

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

STATEMENT OF
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INTRODUCTION

United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) is a global warfighting combatant command (CCMD). Our mission is to deter strategic attack through a safe, secure, effective, and credible global combat capability and, when directed, prevail in conflict. Our people are foundational to the Command's mission and success, ensuring the safety and security of our Nation and our Allies, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I want to thank the President, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs for their continued leadership in support of USSTRATCOM's mission areas. I would like to thank Congress for its continued support in providing USSTRATCOM with the necessary resources to execute our mission and for commissioning the recently-released bipartisan report on America's Strategic Posture, which provides valuable insight into our challenges and offers a number of recommendations to preserve existing advantages.

Today, the United States, its Allies, and partners continue to be confronted by two major nuclear powers as strategic competitors and potential adversaries: the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation. We are also faced with the growing nuclear threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Islamic Republic of Iran's continued expansion of its nuclear program. What's more, our potential adversaries are increasing their level of coordination and cooperation with one another. This threat environment raises the possibility of near-simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed, opportunistic adversaries.

The United States addresses these challenges through integrated deterrence, campaigning, and actions that build enduring advantages—leveraging the capabilities of our Joint Force to ensure that the President has options to deter all potential adversaries. Integrated deterrence is

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the bedrock of our National Defense Strategy (NDS). As the NDS articulates, integrated deterrence spans all instruments of national power, all Allies and partners, all domains and capabilities, and is backstopped by a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent.

USSTRATCOM's role, however, is not limited to nuclear plans and operations.

USSTRATCOM responsibilities span strategic deterrence, nuclear operations, nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) enterprise operations, joint electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) operations (JEMSO), global strike, and missile threat assessment. Executing these responsibilities entails close alignment and collaboration with senior national and Department of Defense (DoD) leadership, CCMDs, defense agencies, and other elements of national power. Strategic deterrence is critical to the DoD's integrated deterrence approach.

OUR PEOPLE

To fulfill our strategic deterrence mission, USSTRATCOM relies on a team of military and civilian members who are steadfast in their dedication. People are the cornerstone of our organization, and I take pride in working alongside such a talented and dedicated group of professionals. I am committed to ensuring they have the support and resources needed to succeed, and I firmly believe that investing in our people is essential to our success. By providing comprehensive professional development opportunities, career-enhancing experiences, and targeted training programs to ensure our personnel are well-prepared to conquer the challenges ahead, we are fostering the growth of the next generation of strategic deterrence experts.

GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

The peace dividend once envisioned at the end of the Cold War has unfortunately failed to materialize in the long-term. Strategic competition is on the rise, including in the nuclear domain, as evidenced by Russia's comprehensive nuclear modernization efforts and the PRC's rapid and opaque nuclear weapons buildup. The emphasis on nuclear capabilities by potential adversaries, coupled with the incorporation of technologies like hypersonic weapons (HSW) and fractional orbital bombardment (FOB) capabilities, significantly escalates global security risks. As noted in the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review, the PRC and Russia also likely possess capabilities relevant to chemical and biological warfare that pose a threat to U.S., Allied, and partner forces, military operations, and civilian populations.

Taken individually, these developments are concerning; they are only exacerbated by the increasing levels of cooperation between and among the PRC, Russian Federation, DPRK, and Islamic Republic of Iran, which creates the possibility for simultaneous crises and raises the risk of opportunistic aggression. For example, Russian and PRC bombers flew joint patrols over the western Pacific this past November and conducted a joint maritime patrol near the Aleutian Islands over the summer. The DPRK and Iran have also delivered arms to Russia to support its war against Ukraine. This increasing cooperation and the risk of simultaneous crisis or conflict place a premium on credible, robust, and flexible joint force response options that signal our readiness and commitment to potential adversaries, Allies, and partners.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The 2022 NDS identified the PRC as the Department's pacing challenge and our most consequential strategic competitor. PRC leadership has stated that the expansion of nuclear

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capabilities is necessary to achieve “great power status,” and potentially perceives its nuclear arsenal as a key deterrent to U.S. intervention in the region. While the PRC’s long-term nuclear strategy and requirements remain unclear, the trajectory of its efforts points toward a large nuclear and more diverse force with a high degree of survivability, reliability, and effectiveness.

