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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE, STRATEGIC SUBCOMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF
BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT L. SMOLEN, USAF
DIRECTOR, NUCLEAR AND COUNTERPROLIFERATION
BEFORE THE UNITED STATES SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC SUBCOMMITTEE

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today representing the outstanding men and women of the Nuclear and Counterproliferation Directorate (XON). Our team is a key part of the world's best nuclear force and I have the highest confidence that our strategic warfighting capabilities will continue to contribute to our Nation's security.

Our directorate establishes Air Force policy and strategy for nuclear weapon systems, has oversight of nuclear operations and requirements, and manages Air Force arms control activities ranging from treaty negotiation support to implementation and compliance. We also are the Air Force lead for activities to counter the proliferation of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear weapons. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss events regarding the Nuclear Posture Review, status of Air Force strategic forces, and our current efforts as stewards of nuclear expertise.

Nuclear Posture Review

On November 13, 2001, President Bush announced that operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads would be reduced to a range between 2,200 to 1,700 by 2012. In support of this, we are actively working with United States Strategic Command, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense to define the future nuclear force structure. With the nuclear force structure defined, we will continue to ensure the nuclear force maintains the capability to meet current and emerging threats. In accordance with the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), we are downsizing the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBMs) force to 500 Minuteman IIIs, by fully deactivating the Peacekeeper ICBM system by 2005. Peacekeeper deactivation began in

October 2002 and is progressing on schedule. The Air Force is not only reducing warheads, we are also working to ensure that the infrastructure, communications, intelligence and planning resources that integrate our strategic strike force are responsive, robust, and all linked within the construct of the New Triad. While we are working to implement the NPR and transition into the future, it is essential to sustain, modernize and enhance these existing strategic systems.

Strategic Forces

As we reduce the number of operationally deployed strategic forces to a range between 2,200 to 1,700 warheads, it is important to highlight the fact that the strategic systems we deploy are the best, most reliable, and most secure systems available. Our ICBM and cruise missile programs are critical components of the New Triad. As we examine options for the future, such as the land-based follow-on system to Minuteman III and next-generation cruise missiles, we must also continue to execute comprehensive sustainment programs.

Our ICBM force must continue to be capable, reliable and fully supportable. Life extension programs for the ICBM force are underway to sustain it through 2020. These life extension programs include propulsion and guidance replacement, as well as various other sustainment efforts. All of these sustainment programs are important in making the New Triad a reality and cannot be neglected.

Since we plan on our bomber fleet to remain operational for another 35 to 45 years, our Air-Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCM) and Advance Cruise Missile (ACM) programs are undergoing life extension programs to support the B-52 life span. Both of these cruise missile systems are implementing life extension programs that include Test Instrumentation Kit

modification, Subsystem Simulator modification, and W-80 Life Extension Program integration. Supporting these programs will sustain the ALCM and ACM to 2030.

September 11, 2001 drove home the importance of homeland security. In that context, a secure strategic force is not debatable, so we have taken aggressive steps to ensure our nuclear force remains secure from known and postulated threats. For example, we are implementing advanced delay/denial features, and updating detection/assessment technology and data transmission systems from the geographically separated launch facilities to responsible Missile Alert Facility to counter emerging threat technologies and methods. We will ensure the helicopters that transport our security response forces in the ICBM field and provide nuclear convoy security are properly equipped to protect national resources by adding a Forward Looking Infrared capability and night vision cockpit capability. We are very serious about the safety and security of the nuclear weapon systems that provide us the deterrent force for our Nation.

Nuclear Expertise

As General Lord stated in his testimony before the full committee, the success of the mission depends on our number one asset -- our people. The warfighting edge depends on the dedication, professionalism, and sacrifice of the men and women in our Air Force. Without our people, even our most effective weapon systems are of little value. As always, we will continue to place the utmost emphasis on recruiting, retaining, equipping and training our entire nuclear force. However, our cadre of experienced nuclear engineers, scientists, and even military leaders is declining. As they retire, they take years of experience away with them. One of the programs we sponsor on behalf of the Air Force is the Nuclear Technologies Fellowship Program (NTFP).

NTFP is a key initiative in solving the shortfall in nuclear expertise by serving as a sustainment program. The NTFP uses a 21-month long educational course in two phases. Phase One, focuses on academics in a classroom environment; and Phase Two, applies classroom knowledge in a National Lab environment. Graduates from this program are providing the Air Force with a new generation of nuclear force experts. These graduates are placed in nuclear-related positions across the Department of Defense and as they grow in experience and assume leadership roles, they will contribute greatly to our nuclear foundation.

Conclusion

Strategic forces are not a cold war relic and will continue to remain a vital aspect of our nation's defense as we respond to current and emerging threats. As we transition into the future, it is essential that we continue to sustain, modernize and enhance our strategic systems. Today's efforts will help build the foundation required to fulfill DoD's transformational goals, protect the U.S. homeland and critical bases of operation, deny sanctuaries to our enemies, as well as project and sustain overwhelming combat power in defense of national security.

I appreciated your continue support and again, thank you for the opportunity to appear and discuss our contributions to national defense.