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SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: FY24 Posture for Department of Defense Nuclear Forces
STATEMENT OF: General Thomas A. Bussiere, Commander
Air Force Global Strike Command

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Lamborn, Ranking Member Moulton, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and discuss the readiness, sustainment, and modernization of our nuclear and long-range strike weapons and platforms. The mission of Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) is to provide strategic deterrence and long-range strike. This command is the lead for sustaining current forces and fielding future long-range strike weapon systems. The demand signal for these capabilities is unlimited; they are the foundation to an independent Air Force (AF), and the backbone of our National Defense Strategy.

The threat to international stability continues to grow, highlighting the importance of both strategic deterrence and long-range strike. The global risks have escalated to a tipping point. We are in the novel territory of great power competition; thus we must be able to credibly provide a nuclear deterrent against two nuclear adversaries concurrently. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is in the midst of a strategic breakout through a rapid nuclear expansion and continues to develop new military capabilities. Additionally, Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine continues alongside its efforts to develop anti-satellite weapons, hypersonic technology, and cyberspace activities. The aggressive and provocative behaviors occurring within the strategic arena underscore the urgency of our efforts to modernize our weapon systems while we maintain our strategic posture, and this responsibility falls on AFGSC. This is a no fail mission.

AFGSC is ready today to meet the requirements given to us from the President and the Commander of United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM), but there is zero operational margin left. Supply chains responsible for legacy system parts are closing, and require innovation to fill those gaps. Additionally, there are mission areas that I feel have received less attention than other high value acquisition programs but are equally critical to our strategic deterrence. I aim to illuminate those mission areas and highlight the risks to our national security if we do not provide them more focus. Unique to this mission area and to AFGSC, we must maintain our legacy weapon systems at full operational capability until the future force is ready to take on the operational requirement. For example, the B-21 "Raider" is the world's first sixth generation aircraft and will offer the United States unparalleled capabilities, but until it is mission capable, we must be postured to deter and, if necessary, fight with our current force of B-1, B-2, and B-52 bomber aircraft. Nearly every portfolio in AFGSC is going through modernization, and the balance of these transitions is critical.

As the Commander of AFGSC, my priority is to ensure we are ready to conduct our mission with great discipline, that we strive for excellence, and our Airmen take pride in our historic legacy. Our "Strikers" are proud to be the backstop of integrated deterrence and the sole provider of air-delivered long-range conventional and nuclear strike and land-based nuclear strike capabilities for our allies and partners. Our personnel have remained focused in the face of a rapidly changing geopolitical environment. As the Air Component to USSTRATCOM, we continue to preserve our ability to execute nuclear options upon direction from the President with safe, secure, credible, and reliable weapons, while we concurrently ensure conventional, long-range strike viability. What we do every day of every week is the foundation of our nation's

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defense. We are stewards of our nation's most important mission, which is an absolute privilege. Continued congressional support through stable, reliable funding ensures our Strikers are equipped with the necessary resources to ensure we compete effectively and responsibly as our nation moves into a new strategic era.

AIRMEN AND FAMILIES

Our Airmen and their families represent the greatest strength of AFGSC. Through their service and sacrifice, they operate, maintain, and secure the most powerful weapons ever designed and execute continuous long-range strike operations across the globe. Such critical missions require the complete focus and attention of our Strikers. To continue the development of our Airmen, AFGSC has established academic alliances with education programs, encouraged Command sponsored research, and continued to develop our personnel through internships and participation in exercises. Retaining talent is also crucial to our mission success and providing the right environment for families is a large piece of an Airman's decision to remain in the AF. We know there are challenges to families outside the struggles of daily military life. Our wings are working hard within their abilities to provide solutions to healthcare challenges, housing shortages, and long childcare waitlists.

AFGSC established a collaboration with Louisiana Tech University through the Global Strike National Security Fellowship Program, utilizing a small team of interns trained in coding, automation, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to develop tailored analytic tools for bomber operations. Moreover, AFGSC has championed implementing the Envision cloud computing platform to produce operational dashboards and provide data-driven insights for decision-makers across the nuclear enterprise. Finally, AFGSC has institutionalized a Data Modernization and Analytics Board to create data-centric, insight-driven organizations capable of achieving and maintaining decision advantage. The board, comprised of subject matter experts in technology, analysis, information systems, and data, advises on technical and modernization efforts across the Command.