The PRC currently has a nuclear triad consisting of bombers, submarines, and land-based missiles. Its H-6N bomber is equipped to carry air-launched ballistic and cruise missiles, and the PRC is actively developing a strategic stealth bomber, the H-20. The PRC also has six JIN-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) equipped with new third-generation JL-3 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), capable of striking the continental United States from PRC littoral waters. Additionally, the PRC has approximately 1,000 medium and intermediate-range dual-capable conventional or nuclear ballistic missiles capable of inflicting significant damage to U.S., Allied, or partner forces and homelands in the Indo-Pacific.

As I reported to Congress in January 2023, the PRC’s arsenal of land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launchers currently exceeds that of the United States. Today, the PRC likely has more than 500 operational nuclear warheads and, should it continue building weapons at its current pace, could have more than 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030. In 2022, it built three new ICBM fields, with at least 300 missile silos, each capable of housing the solid-propellant CSS-10 Mod 2 ICBM. The PRC also maintains road-mobile CSS-20 ICBMs, each armed with multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV), and is developing a new generation of mobile ICBMs. These developments, combined with the PRC's increasing counter-space and cyber capabilities, pose a complex, but not insurmountable challenge to U.S. strategic deterrence.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The 2022 NDS identified Russia as an acute threat. Its unprovoked war against Ukraine has caused the largest conflict on the European continent since World War II and undermines the rules-based international system. The invasion has also highlighted Russia's willingness to employ nuclear coercion and attempt to influence decision making within the United States and our North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Allies. Russia's violation of specific obligations within the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) further exacerbates this issue.

Russia is currently in possession of the largest and most diverse nuclear arsenal of any nation. In September 2023, it proclaimed the RS-28 SARMAT ICBM had been placed on combat duty. Additionally, Russia continues to field new SEVERODVINSK-class nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines, as well as DOLGORUKIY-class SSBNs, armed with the SS-N-32 Bulava SLBM.

Beyond Russia's traditional strategic triad, it is expanding and modernizing its nuclear options. These include nuclear-capable hypersonic systems such as the Tsirkon land attack cruise missile and the Kinzhal air-launched ballistic missile, the last of which Russia has employed frequently against Ukraine in a conventional role. These hypersonic systems add diversity and flexibility to Russia's nuclear arsenal and complement its stockpile of approximately 2,000 theater nuclear weapons that do not fall under New START limits.

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The DPRK views its nuclear arsenal as a means to ensure regime survival and influence Republic of Korea and U.S. forces in the area. The DPRK is developing and fielding mobile short-,

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intermediate-, and intercontinental-range nuclear capabilities that place the United States homeland and regional Allies and partners at risk. DPRK leadership recently declared that the country's status as a nuclear weapons state “has now become irreversible,” and it is possible the DPRK will resume nuclear testing in order to demonstrate its capabilities.

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to expand its nuclear program by increasing its stockpile of highly enriched uranium and deploying additional advanced centrifuges, which has shortened the time Iran would need to acquire enough fissile material for a nuclear weapon. Iran already possesses the region's largest arsenal of conventional ballistic missiles, which threaten U.S. regional bases and are capable of reaching as far as Southern Europe. Iran also continues to proliferate advanced conventional weapons to non-state militia groups across the Middle East—which have been used in countless attacks against U.S. and partner personnel and interests across the region, undermining regional stability.

ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION: THE TRIAD AND OTHER CORE FUNCTIONS

To address these threats, the United States is undertaking a multi-generational, decades-long modernization of our entire nuclear deterrent, including all three legs of the triad, as well as our command, control, and communications capabilities. The comprehensive modernization programs we are currently undertaking have not occurred on this scale since the 1980s. Throughout this period, we will retain credible forces to deter strategic attacks, assure our Allies and partners, and provide options to the President if necessary. USSTRATCOM remains vigilant and will continue to posture available forces throughout the triad's transition to ensure

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we will continue to be able to meet our requirements. I urge Congress to continue supporting these critical national security capabilities and associated infrastructure.

