

Prepared Remarks

United States Senate
Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Energy and Water

Hearing: The Long Range Stand-off Weapon
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**UNITED STATES SENATE
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Hon. Franklin C. Miller

“Deterrence is not, and cannot be bluff. In order for deterrence to be effective we must not merely have weapons, we must be perceived to be able, and prepared, if necessary, to use them effectively against the key elements of [an enemy’s] power. Deterrence is not an abstract notion amenable to simple quantification. Still less is it a mirror of what would deter ourselves. Deterrence is the set of beliefs in the minds of the [enemy] leaders, given their own values and attitudes, about our capabilities and our will. It requires us to determine, as best we can, what would deter them from considering aggression, even in a crisis—not to determine what would deter us.” The Scowcroft Commission Report, 1983

I thank the Committee for inviting me to appear this morning to discuss the long-range stand-off weapon (LRSO) program. This discussion necessarily must take place in the context of our national nuclear deterrence policy.

Seven years ago President Obama launched a major initiative in his Prague speech, calling on the nuclear weapons states to reduce the role nuclear weapons played in their respective national security policies. With the exception of the United States and the United Kingdom, however, that initiative was roundly spurned by the other nuclear powers. Sadly, Moscow, Beijing, New Delhi, Islamabad and Pyongyang have expanded their nuclear weapons programs and have increased their reliance on nuclear weapons.

Nowhere has this been more true than in the Russian Federation. President Putin has been waging his version of “Cold War 2.0” against the United States and our NATO allies for many years. In addition to the extra-territorial assassinations, funding divisive political parties in Western Europe, increased use of sophisticated propaganda and the “Big Lie”, cyber attacks, dangerous military activities in the air and at sea designed to intimidate, and overt military aggression against its neighbors, Moscow has revived nuclear policies and programs reminiscent of the worst years of the Cold War. Russia is engaged in a massive modernization of its nuclear forces, deploying two new types of ICBMs, two new types of SLBMs, a new class of SSBNs (two of which are operational and a third is in the water), two new types of dual capable cruise missiles (air-launched and sea-launched), and building new Blackjack heavy bombers and modernizing existing Bear and Blackjack aircraft (as well as deploying a wide variety of shorter-range nuclear forces). Given recent articles and editorials about a “new nuclear arms race”, it is worth emphasizing for the record that the Russians have been putting, and continue to put, these systems into service now, while the first of the Triad modernization programs proposed by the Administration will not begin to deploy until the mid-to-late 2020’s. Russian nuclear exercises deliberately and overtly simulate attacks against our NATO allies and Russian strategic bombers have routinely simulated nuclear attacks against the United States, NATO Europe, and Japan for years. Finally, Mr. Putin and senior members of his government frequently indulge in Khrushchev-like rhetoric threatening nuclear attacks on our allies using language, which if employed by a Western leader or senior official, would invoke immediate worldwide condemnation.

It should be clear from this that the United States still requires, and will require for the foreseeable future, a credible nuclear deterrent to prevent both nuclear attack on, and nuclear blackmail of, ourselves and our allies. A credible nuclear deterrent requires modern forces which are capable of, and which are perceived by friend and potential foe alike as being capable of, holding at risk what potential enemy leaderships value most. For decades the United States has relied on a mix of strategic nuclear forces configured in land, air, and sea-based legs; while this Triad had its origins in inter-service rivalry, it has come to be relied on due to its combination of varied launch azimuths, offsetting strengths and vulnerabilities, and different failure modes. The current Triad is the second generation force, the Kennedy Administration’s

original Triad having been modernized by the Reagan Administration in the 1980's. The next version of this cyclical twenty year investment should have occurred in the early years of the George W. Bush Administration, but that was deferred. As a result, the strategic nuclear force we field today is the longest serving force we have ever had, and soon will be in critical need of modernization. President Obama recognized this fact when, in his February 2, 2011 letter to the Senate, responding to the Senate's resolution on providing advice and consent to the New Start treaty, he wrote: "I intend to modernize or replace the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems: a heavy bomber and air-launched cruise missile, an ICBM, and a nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) and SLBM...."

Our strategic forces are by no means a deterrent to many of the threats we and our allies face, but they are a deterrent to the only existential threat we face: nuclear attack by a major state power, or, in the case of our allies, major conventional attack backed up by nuclear forces. While we must continue to invest in a wide variety of conventional and unconventional military capabilities, including space and cyber, our nuclear forces, as our service chiefs testified in mid-March of this year to the House Armed Service Committee, are the essential backbone which makes our conventional forces credible when nuclear-armed peer and near-peer competitors contemplate aggression against us.