Our Strikers and their families are the key ingredient to our command's success. Their exceptional resiliency and commitment to excellence have enabled AFGSC to maximize our combat capacity and strategic readiness. To maintain this level of success, we are actively engaged in initiatives to recruit and retain a diverse and talented group of future Striker leaders. However, in recent years, these efforts have become increasingly difficult to sustain as we encounter challenges to provide for the needs of our Airmen and families. These challenges are not unique to AFGSC, but many of our rurally located installations and their unique nuclear mission sets have amplified the impact of many of these challenges.

AFGSC has taken an active role in addressing the concerns about a potential correlation between missile field service and elevated health risks. We are responding with both urgency and transparency to compile comprehensive data to understand the risk to our Airmen and their families. Our command team is working with the USAF School of Aerospace Medicine to ensure a thorough study is conducted covering a variety of geographic locations, AF Specialties, and work environments. In coordination with Headquarters Air Force (HAF) and the Defense Health Agency (DHA), we will ensure this study addresses the concerns of and appropriately

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communicates the progress to our Airmen, families, retirees, Congressional members, and the American people.

Across the command, but especially pronounced within our more rural communities, AFGSC installations are combatting housing concerns for inventory, adequacy, and affordability. This challenge is most intensified at installations with significant military construction (MILCON) efforts that are preparing for an increased amount of personnel such as Ellsworth Air Force Base (AFB), South Dakota. Over the last several years, the Rapid City region and surrounding areas have experienced a surge in housing demand which far outpaces current availability.

AFGSC is also experiencing childcare needs beyond the capacity of our Child Development Centers (CDC). Hiring challenges are the primary driver of the current shortfalls at installation CDCs. Additionally, there are limited options within the local community, which are often cost-prohibitive for military families. However, various wings are implementing initiatives to combat these gaps. The Malmstrom AFB school liaison officer championed a pilot "Transitional-K" program for military children. This early childhood development program within the on-base CDC intends to address childcare issues and enhance academic performance. The pilot program includes 18 military families with support from local high schools and the local university to help children transition between pre-K and a kindergarten educational environment. Additionally, this program helps offset childcare needs and allows military families access to early childhood development resources. Minot AFB has also taken several steps to enhance the quality of life concerning childcare. They have reduced onboarding timelines from 60 to 30 days. Additional advocacy has resulted in the base CDC receiving top priority from AF Installation and Mission Support Center to plan, design, and construct two additional classrooms and renovate an existing classroom into two separate rooms; this initiative will enable the care of 30 more children. Furthermore, Minot AFB has implemented a \$5,000 hiring incentive for an 18-month commitment as part of recruiting and retention initiatives. The installation's Childcare Working Group examines all avenues to expand available, quality childcare.

OPERATIONS

The 20th Air Force (20AF) continues to operate, maintain, and defend the Minuteman III (MMIII) Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) weapon system and meet all USSTRATCOM operational requirements. The last three years showed the resiliency and ingenuity of our Airmen as they faced the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic while still operating, maintaining, and defending our land-based strategic deterrent at the highest readiness levels seen across the entire Department of Defense. The lessons and adaptations to mission accomplishment will play a vital role in the force development structure employed in the future. Additionally, we continue to provide critical sustainment programs to maintain our MMIII's lethality through the end of life, and our forces remain ready to transition to on-time fielding of Sentinel, our new Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD).

Our nuclear security teams remain ready and lethal to meet any challenge. Additionally, 20AF is home to the AF's largest contingent of Security Forces Airmen. As such, 20AF faces

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many challenges associated with organizing, training, and equipping such a substantial force of dedicated professionals. However, these Airmen continue to thrive, working within current constraints and capabilities to support the USSTRATCOM operational plan requirements while gearing toward our future and the fielding of the Sentinel system.

At Malmstrom AFB, the 40th Helicopter Squadron and the 341st Missile Security Operations Squadron have joined forces in the Integrated Alert/Operations Facility —having these on-demand response entities housed under one roof streamlines operational functions and training activities. As Security Forces begin to enter the operations world, with many staffs now under the Ops Directorate, Security Forces' officers are now integrating to new depths at the tactical level. By living, eating, and operating together, these teams are becoming more lethal and more responsive than ever before.