**NUCLEAR COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATIONS (NC3) ENTERPRISE
MODERNIZATION**

The President's ability to command, control, and communicate (C3) with the nation's nuclear forces is critical to the entire nuclear enterprise, and it must remain effective and resilient under all circumstances. Our NC3 Enterprise is a key component of strategic deterrence, and with congressional support, the DoD is focused on improving our NC3 capabilities while addressing potential threats. Our efforts are based on innovation and collaboration, partnering with various sectors—including government, industry, and academia—to incorporate advanced concepts into NC3 projects. This collaborative approach is vital for safely integrating new technologies into our NC3 architecture and for identifying and addressing potential strategic gaps.

To ensure a viable NC3 capability in support of Strategic Deterrence, there are numerous efforts underway in the space, aerial, and terrestrial layers. Regarding the space layer, the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) space constellation is fully deployed, and the command post terminals leveraging it are nearing fully-fielded status. This modernization effort will permit the transition away from our legacy capability, provide enhanced missile warning, increase national-level conferencing connectivity and security, and improve Presidential decision dissemination to our nuclear forces.

We are also in the process of replacing aging aerial layer command and control nodes like the E-4B and E-6B in support of future senior leader communications and force direction

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messaging. The E-4B Nightwatch aircraft currently serves as the National Airborne Operations Center and is an essential National asset. Its recapitalization program, the Survivable Airborne Operations Center, will serve as the next generation airborne command and control center platform for the President, Secretary of Defense, and Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The E-6B Mercury serves two roles. It is responsible for the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) mission, serving as an Emergency Action Message (EAM) relay to all legs of the nuclear triad. It also serves as an alternate USSTRATCOM Command Center (Looking Glass), providing EAM origination and ICBM secondary launch capability. The E-6B follow-on platform, the E-XX, will execute the EAM relay (TACAMO) mission only, and must be operational by the E-6B's projected end of service life in FY38.

The terrestrial layer is undergoing modernization efforts that round out the Nation's ability to provide a more diverse communication architecture that provides additional resiliency to our nuclear force assets and ensures flexibility and survivability from emerging threats. In pursuit of this enhanced architecture, the Air Force and Navy are modernizing the Strategic Automated Command and Control System and Nova nuclear messaging transports to better integrate these complementary critical Service systems, providing high priority direction to all three legs of the triad. In addition, the Defense Information Systems Agency is funding and pursuing a modernized means of Senior Leader conferencing during national events.

These NC3 system upgrades will ensure an integrated, secure, and survivable strategic nuclear communication capability that meets stringent nuclear, cyber protection, and cryptographic certification requirements. Urgently needed, these recapitalization and improvement programs must continue without interruption for on-time fielding to meet

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operational requirements and to deter adversaries from seeking to gain strategic advantage from non-nuclear attacks on the Nation's NC3 architecture.

JOINT ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM OPERATIONS (JEMSO)

The electromagnetic spectrum is a critical maneuver space in modern warfare, and our reliance on it to conduct operations is paramount. As the EMS environment grows more contested and congested, it is vital to understand the threats we face and how they impact our ability to operate. The USSTRATCOM Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Center (JEC) was established at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, with bipartisan congressional support, on July 26th, 2023. In addition, CCMDs created Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Cells (JEMSOCs) in their headquarters to improve EMSO readiness and to address evolving adversary threats. The JEC trains and assesses the progress of these JEMSOCs, maintains governance over JEMSO training, and analyzes the operational impact of U.S. EMSO policy discussions related to spectrum management.

Through participation in joint exercises and wargames, the JEC improves joint force interoperability and coordination and provides superior military advice. The JEC identifies improvement areas by assessing current capabilities and appraising future force concepts, ultimately enhancing our superiority in the EMS environment. These initiatives are critical for assessing the Department's mission performance and ensuring readiness against diverse threats.

Key to maintaining this readiness is our capability to conduct training in realistic EMS environments. This is a significant challenge with the increased demand from non-DoD users. To address this, USSTRATCOM will continue to work closely with Joint Staff and DoD Chief

Information Officer (CIO) to ensure operational risks to the mission are understood when decisions are made on spectrum allocation.

LAND-BASED TRIAD COMPONENT

As the triad's land-based component, the Minuteman III (MMIII) ICBM system is our most responsive strategic deterrent option. It is a geographically dispersed, reliable, and highly responsive force with the most robust and ironclad NC3 system enabling direct communication with the President of the United States. Our ICBMs raise the bar for an adversary considering a counterforce strike against the United States; no adversary can be confident in its ability to destroy our ICBMs via limited attack or prior to their being launched.

