



STATEMENT OF
ADMIRAL RICHARD W. MIES, UNITED STATES NAVY
COMMANDER IN CHIEF
UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND
BEFORE THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE
14 APRIL 1999

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here this morning to testify on strategic nuclear policy, force structure, and force posture.

STRATEGIC NUCLEAR POLICY

Deterrence of aggression and coercion is a cornerstone of our national security strategy. Our strategic nuclear forces serve as the most visible and important element of our commitment to this principle. Although the risk of massive nuclear attack has decreased significantly and the role of nuclear weapons in our national military strategy has diminished, deterrence of major military attack on the United States and its allies, especially attacks involving weapons of mass destruction, remains our highest defense priority.

Our national security strategy reaffirms that:

Nuclear weapons serve as a hedge against an uncertain future, a guarantee of our security commitments to allies and a disincentive to those who would contemplate developing or otherwise acquiring their own nuclear weapons.

A National Security Strategy for a New Century 1998

STRATEGIC DETERRENCE IN THE POST-COLD WAR ENVIRONMENT

As outlined in our national military strategy, although our nation is at peace and the Cold War has ended, there remain a number of potentially serious threats to national security

including regional dangers, asymmetric challenges, transnational threats, and "wild cards."

Russia still possesses, and continues to modernize, their substantial strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces. Because of the deterioration of their conventional forces and severe economic turmoil, Russia has placed increased reliance on nuclear weapons. Russia has made great progress toward creation of a stable democracy but that transition is not assured. Hence our strategic forces serve as a hedge against the possibility of Russia's reemergence as a threat to the U.S. and its allies.

Although China possesses a much smaller nuclear force, China is modernizing its strategic force and we cannot discount its emergence as a potential threat.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery pose the greatest threat to global stability and security and the greatest challenge to strategic deterrence. The issue may not be whether weapons of mass destruction will be used against the West by a rogue nation or transnational actor, but where and when.

Accordingly, our present mission reflects continuity with the past:

To deter major military attack on the United States and its allies; and if deterrence fails, employ forces,

while simultaneously providing planning expertise and support to the geographic CINCs for countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery.

In confronting this mission, U.S. Strategic Command faces four major challenges:

- Maintaining effective, credible, and secure strategic deterrent forces.
- Continuing to help shape a stable environment and solid foundation for the implementation of arms control agreements and promotion of the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Ensuring a safe and reliable nuclear weapons stockpile.
- Taking care of our people.

STRATEGIC FORCE STRUCTURE

To deter a broad range of threats, our national security strategy requires a robust triad of strategic forces. Both the Nuclear Posture Review and Quadrennial Defense Review have reaffirmed the wisdom of preserving the complementary strategic triad of land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles,

submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and strategic bombers. Each leg of the triad contributes unique attributes that enhance deterrence and reduce risk; intercontinental ballistic missiles provide prompt response, submarines provide survivability, and bombers provide flexibility. Together they comprise a robust deterrent that complicates a potential adversary's offensive and defensive planning. The triad is also a synergistic force that provides protection against the failure of a single triad leg.

Intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) continue to provide a reliable, low cost, prompt response capability with a high readiness rate. They also contribute substantially to a stable deterrent by ensuring that a potential adversary takes them into account if contemplating a disarming first strike against the United States. Without a capable ICBM force, the prospect of destroying the bulk of America's strategic infrastructure with a handful of weapons might be too tempting to a potential adversary in a crisis.

Ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) will continue to carry the largest portion of our strategic forces, regardless of whether we are subject to START I or START II treaty ceilings. With approximately two-thirds of the force at sea at any one time, the SSBN force is the most survivable leg of the triad, providing the United States with a powerful assured retaliatory capability against any adversary. Submarines at sea are

stabilizing; by contrast, submarines in port are more vulnerable and could offer an extremely lucrative target in crisis. Thus, in any foreseeable arms control scenario, the United States must preserve a large enough SSBN force to enable two-ocean operations with sufficient assets to ensure a retaliatory force capable of dissuading any adversary in a crisis.

