

Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairman Jim Cooper
Opening Statement
Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request for Department of Defense
Nuclear Activities
March 28, 2019

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Video link to hearing here: <https://armedservices.house.gov/2019/3/fiscal-year-2020-priorities-for-department-of-defense-nuclear-priorities>

Good morning. The purpose of today's hearing is to hear testimony on the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request for the Department of Defense's nuclear forces. The most important job of government is to defend the nation, and the #1 priority of our defense department is to maintain our nuclear deterrence capability.

Here today to testify are Deputy Under Secretary Trachtenberg, General Hyten, Vice Admiral Wolfe, and Lieutenant General Clark. Thank you for coming today to provide your views on these vital issues.

As the witness' testimonies note, both China and Russia have recently undertaken significant modernization of their nuclear forces, while the United States has been very slow to respond. Thankfully, as your testimonies also note, our forces remain dominant. However, in order to maintain that position, the Department must modernize our submarine, bomber, and missile delivery systems, a hugely expensive recapitalization. Fortunately, our warheads have been properly maintained and their lives are being extended under various life-extension programs.

Our last nuclear modernization effort, under President Reagan, went hand in hand with a robust diplomatic effort to limit Soviet nuclear arsenals with arms control. By the end of next year, the New START will expire unless it is renewed. Unlike with the INF Treaty, the Russians are complying with New START. New START not only limits Russian nuclear capability but also gives the United States significant insight into the Russian strategic nuclear forces. I look forward to hearing your views on extending the New START Treaty, an extension that could give the United States five more years of predictability and transparency—as well as keeping a lid on Russia's strategic nuclear forces capable of reaching the United States.