The MMIII missile initially deployed over 50 years ago with a planned 10-year service life. Its supporting infrastructure of silos and Launch Facilities is even older. The missile's robust design, combined with judicious investments, and the dedication of our Airmen, have permitted the MMIII to operate well beyond its original design life. It remains a formidable deterrent, but asset attrition, aging, parts obsolescence, and sustainment shortfalls present increasingly significant operational challenges. To address this, the Air Force has identified comprehensive capabilities to keep the MMIII weapon system viable until end of life; Centralized Asset Management (CAM) funding increases will ensure the MMIII weapon system meets USSTRATCOM alert requirements in the near term, and support equipment acquisition program investments will help reduce weapon system sustainment risks.

The LGM-35A Sentinel ICBM Program is intended to replace the MMIII weapon system with a modern land-based deterrent, and the program is synchronized with MMIII decommissioning to avoid operational shortfalls. Sentinel constitutes an incredibly complex

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mega-project to replace every facet of the MMIII weapon system. The program includes a secure and robust command, control, and communications capability, a new missile, and hundreds of infrastructure projects, including hardened facilities spread across thousands of miles in five states. The command and launch segment is the most complex segment of the Sentinel program. It includes 450 refurbished and modernized Launch Facilities, thousands of miles of modern fiber optic networks, the acquisition of permanent and temporary real estate easements with hundreds of landowners, and operational site activation efforts necessary to support the workforce responsible for converting the Launch Facilities.

The Sentinel program is unique in size and scope—with no recent comparisons in terms of magnitude. It is critical that the Air Force, with the support of Congress, continue investments to ensure sustainment of MMIII to manage end-of-life margin until it is fully replaced by a modern ICBM weapon system.

SEA-BASED TRIAD COMPONENT

As the triad's sea-based component, the OHIO-class SSBN fleet, paired with the Trident II D5 Strategic Weapon System (SWS), operates virtually undetected in the world's oceans, providing a resilient, reliable, survivable, and assured second-strike capability vital to the defense of the United States and our Allies and partners. Despite the fleet's accomplishments, and its ability to achieve the mission today, it faces continuing sustainment challenges that could impact its availability until fully replaced by the COLUMBIA-class in 2042.

The COLUMBIA-class SSBN is the Navy's top priority strategic deterrent program for USSTRATCOM. This new submarine must achieve its first strategic deterrent patrol by 2030 to avoid an unacceptable capability gap. To address this potential gap, the Navy is investing

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heavily in the Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) in order to ensure delivery of COLUMBIA hulls 2-12 meet required timelines. These efforts will help maintain SSBN availability until the COLUMBIA-class submarines are all available.

The COLUMBIA Program of Record (POR) delivers at least twelve SSBNs, which is the absolute minimum required number of SSBNs to meet today's at-sea deterrence requirements. The COLUMBIA-class will feature improved tactical and sonar systems, electric drive propulsion, and advanced hull coating to improve acoustic performance and maintain U.S. undersea dominance. In addition, the longer life span of the reactor and reduced maintenance requirements will increase SSBN availability compared to the OHIO-class SSBNs.

Shore infrastructure readiness is fundamental to supporting SSBN operational readiness requirements. This includes Navy NC3 systems, facilities, and the SSBN maintenance facilities in Bangor, WA, and Kings Bay, GA. Provision of military construction funding, as well as operations and maintenance funding, facilitates the Navy's modernization of shore infrastructure supporting the nuclear deterrence mission. One immediate example of this modernization is the COLUMBIA-class expansion for the Kings Bay Trident Refit Facility (TRF), which is on track to begin in FY25. COLUMBIA-class submarines require industrial processes that TRF facilities are not currently capable of supporting. The TRF expansion project will provide the modernization and capacity required to support the COLUMBIA-class SSBNs in Kings Bay.