Strategic bombers are the most flexible part of our triad. A "man in the loop" allows in-flight targeting reassignment or aircraft recall after mission execution. The low-observable technology of the B-2 bomber enables it to penetrate heavily defended areas and hold high value targets deep inside an adversary's territory at risk. In contrast, the B-52 bomber is capable of being employed in a standoff role using long-range cruise missiles to attack from outside enemy air defenses. This mixed bomber force can generate to alert status when necessary to deter escalation or can be executed should deterrence fail.

As mandated by Congress, we are maintaining our strategic forces at the following START I levels:

- 500 MINUTEMAN III and 50 PEACEKEEPER ICBMs armed with multiple warheads.
- 18 TRIDENT SSBNs each equipped with either 24 TRIDENT I (C4) or TRIDENT II (D5) missiles.
- 76 B-52 and 21 B-2 bombers.

In accordance with the FY 1998 Defense Authorization Act, we have examined force structure options for maintaining START I levels beyond FY 1999 if necessary, and a report of those START I alternative force structures has been provided to Congress.

STRATEGIC FORCE POSTURE

Our strategic forces are postured to provide an assured response capability to inflict unacceptable damage to a potential enemy. Our strategic plans provide a wide range of options to ensure our nation can respond appropriately to any provocation rather than being left with an "all or nothing" response. Additionally, our forces are postured such that we have the capability to respond promptly to any attack, while at the same time, not relying upon "launch on warning" or "launch under attack." The high flexibility, survivability, and diversity of our strategic forces are designed to complicate any adversary's offensive and defensive planning calculations.

With the end of the Cold War, we have changed dramatically our strategic force posture. Our strategic forces no longer target other countries during normal peacetime operations. Our strategic bombers and their supporting tankers have not been on alert since 1991. Our strategic submarine force, while positioned at sea for survivability, patrols under relaxed conditions of alertness.

STRATEGIC FORCE MODERNIZATION AND SUSTAINMENT

As our Nation comes to rely on a smaller strategic force, and with no new strategic systems under development, the imperative for modernizing and sustaining that force becomes even greater.

Support and sustainment of our strategic systems are absolutely essential to ensure a continued viable deterrent. With the exception of the D5 missile, which will complete its production run in 2005, our Nation has in-hand all of its major strategic systems. Since we must maintain existing systems for the foreseeable future, it is crucial to ensure continued support for efforts to sustain the industrial base which provides key components and systems unique to our strategic forces.

Upon START II treaty entry into force, the PEACEKEEPER ICBM will be retired and the MINUTEMAN III ICBM will be converted to a single warhead missile. This will also allow us to shift the W87 warhead, with its greater effectiveness and enhanced safety features, from the PEACEKEEPER to the MINUTEMAN III.

Whether or not the START II treaty enters into force, the MINUTEMAN III ICBM force will be central to our future strategic force structure well into the 21st Century. However, the MINUTEMAN III has been in our inventory for 25 years, and the guidance and propulsion systems are near the end of their design

life and must be upgraded because of aging and obsolescence. Strong Congressional support of guidance and propulsion replacement programs to the MINUTEMAN III ICBM is essential to ensure an effective and reliable ICBM force for the next quarter century.

Congress' continued support for the D5 missile backfit program remains essential. The C4 missile is already beyond its design service life and will be sustainable only at substantial cost and considerable risk by the middle of the next decade. Backfit of four submarines to carry the D5 missile is the most cost-effective means to ensure a reliable sea-based weapons system well into the next century.

The near-term sustainment and future modernization of the bomber force is required to provide a force which can support our national security strategy of strategic deterrence, as well as meet theater-commander requirements. US Strategic Command needs assured, survivable, and endurable bomber connectivity. In addition, downward bomber personnel readiness and retention trends must be reversed. Not only is it important to continue to sustain our bomber forces, but life extension programs for our cruise missiles are equally vital. We have worked closely with the Air Force to develop a long-range bomber roadmap.