Within this context, the sea-based leg, which, by the end of this decade, will carry 60% of US nuclear warheads, is carried by submarines which by the mid-2020's will be the longest serving subs in the nuclear Navy's history. A force of twelve replacement SSBNs will permit an operational fleet of ten boats, allowing for two-ocean basing and upload potential to mitigate the risk of a world gone badly wrong. A modernized ICBM force will retain the advantages of both sovereign basing and the strategic stability inherent in a single warhead system. But it is the air leg which concerns this hearing. The bomber force has traditionally provided the President a wide variety of deterrent capabilities:

- **stability:** because the force is not on day-to-day alert, because the launch of the force is detectable and, uniquely, subject to re-call, and the bombers – both cruise missile carriers and penetrators – take hours to reach their launch points – and the cruise missiles take

additional hours to reach their targets after their launch; indeed, the strategic stability provided by bombers and cruise missiles was recognized in the special counting rules applied to them both during the Cold War in the START treaty and much more recently in this decade by the New START treaty;

- **signaling capacity:** because the force can be placed on alert in part or in whole, dispersed and moved closer to potential theaters of conflict in order to demonstrate resolve;
- **a hedge:** in a technical sense, against a dramatic and unforeseen improvement in a potential enemy's ABM/BMD capabilities or a catastrophic anomaly in the SLBM or ICBM legs and a military one by providing additional up-load potential should it be needed; and, finally, consistent with long-standing mainstream deterrent policy;
- **deterrent flexibility,** by providing relatively lower yield single warhead capability to offset and thereby deter an enemy's decision to employ low-yield nuclear strike options.

Since the early 1980's, a mix of cruise missile carriers and penetrating bombers has been viewed as the most militarily effective way to stress an enemy's air defense; indeed there are targets to which cruise missiles can penetrate which are too dangerous for a penetrating bomber. Causing a potential adversary to invest heavily in air defenses is itself stabilizing, in the sense that resources invested in air defenses cannot be invested in offensive systems. As the Committee will be aware, however, we have only a handful of B-2s, each of which would have to overfly multiple targets. In a nuclear environment this would be, to indulge in massive understatement, extraordinarily challenging. Moreover, the small B-2 force lacks the capacity to carry the number of air-delivered weapons current US policy requires. (Senators will recall that the Joint Chiefs' and Strategic Command's certification of the military sufficiency of the 1550 weapons limit of the New START treaty, and their further agreement to a proposal to consider negotiating an agreement at levels below New START, was based on full exploitation and leverage of the bomber counting rule. If air launched cruise missiles were eliminated, hundreds of US weapons disappear and the premise upon which military sufficiency of the Treaty limit vanishes.) This, then, places a major burden on our cruise missile force. And that force depends on the AGM-86B, the ALCM-B, first deployed in 1980 with a projected service life of 10 years. It's older than some of the Committee's staffers. And, due to its age, it is increasingly difficult

to maintain and to operate. Its ability to penetrate advanced air defenses is degrading. If the United States is to maintain this existing deterrent capability, the ALCM-B must, I repeat, must be replaced as soon as is possible.

Here is where the LRSO comes in. Replacing ALCM-B with LRSO preserves the viability of the B-52 nuclear stand-off mission for decades. Contrary to popular pronouncements from the disarmament community, it does so at relatively low cost: the entire LRSO program is estimated by the Pentagon (as contained in its March 2016 report to the Congress) to cost \$8.3 billion, of which approximately \$1.8 billion would be spent in the FY2016-2020 timeframe. The Department's report notes that this cost "represents approximately 2 percent of the nuclear Triad budget and 0.06 percent of the overall Defense budget for the FY 2016-2020 timeframe". The B-52/LRSO combination provides the requisite numbers to meet the military's strategic requirements. And, in the mid-term future, the LRSO also provides an ability to extend the life of the B-2 and proposed B-21 when air defenses evolve to a point where they are unable to penetrate to their targets in a nuclear role. So the LRSO allows us to keep an existing deterrent mission viable which provides significant stability, flexibility, signaling and hedging capabilities – again, all of which are needed for a successful deterrent -- at a relatively low cost.

It is surprising therefore that the program has become controversial. It would be useful at this point to review some of the more interesting allegations.

- The first, somewhat astoundingly, is that LRSO (or presumably any nuclear-armed cruise missile) would create a dangerous ambiguity since we also deploy conventionally armed cruise missiles, and that this ambiguity might cause an enemy to believe we had launched a nuclear weapon when in fact we had not. This idea, which has arisen only in the past several years, is inconsistent with how we have traditionally regarded cruise missiles. Throughout the Cold War we had both nuclear and conventional cruise missiles. There was never any concern about ambiguity. We began retiring the nuclear version of the sea-launched cruise missile as part of the Bush-Yeltsin nuclear initiatives, in part as a conciliatory gesture to the ending of the Cold War and in part because the US Navy hated having them on board conventional platforms – but not because of

any perceived concerns about ambiguity. The same was true of the idea that the Soviets would view a conventional alcm launched in a strictly conventional war (and we used them against Iraq in 1991) as a nuclear one. It's also worth noting that the Russian government, theoretically the object of concerns in this regard, has not indicated any sensitivity about the nature of nuclear tipped cruise missiles and in fact is busily deploying both new nuclear and conventional cruise missiles from air and naval platforms and employing conventional versions in Syria.