The COLUMBIA-class will continue to carry the Trident II missile, and the D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) program will upgrade the Trident II to maintain a modern, reliable, flexible, and effective missile with advanced technology capable of adapting to emerging threats for many years to come. D5LE2 is essential to support COLUMBIA-class SSBNs and requires timely and appropriate funding to maintain a viable SSBN deterrent; underfunding D5LE2 would

impact technology readiness and program milestones. The success of the COLUMBIA-class depends on a capable and flexible missile to safeguard credibility in both present and future threat environments.

The Navy's commitment to sustaining and modernizing its SSBN fleet underscores its dedication to maintaining the sea-based portion of the triad. Although there are challenges and risks associated with these efforts, the Navy's efforts to address sustainment concerns and modernize its fleet will ensure the nation's strategic deterrence capabilities will remain reliable, survivable, and resilient in the future.

Low-Yield Non-Ballistic Nuclear Capability

The Sea-Launched Cruise Missile – Nuclear (SLCM-N), established as a new program of record by the FY24 NDAA, will provide an additional at-sea nuclear deterrent capability. It will give the U.S. a low-yield, non-ballistic nuclear capability without visible generation, offering an additional capability for extended deterrence and assurance. We look forward to working with Congress to find the most beneficial and effective approach in delivering this capability.

Anti-Submarine Warfare

Adversaries can increasingly challenge our acoustic superiority and SSBN survivability through advancements in undersea quieting, acoustic arrays, and processing capabilities. Our submarines are formidable weapon systems, but we need to address potential adversaries' undersea advances to maintain an effective and viable SSBN fleet in the long-term.

The Navy's Integrated Undersea Surveillance System (IUSS) provides vital information with respect to adversary submarine and surface ship operations, providing the theater anti-

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submarine warfare commander with battlespace awareness that is critical to defeat the threat to our own submarines. IUSS has been a crucial component of U.S. naval operations and its recapitalization is a national imperative.

Undersea dominance is critical to national security, and we must maintain our advantage through the evolving threat environment and OHIO to COLUMBIA transition. In addition to IUSS, the U.S. Navy must continue its efforts in the Acoustic Superiority Program. Advanced emerging technologies in this program must be delivered. By doing so, we can maintain our tactical and strategic advantage in the undersea domain, thereby ensuring the safety and security of our Nation.

AIR-BASED TRIAD COMPONENT

As the triad's air-based component, our bomber fleet is the most flexible and visible leg; it represents a crucial component of our nation's strategic deterrent and responsive assurance to United States Allies. Enabled by our tanker fleet, the United States is the only country with the ability and capacity to provide bombers to support U.S. operations and Allies and partners around the world.

The U.S. bomber force represents an incredibly versatile set of tools. Our bomber and tanker fleets support both nuclear and conventional operations, enabling the execution of strike options to support national objectives worldwide. The bomber fleet's dynamic force employment versatility makes it an indispensable triad component. I strongly encourage Congress to continue to support our budget requests for the bomber fleet, including its associated weapons and communication systems.

B-52H Modernization

The B-52 has served as the backbone of our bomber fleet for over 60 years, and with Congressionally supported modernization and sustainment programs, it is set to remain viable and effective for another three decades. Achieving this milestone poses several maintenance and operational challenges, requiring dedicated technical solutions, resources, and the hard work of our remarkable Airmen.

The B-52H requires critical upgrades, including the Commercial Engine Replacement Program, which replaces the outdated and inefficient engines with modern variants offering longer flight range, lower emissions, less tanker requirements, and improved supply chain management for the Air Force. The Radar Modernization Program will enable USSTRATCOM and Air Force Global Strike Command to effectively employ B-52 nuclear and conventional weapon capabilities, as well as enhance navigation and weather avoidance functions. Finally, the Advanced Extremely High Frequency integration will enable a survivable, two-way command and control communications system as well as provide a path for future growth and polar communications integration. These B-52H recapitalization and improvement programs are urgently needed and must continue without interruption to ensure on-time fielding of a modernized B-52J fleet to meet operational requirements.

B-2 Modernization

The B-2 fleet is a crucial delivery platform, as it is the only low-observable bomber in the world that can penetrate denied environments and deliver a wide range of munitions against high-value strategic targets. We must preserve this unique operational advantage as the Air Force transitions from the B-2 to the B-21 fleet.