STRATEGIC FORCE REDUCTIONS

Cooperative threat reduction, arms control, Presidential initiatives, and numerous confidence-building measures have brought about many positive changes in the strategic posture of both the U.S. and Russia. These changes reflect a new, more constructive relationship. Both countries agree that this stability must be preserved so that neither state fears the other will achieve a strategic advantage. We are on a well thought-out course; it is stable, verifiable, and reciprocative.

Since the end of the Cold War, we have made dramatic progress in reducing our nuclear arsenal and associated infrastructure. We have:

- Halted production of our most modern bomber (B-2) and ICBM (PEACEKEEPER).
- Eliminated all ground-launched intermediate and short-range nuclear weapons.
- Removed all sea-launched nuclear cruise missiles from ships and submarines.
- Removed all bombers from day-to-day alert.
- Reduced the number of command and control aircraft from 27 to 20.
- Terminated the Ground Wave Emergency Network.
- Converted the B-1 bomber to conventional-only use.

- Eliminated the MINUTEMAN II ICBM force.
- Eliminated all nuclear short range attack missiles from the bomber force.

All these changes reflect a consistent trend towards reduced reliance on strategic systems. Since the end of the Cold War, we have reduced our strategic nuclear systems by over 50 percent and non-strategic nuclear systems by over 75 percent. We have reduced the number of people involved in our strategic forces by approximately one-half and the number of military bases supporting them by approximately sixty percent. While overall defense spending has declined roughly 11 percent since the end of the Cold War, strategic force spending has declined roughly 70 percent; as a consequence, strategic force costs have dropped from 8 percent of DOD total obligation authority to less than 3 percent.

Because we have neither new delivery platforms nor new warheads in development, we must not be hasty in taking irreversible steps to eliminate more weapons platforms or reduce their capability or flexibility. While reductions of platforms may be appealing, the trade-off is a loss of flexibility and an increase in vulnerability.

Considerable caution should also be exercised in reducing our strategic forces below the negotiated START I force levels

until it is evident that Russia is fully committed to further arms control reductions. Proceeding unilaterally with START II reductions could remove Russia's incentive to ratify the START II treaty and potentially jeopardize strategic stability. As long as reductions are made bilaterally, further reductions are possible without undermining our deterrent posture.

The Nuclear Posture Review specified and the Quadrennial Defense Review reaffirmed the following START II-compliant nuclear force structure:

- 500 MINUTEMAN III ICBMs, each armed with a single warhead
- 14 TRIDENT SSBNs each equipped with 24 D5 missiles
- 66 B-52H and 21 B-2 strategic bombers.

This is a credible, robust deterrent under START II limits, with sufficient flexibility to respond to future challenges. It preserves a reconstitution capability as a hedge against unwelcome political or strategic developments. If START II enters into force, we will be able to move toward this force structure in a deliberate, prudent manner.

Further reductions in strategic delivery systems beyond START II should be complemented by more comprehensive considerations of increased stockpile transparency, greater accountability and transparency of non-strategic/tactical nuclear warheads, limitations on production infrastructures,

third-party nuclear weapons stockpiles, the impact on our allies, and the implications of deploying strategic defensive systems.

STRATEGIC FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL

Survivable and flexible nuclear command and control is a key component of effective strategic deterrence. The Nuclear Command and Control System is designed to ensure effective command and control of nuclear weapons by maintaining an appropriate balance between assuring the timely and effective authorized use of nuclear weapons when directed by the President, and assuring against any unauthorized or inadvertent use of these weapons. Rigorous requirements exist to maintain the highest levels of nuclear weapons safety, security, control, and reliability.