Since 2019, we have been working with the Pentagon as part of the Federal Aviation Administration's Obstruction Evaluation process to evaluate requests from energy developers consistent with title 10, U.S. Code, section 183a. In 2021, after completing a substantial analysis and a formal safety risk assessment, Global Strike determined that wind turbines located within two nautical miles (NM) of an ICBM launch or missile alert facility would unacceptably degrade national security and threaten the safety of our pilots in the event of an emergency response. One of the critical components of nuclear security for the MM III ICBM weapon system is the ability to respond rapidly and with sufficient force over a dispersed ICBM complex the size of the state of South Carolina. The UH-1N and its replacement MH-139 provide the airlift, surveillance, and overwatch capabilities to enable nuclear security, day or night, and in all weather conditions. Wind turbines over 200 feet in height create an unacceptable collision risk within that critical airspace. AFGSC currently assesses that 46 ICBM launch and missile alert facilities are severely encroached on by existing wind turbines. AFGSC continues to work with energy developers through the processes established in title 10, U.S. Code, section 183a to reduce the number of existing turbines and develop alternate locations to avoid any additional turbines within 2NM. In addition, our Sentinel team and the missile wings continue to engage with and educate landowners and other key stakeholders on AFGSC's vital ICBM mission and the risks created by wind turbines within 2NM.

AFGSC has experienced several mission successes within 20AF, including the ICBM Cryptographic Upgrade II, which will reach initial operating capability by mid-2023. Although fielding this capability has faced a few delays, its implementation allows for remote ICBM cryptography changes, has already saved hundreds of labor-hours, and increases nuclear surety and security. Additionally, the Tactical Response Force/Helicopter integration working group was initiated in late 2021 and continues to meet the full spectrum of nuclear security challenges successfully. Lastly, we continue to engage with partners and develop plans for cooperation on training and knowledge exchange as we begin employing the MH-139A, Grey Wolf helicopter.

Looking forward, we have completed 65% construction of the first Weapons Generation Facility at F.E. Warren, Air Force Base (AFB), Wyoming. This facility is an ultra-secure combined nuclear maintenance and storage facility. We will continue using the lessons learned from F.E. Warren to gain efficiencies at future Weapons Generation Facility construction sites. In addition, we deployed the first high-speed data backbone command and control unit at our

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first ICBM wing. Three hundred personnel trained and equipped 72 vehicle systems, created 12 tech ops centers and erected 40 towers which provide the missile field complex a \$94M high-speed, self-healing communication system.

AFGSC continues to encourage our Wings and personnel to innovate to execute the mission better. New ICBM security response procedures will allow security experts to lead security response in the missile complex. As part of Sentinel, each missile wing will receive a new on-base Launch Facility Trainer specifically for security forces' use--including active alarm systems and cameras. AFGSC has also coordinated a lease with Camp Guernsey, Wyoming, to provide 24/7 unimpeded access to 6 small arms ranges enabling distance shooting up to 500 meters. The new \$23M indoor small arms range complex at Minot AFB, North Dakota, is complete and FOC. Malmstrom AFB, Montana, has three operational small arms ranges and uses nearby Fort Harrison, Montana, for long-distance small arms firing. Lastly, as the new Payload Transporter (PT) completes fielding, we anticipate de-certified PTs will be available for SF training.

The MMIII ICBM remains viable as the ground leg of our nuclear triad. However, the 50-year weapon system and accompanying infrastructure will face significant challenges as it nears end-of-life, with the major factors being parts obsolescence and diminishing manufacturing sources. Over 150 ICBM launch vehicles and operational ground equipment components require risk mitigation to remain operationally viable until their end-of-life. The missile wings have logged over 2.4 million maintenance hours over the last five years, which is a 30% increase over the previous five years. However, our installations still carry a maintenance backlog of 21,000 work orders, and models predict a 25% increase over the next Future Year Defense Program (FYDP). Additionally, our weapon system sustainment execution budget has grown over 17% within the last five years. MMIII sustainment acquisition programs such as Launch Control Center Block Upgrade, Automatic Switching Unit replacement, and Payload Transporter Replacement are critical in maintaining capability. However, the fundamental mitigation action for MMIII to avoid exceeding its operational viability is the fielding of our next generation weapon system program, Sentinel.