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To ensure a seamless and successful transition, Congress must continue to fully fund B-2 sustainment and modernization programs until the B-21 achieves full operational capability for both conventional and nuclear missions. In particular, B-2 modernization must include the Low Observable Signature and Supportability Modifications program, which will enhance its ability to penetrate anti-access area-denial (A2AD) combat environments. To enable reliable C2 pathways, the B-2 Advanced Communications Program will provide secure satellite connectivity beyond line-of-sight, ultra-high frequency line-of-sight, high-frequency anti-jam, and encrypted voice communications. This modernization will allow our aircrews to communicate securely with our Allies and partners.

By investing in these modernization efforts, the DoD can ensure the B-2 fleet remains a formidable force in the face of evolving threats. This will enhance the Air Force's operational capabilities and significantly boost national security.

B-21 Raider

The B-21, along with the B-52J, will be the mainstay of the triad's air leg, making it an essential part of the nation's defense strategy. The Raider will provide long range, exceptional access, and diverse payload wherever necessary to help deter and win wars. The program is on track to meet operational requirements set by USSTRATCOM, with flight testing under way and the first operational aircraft scheduled for delivery in the late 2020s.

The Raider POR delivers a minimum of 100 aircraft. As the national security environment evolves, the Air Force may require additional B-21 aircraft to meet future global conventional and nuclear warfighting needs. It is crucial this advanced bomber program remains

fully funded, stays on track, and delivers on time to prevent any potential shortfalls in the bomber strategic deterrent force.

Air-Launched Cruise Missile / Long-Range Standoff Missile and Nuclear Gravity Bombs

Today, the air-delivered weapons portfolio consists of the Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) and nuclear gravity bombs. This combination provides an appropriate mix of standoff and direct attack munitions to meet near-term operational requirements while the DoD and National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) explore options for future capabilities. Longer-term, the ALCM will be replaced by the long-range standoff (LRSO) cruise missile as our nation's only air-delivered nuclear standoff capability—offering the President more flexible and scalable options to penetrate and survive advanced air defense systems. The B61-12 will complete fielding in FY26; along with the B61-13, it will extend the service life of the B61. The flexibility of these air-delivered systems is a key attribute in all USSTRATCOM operational plans. The on-time delivery of these weapons is the critical risk mitigation component for potential delays in the fielding of other modernization programs.

Tanker Support

The U.S. tanker fleet is the primary enabler of airborne strike platforms, providing global reach without relying on intermediate basing locations. A robust tanker fleet is essential to sustain USSTRATCOM missions, but the aging KC-135 is currently our only nuclear-certified refueling platform.

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To address this, the Air Force is working to revitalize the tanker fleet through the rapid nuclear certification of the KC-46 and the acceleration of the Next Generation Air-refueling System program. These initiatives are vital to continued long-range air operations.

We must modernize and acquire more tankers to enable simultaneous global operations across the spectrum of conflict involving multiple CCMDs. Full congressional and Service commitment to tanker sustainment and modernization efforts will ensure the United States maintains a global strategic advantage, even in simultaneous conflicts.

ACCOMPLISHING THE MISSION: INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND SECURITY

We cannot accomplish our mission without the industry, infrastructure, and security that supports the triad and our core functions. These key enablers ensure that our weapons and weapons platforms are designed and manufactured to fight, and win, today and in the future.

DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL BASE

A healthy defense industrial base (DIB) that can provide advanced technology, capability, and capacity is fundamental to our ability to compete strategically. The strength of our defense capabilities is directly linked to the talents of the American workforce and the robustness and innovation of our industrial base. Building a strong and resilient workforce and supporting infrastructure to execute PORs on-time, while modernizing and sustaining current forces, is one of the most important issues we face today.