A strong command and control capability remains of utmost importance to the success of our Nation's strategic deterrence. Post-Cold War strategic force reductions have resulted in more emphasis on submarines in our strategic triad. Hence systems such as the Extremely Low Frequency (ELF) communications system and the Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) communications system are essential to the flexibility and survivability of our deterrent forces. Along with MILSTAR, the Space-Based Infrared System, which ensures timely and effective missile attack

warning and attack assessment, and the CINC Mobile Consolidated Command Centers remain critical to the positive command and control of our strategic forces.

YEAR 2000 PROBLEM

I remain confident that our strategic forces and their command control systems will not be affected, in any significant way, by the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem.

Our strategic forces are executing a series of five operational evaluations designed to validate Y2K compliance of the various phases of our nuclear mission from day-to-day operations through warning, alerting, response, and regeneration of forces. We have completed three operational evaluations completely verifying our ability to:

- Process integrated tactical warning and assessment information from space and ground sensors.
- Initiate secure conferencing with the national command authority and mobile platforms.
- Plan, generate, and disseminate deliberate and theater nuclear planning options for ICBMs, SSBNs, bombers, and dual-capable aircraft.

While we are continuing our detailed analysis, no initial Y2K failures have been detected. This month, we will place our strategic forces and supporting communications links in a Y2K

environment, demonstrating the capability to execute and terminate NCA tasking. In May, we will evaluate our ability to regenerate forces and perform strategic reconnaissance. The overall goal of our Y2K program is to demonstrate the ability to maintain deterrence into the next century. We are on track in our testing and validation to provide that assurance.

NUCLEAR WEAPON STOCKPILE STEWARDSHIP

The safety and security of our Nation's nuclear stockpile remains a top priority. The President has declared the United States must ensure our nuclear stockpile remains safe, secure, and reliable in the absence of nuclear testing. As directed by the President, CINCSTRAT is required to provide the Secretary of Defense an annual independent assessment of the safety and reliability of the nuclear weapons stockpile. In August 1998, I reported to the Secretary that, at this time, I have a high level of confidence in the safety and reliability of the stockpile and I see no need for a nuclear test to resolve any nuclear weapons stockpile issue. That assessment is based on a comprehensive review of the nuclear weapon stockpile by my staff and the Strategic Advisory Group -- a group of nationally renowned experts. However, as has been the case in previous years, a number of operational performance issues, some affecting weapons system reliability, remain outstanding.

Our confidence in the success of the Department of Energy's science-based Stockpile Stewardship Program will depend on how well this program is funded and how successful we are in developing complex technological tools and facilities and in maintaining the necessary expertise in our people. We need to recognize the uncertainties that exist in this effort. Strong Congressional support of the Stockpile Stewardship Program is essential to enable the program to progress at a rate meeting the increasing challenges of maintaining confidence in and extending the life of our Nation's aging stockpile.

STRATEGIC FORCE PERSONNEL

No one has done more to prevent conflict than the men and women of our strategic forces. We must take care of them. The readiness of our people is fragile given the turbulence of downsizing and the alternative attractions and opportunities afforded by a very strong economy. The Secretary of Defense and Joint Chiefs' proposed benefits package is right on the mark and I thank you for your support of their initiatives to help our people. I am confident our active duty, reservists, guardsmen, and their civilian peers will continue to serve our country faithfully and enthusiastically. Nuclear weapons require unique standards of performance of all our people. In a time when nuclear weapons may be less visible than in the past, I can

assure you that our people continue to meet the highest standards of excellence. Our country is safer because of them.

CONCLUSION

Our strategic forces stand as America's "ultimate insurance policy" -- a cost effective force which is the underpinning of our national security strategy. Our Nation must maintain the ability to convince potential aggressors to choose peace rather than war, restraint rather than escalation, termination rather than conflict continuation.

U.S. Strategic Command is committed to ensuring a viable deterrent for the Nation, and to maintaining and strengthening the stability of our strategic relationships as we further reduce our forces. Our future requires sustaining weapons platforms beyond their initial design lives, and preventing our unique industrial base from atrophying. We must maintain the safety and reliability of our nuclear weapons stockpile and we must always support and keep faith with our people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, this completes my formal statement.