Sentinel, the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD), will modernize or replace MMIII flight systems, weapon system command and control, and launch systems, including missile silos, control centers, and other ground infrastructure. The program is in its third year of a seven-year development effort. Sentinel faces the same challenges that many major defense acquisition programs are facing. Macroeconomic factors, manpower challenges, and inflationary effects pose significant challenges; nevertheless, the Sentinel program's top priority is keeping Sentinel on a path to meet the warfighters' need. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) is currently identifying acquisition levers to capitalize on opportunities to keep this projected IOC date. Like other systems within the Command, the Sentinel program will require stable funding and a whole-of-government approach to ensure prompt delivery and avoid critical shortfalls in our nation's defense.

The MH-139A program accepted the first four MH-139s in August 2022. Developmental Test has started at Duke Field at Eglin AFB, Florida, and AFGSC expects Initial Operating Capability at Malmstrom AFB in FY25. Milestone C was approved early March 2023 and starts

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entry into Low-Rate Initial Production (LRIP). LRIP will consist of three lots of two to 16 aircraft each, with the first lot delivering 13 aircraft. The UH-1N is quickly facing obsolescence challenges one would expect of a weapons system of over 50 years. The MH-139 is the answer to ensure safe, reliable security response to our missile fields spreads.

Eighth Air Force (8AF) operates and maintains the only long-range strategic bombers across all combatant commands and between our allies and partners. AFGSC bombers continue to meet mission requirements despite being below our readiness target goals for spare parts due to parts obsolescence. Aircraft availability has decreased and downtime for maintenance has increased, and this has added challenges and focuses the importance of sustaining the current fleet while staying on time with modernization. Despite the safety stand down, the B-2 is ready for any national taskings. It is the only penetrating bomber and must maintain full operational capacity, until replaced by the B-21 Raider. The crew force continues to find ways to maintain readiness while maintainers utilize this time to repair aircraft discrepancies. The safety investigation continues to progress as engineers, aircrew, and maintenance subject matter experts look for a long-term engineering solution to prevent future gear safety mishaps.

The B-52 continues to be the workhorse of long-range strike, but also has its sustainment challenges. Parts obsolescence increases aircraft down time and leads to higher cannibalization rates of parts from other aircraft. This means to meet mission requirements, aircrews are flying less training sorties. A lack of training sorties leads to a lack of current aircrew to fly mission lines and an inability to absorb the number of crews required. To combat availability issues, AFGSC is pursuing a medium fidelity weapon system trainer to maintain aircrew readiness and increase training quality. AFGSC has an obligation to deliver solutions to our Airmen if we continue to make them operate this way. Proficiency and currency are part of the nuclear triad.

We will implement as directed the 4-Bin Force Generation Model and the Agile Combat Employment (ACE) concept to achieve Commander, USSTRATCOM and Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) objectives while deterring our enemies and assuring our allies. The 4-Bin Model intends to meet specific CSAF objectives, conform to the 2022 National Defense Strategy, and move the AF to a more predictable and sustainable model for our Airmen. ACE exercises practice distributed operations from dispersed locations to increase survivability while generating combat power. We initially sent four B-52s to Fairchild AFB, Washington, to execute the ACE mission. Each bomber transported a mobile maintenance team and a Bomber Onboard Cargo System (BOCS) to practice the capability of landing, rearming, and repairing the aircraft anywhere that has enough runway. AFGSC has successfully deployed two B-52 ACE operations to Alaska and Spain while taking maintenance personnel and equipment using the Bomber Onboard Cargo System to remain agile and lethal with a minimum logistical footprint and tanker requirement. Additionally, B-1s completed a limited ACE deployment to Alaska with a lean and agile maintenance footprint conducting combat training missions out of Eielson AFB, Alaska. Other notable events include the first B-52, C-17, and KC-46 large force exercise, demonstrating ACE to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) with a KC-46 and B-52 in formation, integrating AMC/CC and AFGSC/CC objectives.

As the Air Component to USSTRATCOM, AFGSC is leading the way in accomplishing multiple site surveys of airfields and air bases worldwide to determine their suitability to support

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bomber operations in peacetime and during contingencies. In FY22, AFGSC surveyed 14 bases, eight countries, and three geographic combatant commands with scheduled bomber task force missions to execute this year.