It is imperative to develop the DIB and workforce capable of creating the infrastructure necessary to support all our modernization programs, particularly the Sentinel ICBM program,

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the COLUMBIA-class SSBN program, and future follow-on programs for the Trident II D5 SLBM. This includes ensuring the right throughput for trade schools and producing skilled technical labor, such as technicians proficient in concrete work, welding, and rebar fabrication. The success of the major levels of effort in ballistic missile programs in the 1960s, like the Polaris missile program and the Minuteman project, driven by an energized whole-of-government approach, serves as a historical precedent for the current national imperative.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) and the Navy have dedicated considerable study efforts toward maximizing efficiency and identifying substantial SIB programmatic gaps; these studies have resulted in real efforts to assess shortfalls and address growing industrial base demand. Continued congressional support is critical to overhauling the SIB to advance the Navy's shipbuilding efforts. Execution of the 1+2 (1 COLUMBIA-class SSBN + 2 VIRGINIA SSNs per year) submarine build plan is a national imperative. Currently, the shipbuilding industry only delivers one VIRGINIA-class submarine every ten months instead of the targeted six months. Achieving required production levels will shape our nation's undersea dominance and sea-based strategic deterrence well into the 2080s. Continued support for the DIB and SIB is key to sustaining current capabilities and ensuring we remain at the forefront of defense technology.

NUCLEAR SECURITY ENTERPRISE (NSE) AND WEAPONS INFRASTRUCTURE

The nation's nuclear weapon stockpile is currently safe, secure, effective, and credible. The NNSA workforce achieved significant milestones in FY23 with initial fielding of the B61-12 gravity bomb and the W88 Alt 370 warhead. Progress also continues toward achieving the first production of a war reserve plutonium pit in 2024. These accomplishments

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notwithstanding, work remains on our aging nuclear stockpile and its supporting enterprise as our nuclear competitors accelerate fielding of advanced capabilities.

While I am confident that we can meet objectives today, performance degradation and increasing uncertainty reduces the operational flexibility I have in providing options to the President. As the Nuclear Posture Review makes clear, a resilient and adaptive nuclear security enterprise is key to managing geopolitical as well as operational, technical, and programmatic risks. Our success depends on executing stockpile and infrastructure PORs to maintain the current stockpile, modernize weapons where practicable, develop and field modern replacements when required, and enhance the NSE with additional residual capacity to enable a responsive and resilient weapons program.

As our weapons stockpile ages beyond its planned service life, the margins in our fielded weapons decrease. The confidence in our deterrent over time has been sustained by the exceptional performance and knowledge provided through the stockpile surveillance program, which gives us insights into the design margins built into these systems. This is a testament to the work of past designers, engineers, and production staff, but we cannot rely on this approach indefinitely. We need to find alternative methods to become more predictive in our surveillance programs to ensure the continued safety and effectiveness of our aging strategic stockpile.

Modernizing a new or significantly updated weapon in today's enterprise takes a decade or more. As we look ahead, considerable work needs to be done to modernize weapons across all three legs of the triad. The first wave of modernization is the current POR that includes the W80-4 for the LRSO, the W87-1/Mk21A for the Sentinel, and the W93/Mk7 for the SSBNs. Subsequent nuclear weapons stockpile modernization will follow, with programs required through the 2040s and beyond.

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It is important to note that we do not have residual NSE capacity to manage emerging risks. For example, we have little capacity to respond to unforeseen issues in our aging stockpile without impacting the POR or planned future modernization programs. We must not lose sight of the larger need for modern weapons development and fielding for the warfighter. Only the NNSA can provide this capability.

As in past years, our priority remains the establishment of a credible plutonium pit manufacturing capability. However, modernizing the stockpile requires more than pit production. To improve future readiness and implement the flexibility to respond to the changing geopolitical environment, we must also establish necessary capacities and capabilities to manufacture and produce uranium, tritium, high explosives, lithium, and radiation-hardened electronics.

I strongly endorse the efforts of NNSA and Service partners to ensure a modern stockpile, responsive infrastructure, and a robust science and technology base for our strategic deterrence force. As a critical partner to integrated deterrence, I strongly endorse the Services and NNSA's efforts to recover lost schedules, create margin, reduce USSTRATCOM's mission risk, and decrease the nation's strategic risk.

NUCLEAR SECURITY

Our defense-in-depth strategy for the safety and security of U.S. nuclear weapons begins with each weapon and extends outward to protect systems, bases, structures, and personnel. Any failure in their protection can raise questions about the credibility of our national deterrent. As we continue to assess and analyze threats to fielded forces and strategic capabilities, we will

shape and advocate for programs to close security gaps and maintain our stringent security standards to deter, detect, delay, deny, and defeat threats.