- Closely tied to the above conjecture is the assertion that LRSO, or ALCM-B or even the B-2 or B-21 for that matter, is a first strike weapon. This flies in the face of how the US Government, and indeed the Russian Government, have regarded these slow flying stabilizing systems. As I noted earlier, as recently as the New START negotiations held a few years ago, air launched cruise missiles were regarded as sufficiently stabilizing that they deserved a special discount counting rule.
- Another line of argument has suggested that highly accurate US conventional weapons have obviated the need for nuclear cruise missiles. This, I believe, confuses, dangerously so, the distinction between war-fighting weapons and nuclear deterrent weapons. As was the case both in recent wars against Iraq and the current war against the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and ISIS, we deploy and use highly precise conventional weapons. That is a far different case, however, than contemplating threatening a nuclear-armed potential enemy's most valued assets with conventional rounds. And, since the role of the ALCM-B and LRSO is to deter nuclear attack by posing a credible nuclear retaliatory capability, there should be no confusion as to whether a conventional cruise missile can substitute in that role: it cannot.
- It has also been argued that the Administration's commitment to modernize the Triad reflects a "Cold War Nuclear Policy" and that a very small minimal deterrent force of a few hundred weapons – on the order of the force deployed by China -- should suffice for the United States in the twenty-first century. If we were to adopt a "Minimum Deterrence" policy and abandon our nuclear umbrella over our NATO and Asian allies, that might be a viable approach. It would also

provoke international instability and nuclear proliferation. Our extended deterrent is an anti-proliferant and has provided a stabilizing force in global affairs for over 50 years. We should not abandon it lightly in order to set an example which will be exploited rather than followed by potential adversaries.

- Another argument advanced against the LRSO program suggests that if the United States “exercises restraint” and cancels the program, other nuclear weapons states, especially the Russian Federation, will follow our example. This argument fundamentally misunderstands the history of the last twenty years. President Obama tried to set such an example with his Prague initiative...but as I stated at the outset he failed to persuade other nuclear states to follow suit. President George H. W. Bush tried to set such an example by retiring all US ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons and all naval tactical nuclear weapons, but, despite pledges made by Presidents Gorbachev and Yeltsin, Russia today maintains a large arsenal of several thousand tactical nuclear weapons, including ground-launched and naval systems. As the Obama Administration has made clear in the past few years, Russia has violated the INF Treaty while we continue to respect its provisions. So, cancellation of LRSO will not result in a Russian decision to halt and rollback their nuclear cruise missile programs: it will just result in a situation in which they deploy new and improved nuclear alcms while we don't deploy any, thereby creating a strategic imbalance. Senior levels of the Russian government also reject our notions that multiple warhead ICBMs are destabilizing, as evidenced by their production and deployment today of the SS-27/Mod 2 and the impending deployment in 2018 of a very large heavy ICBM to replace the Cold War era SS-18. In thinking about deterrence, we need to accept that Moscow thinks about nuclear weapons quite differently than we do – and therefore we must ensure that the Russian leadership understands that our retaliatory capability makes any consideration on their part to resort to military use of such weapons a non-starter and always their worst available option under any circumstances. This, precisely, is why the Triad needs modernization,

Let me end on a personal note. I was deeply involved in US nuclear weapons policy for the vast majority of my 31 years of government service in both Democratic and Republican Administrations. Since my retirement from federal service eleven years ago I have remained involved as a member of various government advisory bodies and as a private citizen. It would not surprise me, as a result, that opponents of my views suggest that I “never met a nuclear weapon I didn’t support”. What has not been known publicly until a month or so ago when retired General Lee Butler published his autobiography, however, is that in 1989 I initiated and led, with the strong support of then Secretary of Defense Cheney, the first major review and overhaul of the US nuclear warplan. That review resulted in cutting US weapons requirements by over 40% and became the basis of the US proposal for the START II treaty. Shortly after the study concluded, the USSR began to unravel, and I led a follow-on study which reduced the requirements by another 40%. During my service on the NSC staff, I was instrumental in creating the 2002 Bush-Putin “Treaty of Moscow”, which reduced US strategic requirements by another almost 40%, resulting in levels which were below even those of the Obama-Putin New START treaty. All of these reductions, however, were premised on the fact that we could safely reduce weapons levels if and only if we maintained a credible deterrent. The Congress now has before it the President’s plan to keep our deterrent credible, thereby ensuring stability and holding open the possibility of future reductions if Moscow becomes convinced of our resolve. I urge the Congress to support the modernization of the Triad, including the development and deployment of LRSO.