workforce for efficiencies, and the answer is clear: We must grow our workforce to meet the needs of the nation.

The next decade is a time of great importance to successfully accomplish concurrent development efforts, on top of the sustainment of the aging D5/D5LE weapon system. SSP has spent the past several years posturing its workforce, organizational structure, infrastructure, culture, and technical capabilities to ensure optimal success for the impending bow wave of critical development, testing, deployment, and sustainment efforts.

Conclusion

Since the 1950s, our Nation’s sea-based strategic deterrent has been a critical component of our national security and must continue to assure our allies and partners and deter potential adversaries well into the future. SSP ensures a safe, secure, effective, flexible, and strategic deterrent, with a steadfast focus on the proper stewardship, custody, and accountability of the nuclear assets entrusted to the Navy. Sustaining and modernizing the sea-based strategic deterrent capability is a vital national security requirement.

As the fourteenth Director of SSP, I have absolute faith and confidence in the safety, security, effectiveness, and credibility of our Navy’s strategic deterrent due to the proficiency and professionalism of the dedicated service members and civilians committed to our mission. I am leaving the fifteenth Director a legacy of proven success that will allow the command to grow and take on challenges we have not yet begun to imagine. With continued Congressional support and stable, on-time funding, the Navy will continue to effectively defend our Nation and preserve peace for future generations. I am proud of the work I have overseen in the last eight

years as the Director of SSP and in my 38 years in the Navy; it has been my honor to lead this organization and its people.