AFGSC is committed to the requirements and funding stability on the baseline acquisition program for the B-21 Raider. Since the program's inception, the top-level key system attributes and performance parameters have remained unchanged. Similarly, since the Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) contract was awarded in 2016, the B-21 program has remained within its Acquisition Program Baseline (APB) for both cost and schedule targets. The FY24 President's Budget includes funding to continue development and procurement funding to continue the program's transition to low-rate initial production. Therefore, the following significant milestones for the program are the first flight and the start of low-rate initial production.

Aligned with the National Defense Strategy, the B-21 provides survivable, long-range, penetrating strike capabilities to deter aggression and strategic attack against the United States, its allies, and partners. Six aircraft are in production. Test aircraft are being built on the same production line, using the same tools, processes, and technicians that will manufacture the production aircraft. The program has completed loads calibration for the first test article that will support first flight, has initiated full-scale static testing for the second B-21 test article, and completed an integrated kill chain demonstration using a Flying Test Bed. The recent public unveiling of the B-21 on Dec 2, 2022, demonstrates our commitment to integrated deterrence to the nation, our allies, and our partners. The first flight remains a key milestone, which will be an "event-driven" milestone that will, in turn, drive the flight test campaign for the B-21.

Military construction at Ellsworth AFB is part of the critical path to support the B-21 nuclear and conventional mission. In calendar year 2021, the Acting Secretary of the Air Force confirmed that Ellsworth AFB would be the first B-21 Main Operating Base. Ellsworth has yet to host a stealth, nuclear capable aircraft thus, requiring the necessary facilities, infrastructure, and workforce to support the nuclear mission and meet USSTRATCOM requirements. Funding for two military construction projects, Phase Hangar and Fuel Systems Maintenance Dock at Ellsworth AFB, have been requested in the FY24 President's Budget to support aircraft arrival in the mid-2020s.

Additionally, the FY24 President's Budget includes Planning and Design (P&D) funding for military construction (MILCON) projects at Dyess AFB, TX, and Whiteman AFB, MO. Our MILCON projects remain a crucial component to the execution of our bed-down activities across all our AFGSC bases.

The design of the B-21 is an Open Systems Architecture that will allow for rapid capability integration with minimal disruption to production and aircraft availability, ensuring the weapon system will keep pace with the highly contested threat environment. The recent successful integration of a third-party sensor demonstration validates these words are more than talking points and that the B-21 will provide an enduring capability against present and emerging threats for our nation and our allies for decades. The FY24 President's Budget includes funding to begin modernization activities such as nuclear certification, Long Range Standoff mission

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(LRSO) integration, and other, more exquisite activities. Continued investments in new capabilities like the B-21 ensure our nation possesses cutting-edge technology needed to maintain strategic deterrence and execute effective operations across the globe. Furthermore, the Secretary of the Air Force's operational imperatives, including the B-21 Long Range Strike Family-of-Systems, will further enable the B-21 to enhance survivability, resiliency, and lethality while promoting interoperability with the Joint Force.

The Commercial Engine Replacement Program (CERP) is critical to B-52 viability through 2050. The AF Life Cycle Management Center's Propulsion Directorate found the current B-52 TF-33 engines will be unsustainable beyond 2030. As a result, USAF selected Rolls Royce as the new engine supplier. The off-the-shelf variant of the F130 turbofan will replace the obsolete TF-33. The program will be a net cost-saver in place of continued TF-33 service life extensions, and AFGSC anticipates an increase of 20% to the B-52's unrefueled range. The program is transitioning from a Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) to a Major Capability Acquisition (MCA), with IOC occurring in FY31.

The Radar Modernization Program (RMP) will integrate an off-the-shelf radar system that will ensure the B-52's ability to employ nuclear and conventional weapons in present and future fights. The current B-52 radar is unsustainable and suffering from parts obsolescence. The program will reduce maintenance repair times, decrease operating costs, and provide for future growth capability. An EMD contract award occurred in 3QFY21. We project IOC for FY27 and FOC in FY31.

The nuclear armed Long Range Standoff missile (LRSO) is an Acquisition Category 1D Major Defense Acquisition Program (MDAP) to design, develop, produce and deploy a weapon system replacement for the current nuclear armed Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM). The LRSO program completed its February 2023 Critical Design Review (CDR) on time and remains on track for the scheduled IOC/Full Operational Capability (FOC).