MH-139A Grey Wolf Helicopter

The Joint Force achieved a significant ICBM security milestone with the contract award for the MH-139A Grey Wolf. This helicopter increases the overall protection of our nuclear arsenal by providing an enhanced rapid response against threats to our land-based ICBM infrastructure. When compared to the legacy UH-1N, the MH-139A provides our forces enhanced speed, range, endurance, payload, and survivability. These attributes ensure our strategic advantage by protecting assets vital to national security. We look forward to achieving operational capability and employing these highly capable platforms.

Weapon Generation Facility

As we modernize nuclear weapons and platforms, the Air Force is replacing aging weapon storage areas with weapons generation facilities (WGFs). These WGFs are vital to security, sustainment, and fielding of the Sentinel, B-21, and LRSO triad modernization programs, and their associated weapons. The Air Force will conduct weapon maintenance, storage operations, and weapons generation activities in a single reinforced WGF at each strategic base. The WGFs enhance weapon security by consolidating maintenance and sustainment activities into one common facility, and are a key part of the nuclear modernization effort that must deliver on time to meet weapon and platform POR delivery schedules.

Uncrewed Systems

The proliferation of uncrewed systems with increasing technological sophistication poses a challenge to the Department and our nation's nuclear enterprise. We are in a rapidly accelerating technological race with our adversaries. USSTRATCOM executed assessments in 2022 and 2023 to validate the effectiveness of our counter-uncrewed aircraft systems as a step towards refining requirements, tactics, techniques, and procedures to advance future capabilities. Investing smartly and leveraging partnerships with academia and industry are crucial to secure our technological advantage and protect our ability to preserve strategic deterrence. I urge Congress to continue supporting these areas so we can meet the challenges of a rapidly changing technological landscape and compete into the future.

INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENSE

Although the Missile Defense mission was recently transferred from USSTRATCOM to USSPACECOM, the protection of our fielded forces from air and missile threats remains a critical responsibility of USSTRATCOM. Moreover, integrated air and missile defense is an enduring component of integrated deterrence. The missile defense enterprise continues to evolve in a dynamic, increasingly complex and challenging threat environment. USSTRATCOM's ability to deter and respond to strategic attack requires response to adversary cruise, ballistic, hypersonic missile, and other delivery systems. The breathtaking pace of development, testing, and fielding of these weapon systems demonstrates adversaries' investment and commitment to advanced capabilities.

USSTRATCOM continues to work with CCMDs, Services, and Agencies to posture U.S. forces while working to field responsive, persistent, resilient, and cost-effective sensor

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capabilities able to detect, characterize, track, and engage current and projected threats. USSTRATCOM also supports improvements in early warning, identification, tracking, discrimination, and attribution for the range of air and missile threats to the homeland and our strategic forces.

HYPERSONIC WEAPONS

USSTRATCOM provides nuclear and conventional options to support deterrence objectives and global strike responsibilities. USSTRATCOM relies on Conventional-Nuclear Integration planning, which includes planning for employing conventional HSWs capable of holding time-sensitive, high-value targets at risk. These weapons could allow mission planners to tailor specific effects to better complement the planning and use of nuclear forces, while enhancing Presidential decision space. HSWs could provide potential flexible strike options to influence adversary decision-making and potentially restore deterrence before reaching the nuclear threshold.

The Services continue to develop and plan for operational fielding of hypersonic weapon systems to support multiple CCMDs. The Army and Navy are developing a common all-up round weapon to deploy in the near- and far-term on mobile transporter erector launcher batteries, ZUMWALT-class destroyers, and VIRGINIA-class submarines, respectively. The Air Force is completing the Air-launched Rapid Response Weapon flight test program and working on high Mach and hypersonic cruise missiles. USSTRATCOM will continue working with partners to develop responsive, affordable strike systems for national security needs in support of our deterrence and global strike responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

USSTRATCOM remains steadfast in its mission. We are focused on advancing our capabilities while maintaining a credible strategic deterrent today. To ensure we can deliver, we are diligently modernizing our capabilities and adopting a dynamic, integrated approach to strategic deterrence. I am proud to lead a team of dedicated Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen, Guardians, and Civilians committed to our mission. We are eager to bolster integrated deterrence as we continue our work with Congress, the Department of Defense, the interagency, industry, academia, and our Allies and partners.