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STATEMENT OF  
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DEVELOPMENT

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Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Feinstein, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) cruise missile and its critical role in sustaining effective deterrence as part of our nuclear Triad.

### **Sustaining the cruise missile for effective nuclear deterrence**

President Obama's approach to reducing nuclear dangers has consistently included two key pillars: working toward a world without nuclear weapons, and maintaining effective deterrence along the way. Replacing our only nuclear-armed cruise missile, the Air-Launched Cruise Missile, or ALCM, will sustain that system's unique contribution to stable and effective deterrence. Contrary to claims by some, doing so will not lower the threshold for U.S. nuclear use, raise the risk of accidental nuclear war, or waste money on a capability we do not need. On the contrary, ALCM replacement is a critical element of a nuclear recapitalization program that supports the President's defense and nonproliferation objectives.

The current ALCM is designed to launch from a bomber flying outside an adversary's territory and reach targets inaccessible to even stealth aircraft. Retaining this capability requires that we replace the ALCM during the coming decade, and we are developing the LRSO to do just that. The ALCM is already decades beyond its planned service life, and its ability to survive modern air defenses is degrading over time. It is also exhibiting increasing age-related problems, and simply will not last much beyond the time planned for LRSO availability. No modern weapon system is cheap, but it is worth noting that LRSO is the lowest-cost element of our strategic modernization program.

The Administration's plan for ALCM replacement conforms with our broader approach to nuclear weapon sustainment and modernization. We are not developing a new nuclear warhead for the LRSO. Instead, it will use a refurbished version of the existing ALCM warhead. LRSO is not part of a nuclear arms buildup. The number of replacement nuclear warheads will not exceed the current ALCM warhead inventory, and is far lower than the approximately 1,000 missile bodies needed to support both the deployed force and testing requirements over the system's projected lifetime. LRSO will not support new military missions or provide new military

capabilities. Rather, it will preserve the current ALCM capability in the face of evolving 21<sup>st</sup> century air defense threats.

Fielding the LRSO will sustain the ALCM's longstanding contribution to strategic stability. An adversary's potential inability to distinguish between a nuclear- and conventional-armed air-launched cruise missile in flight does not make the LRSO destabilizing, as some have argued. Conventional air-launched cruise missiles have been used for decades by the United States and other countries that also possess nuclear-armed cruise missiles, and few argue that this existing condition is destabilizing. Furthermore, although the United States has long maintained both nuclear and conventional variants of the ALCM, there is no plan to develop a conventional-armed LRSO at least while the conventional ALCM variant remains in service. I do not believe that retaining our existing ALCM capability will now increase the risk of inadvertent nuclear war. We have generally believed that a strategic weapon system can be destabilizing if it threatens the adversary's ability to respond to an initial attack. Then it might create an incentive to strike preemptively in order to avoid being disarmed. Like the ALCM, the LRSO will not pose the threat of a disarming attack to Russia or China. The process of alerting strategic bombers is observable, and aircraft and missiles must then spend hours flying toward their targets, compared to less than 30 minutes for ballistic missiles. Hence, the LRSO provides more potential for explicit warning than do ballistic missiles, or the ground- and sea-launched cruise missiles the United States previously deployed, but has since retired.

The ALCM contributes meaningfully to three requirements for effective deterrence. It provides important military capability, strengthens the U.S. ability to communicate deterrence messages to potential adversaries, and reinforces the credibility of those messages.

First, cruise missiles provide capability that ensures an effective bomber force and complements rather than duplicates the stealth bomber. They extend the reach of the bomber force, and multiply the type and number of penetrating targets each bomber presents to the adversary. This severely complicates the air defense challenge facing any country seeking to negate this portion of our deterrent. Further, as air defenses continue to improve and proliferate, we cannot assume our technological lead will forever ensure unchallenged U.S. bomber operations over any target and in any theater. Without LRSO, our only air-delivered nuclear response option would be gravity bombs, which bring increased mission risk by forcing bombers to fly over targets—likely

multiple targets within enemy territory for each flight. LRSO capability is required to sustain the nuclear role of our aging B-52 bomber fleet, and will enhance the survivability and extend the useful service life of the current B-2 and the next-generation B-21 stealth bomber when its ability to go undetected eventually degrades. The stark reality is that forgoing the LRSO would allow potential adversaries to focus on acquiring the ability to detect a single type of aircraft in an effort to render the entire U.S. strategic nuclear bomber force ineffective.

Clear military capability reduces the likelihood that adversary miscalculation will lead to armed conflict; so too does the ability to communicate deterrence messages. Because aircraft can be deployed and flown during a crisis, an effective bomber force supports the President's ability to visibly signal our resolve and commitment to defend ourselves and our allies. Bombers provide a forceful reminder to any adversary contemplating nuclear attack that the risk it faces is real. This critical role cannot be meaningfully filled by ballistic missiles hidden on submarines at sea or fixed within protective silos in the United States that cannot be recalled after launch.

Finally, effective nuclear deterrence requires that the adversary believes the United States has the resolve as well as the capability to defend itself and its allies. The cruise missile makes a unique contribution to the range of delivery modes and nuclear explosive yields available to the President for deterring and responding to large-scale or limited nuclear attack.

This flexibility is critical in a world where we must not only avoid unintended escalation, but also deter deliberate nuclear escalation like that envisioned in Russia's stated approach to conflict. The LRSO will strengthen our ability to deter limited nuclear attacks from ever taking place, and will support U.S. nonproliferation objectives by reinforcing allied confidence in extended deterrence. Deterrence could fail if an adversary believes limited nuclear-weapon use might coerce the United States to grant concessions or abandon its friends due to a lack of credible response options. Retaining an effective cruise missile capability ensures that the President does not have to rely solely on high-yield ballistic missiles that may lack credibility for responding to a calibrated nuclear attack on an ally or U.S. forces abroad. If allies and partners conclude they cannot count on the United States to respond decisively to nuclear attack, they might opt to pursue their own nuclear arsenals. These are conditions that would be truly dangerous and destabilizing.

Although the United States continues to strengthen non-nuclear capabilities and plan non-nuclear strike options, conventional weapons cannot duplicate the physical effects of nuclear weapons. Nor are they capable of fulfilling the nuclear-armed cruise missile's contribution to and role in effective deterrence and reassurance of U.S. allies. Arguments that the LRSO should be judged solely on its ability to destroy a given target set miss the key point that nuclear weapons are not just another military capability. Their fundamental role is deterrence, not warfighting, and effective deterrence requires that an adversary believes the United States can and may respond in kind to a nuclear attack.

To be clear, the LRSO is not intended to provide the United States with the ability to start a limited nuclear war. Rather, it is intended to retain the ALCM's contribution to our ability to deter a limited nuclear war and mitigate the risk of uncontrolled escalation if nuclear deterrence fails. Retaining lower-yield options means retaining the ability to limit the level of destruction if the President determines a nuclear response is necessary. It does not mean a higher likelihood of U.S. nuclear use. Indeed, the United States has long maintained a high threshold for nuclear use together with a diverse range of nuclear explosive yields and response options.

Some argue that providing the President options for limited response to a nuclear attack is outdated and dangerous. Yet eschewing such options would suggest a strategy of arraying U.S. nuclear forces so that even a limited nuclear attack would trigger a massive response. For decades, every U.S. President has sought to strengthen deterrence and reduce the risk of nuclear war by retaining some flexibility in how to respond. Recapitalizing the cruise missile will help ensure the United States can continue to do so for as long as nuclear weapons exist.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.