AFGSC continues to transition from a legacy to a modern Nuclear Command, Control, and Communication (NC3) enterprise. The AF has begun recapitalizing the aging E-4B with the Survivable Airborne Operations Center (SAOC) program. The E-4B is a vital piece of the National Military Command System, providing Nuclear Command and Control (NC2) for the executive branch. AFGSC authored an AF-validated SAOC Capabilities Development Document that gained Joint Requirement Oversight Council validation in March 2022. The Department has concluded its market research, finalized requirements, worked with key stakeholders, including industry, to develop SAOC solicitation, and is targeting a competitive contract award in CY2023. The AF continues to refine the SAOC acquisition strategy, leveraging modernization opportunities, open system architecture, and digital engineering to reduce overall program costs. As a result, the SAOC will achieve FOC in the early to mid-2030s.

NC3 is a program that fails to gain the notoriety of larger acquisition programs. However, this is an important weapons system for AFGSC and our national defense. Collectively, we need better accountability and transparency of these systems and a clearer answer to who oversees each system and the funding streams associated with the programs. NC3

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is a no-fail mission, and we aim to highlight its importance as we continue striving to bring visibility to NC3. AFGSC will work closely with USSTRATCOM, AF, Space Force, and industry partners to generate the NC3 Next modernization plan.

We have several recent and upcoming ICBM command and control modernization efforts for our Strategic Automated Command and Control System, satellite communications, and very low-frequency radios. These will ensure command and control capability for deployment of the new Sentinel ICBM and the legacy MMIII ICBM fleet until it is retired.

AFGSC Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Directorate partnered with the NC3 Enterprise Center (NEC) and other intelligence organizations to produce the first-ever NC3 focused intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance Program of Analysis (POA). This effort synchronizes NC3 intelligence requirements across the enterprise. In addition, the POA provides a means to advocate within the wider Intelligence Community to advocate for NC3 equities. It also provides a way to assess the effectiveness of NC3-related collection and analysis.

AFGSC has successfully fielded 12 fixed Global Aircrew Strategic Networking Terminal Systems at 18 main operating bases within the continental United States at the close of CY22 and eight transportable terminals to support the Mobile Nuclear Command and Control Mission to execute USSTRATCOM's Nuclear Alert Mission. In FY23, AFGSC projects to release 42 additional terminals to 25 locations worldwide. AFGSC maintenance and logistics aligns with the USSTRATCOM NEC and the NC3 Program Office. Through this connection, we provide oversight on NC3 weapon system status reporting to align operational units with the Joint Global Strike Operations Center (J-GSOC) and the NEC reporting requirements and timelines and routinely work with the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center's (AFNWC) Integrated Product Center to resolve field-level sustainment concerns.

CONCLUSION

AFGSC thanks Congress for your continual support to our mission. The risks to our national security are becoming more apparent every day. The PRC aims to surpass the United States in terms of global influence and military might, while Russia continues to challenge international norms increasing risk to strategic stability. AFGSC understands the importance of sustaining our current fleet and will continue to modernize at the speed of relevance. We are ready today to meet the requirements given to us from the President and the Commander of USSTRATCOM, but there is no operational margin left and we have a plan to get where we need to go. Sustainment is the first piece of this plan. AFGSC is not afforded the same luxury as other commands when onboarding new systems. We must maintain full operational capability to meet our national security requirements, while fielding new weapon systems. These legacy systems still require stable funding until they can be completely divested. Modernization is the second piece. We cannot slow down and AFGSC is building the architecture to meet current and future requirements. Nearly every portfolio is being modernized from new sixth generation aircraft, to better vehicles for our security forces in the missile fields. Lastly, our Airmen and families are the foundational component that make sustainment, modernization, and deterrence possible. AFGSC and the nation have an obligation to help meet the challenges facing our Airmen. We owe our Airmen answers to their health concerns, access to the required medical attention, adequate childcare, and opportunities for education and growth for both the member

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and their family. If we take care of them, they will take care of the mission. Strategic deterrence and long-range strike are foundational to our nation's defense, and AFGSC is the backbone of those mission sets. Our success in this enterprise to field and sustain these capabilities for our nation requires coordination from Congress and the continued support you provide.