

Stenographic Transcript  
Before the

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE NUCLEAR ACQUISITION  
PROGRAMS AND THE NUCLEAR DOCTRINE IN  
REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION REQUEST  
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2017 AND THE FUTURE YEARS  
DEFENSE PROGRAM

Tuesday, February 9, 2016

Washington, D.C.

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1 HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
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4 2017 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM

5  
6 Tuesday, February 9, 2015

7  
8 U.S. Senate

9 Subcommittee on Strategic

10 Forces

11 Committee on Armed Services

12 Washington, D.C.

13  
14 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:37 p.m.  
15 in Room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Jeff  
16 Sessions, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

17 Present: Senators Sessions [presiding], Fischer,  
18 Donnelly, and Heinrich.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF SESSIONS, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ALABAMA

3           Senator Sessions: The Strategic Forces Subcommittee  
4 convenes today to receive testimony on the Department of  
5 Defense nuclear acquisition programs and nuclear policy in  
6 review of the defense authorization request for fiscal year  
7 2017.

8           We know from Secretary of Defense Carter that our  
9 nuclear deterrent is the foundation and the bedrock of our  
10 security. "No other capability we have is more important,"  
11 said his predecessor, Chuck Hagel.

12          We also recognize that a consistent lack of investment  
13 and support for our nuclear forces over many decades has  
14 left us with little margin to spare as we recapitalize the  
15 force. As Secretary Work told Congress just 7 months ago in  
16 an important comment, "The choice right now is modernizing  
17 or losing deterrent capability in the 2020s and 2030s. That  
18 is the stark choice that we face."

19          The case for nuclear modernization is made more urgent  
20 by recent developments in the strategic environment. In  
21 previewing the fiscal year 2017 budget request, Secretary  
22 Carter warned that we are witnessing a return to great power  
23 competition. That is a historic event that we have to  
24 recognize.

25          According to the Secretary, Russian aggression in

1 Europe and the rise of China in the Asia-Pacific region are  
2 two primary challenges now driving the focus of the Defense  
3 Department planning and budgeting, with North Korea and Iran  
4 following closely behind.

5 So these are four nuclear nations, all expanding their  
6 capabilities in nuclear programs.

7 In addition to expanding their conventional military  
8 capabilities, both Russia and China are making significant  
9 investments in their strategic capabilities, expanding the  
10 role of nuclear weapons in their overall security strategy.  
11 Russia has gone so far as to make direct nuclear threats  
12 against the United States and its allies while President  
13 Putin warns, "I'm surprising the West with our new  
14 developments in offensive nuclear weapons."

15 And it is not just China and Russia. Admiral Haney,  
16 Commander of the Strategic Command, observed in January  
17 that, "For the foreseeable future, other nations are placing  
18 high priority on developing, sustaining, and modernizing  
19 their nuclear forces."

20 Obviously, the vision that we had and many had that  
21 unilateral restraint and even reduction of our nuclear  
22 weapons stockpile and capabilities would encourage others to  
23 follow on that path has not proved effective.

24 Congress has provided sustained support for the  
25 President's entire nuclear modernization program, and I

1 expect us to continue despite obvious budget pressures.  
2 This country can and should be able to afford 5 percent to 6  
3 percent of our national defense spending to maintain and  
4 recapitalize our nuclear forces over the next 10 years.

5 We should acknowledge, however, that the DOD and the  
6 Department of Energy nuclear modernization programs over the  
7 next 10 to 20 years are fragile, in the words of Under  
8 Secretary of Defense Frank Kendall, and that "any funding  
9 reductions at this point could pose unacceptable risk to the  
10 health of the nuclear enterprise."

11 I believe we have a bipartisan commitment not to make  
12 this mistake. I really do. I am optimistic about our  
13 ability to make the right choices. I think the President is  
14 proposing reasonable goals, and I think our Congress and  
15 Senate will support that.

16 In recent press reports, if they are correct, Secretary  
17 Moniz, the Secretary of Energy, has warned that underfunding  
18 in the out-years will put the NNSA budget in an untenable  
19 position by 2018.

20 But make no mistake, the United States Government will  
21 do what is necessary to preserve a strong and effective  
22 nuclear deterrent that should be feared and respected by  
23 potential adversaries, and welcomed by U.S. allies who  
24 depend on the United States for their security.

25 The venerable principle of peace through strength

1 remains true. There must be no doubt that the greatest  
2 military in the world has the capacity and the will to  
3 defend itself against any attack, and will not cower or be  
4 intimidated.

5 So I will now turn to my able ranking member for any  
6 comments that he might have.

7 Senator Donnelly?

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. JOE DONNELLY, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
2 INDIANA

3           Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4           I would like to thank today's witnesses for appearing  
5 at this hearing.

6           Assistant Secretary Scher and General Rand, I  
7 understand this is your first appearance. Welcome.

8           Today's hearing occurs almost 2 years after the  
9 cheating incident at Malmstrom that resulted in Secretary  
10 Hagel's nuclear enterprise review. While there is much  
11 criticism of this event, it has, I believe, resulted in a  
12 positive effort for the DOD nuclear enterprise. It resulted  
13 in a deep discussion of our Nation's ability to maintain its  
14 deterrence posture by concentrating on our airmen and  
15 sailors first, and the means to support them.

16           I hope today's hearing continues to understand the  
17 progress in this area.

18           We had a hearing 2 weeks ago with a number of former  
19 deputy assistant secretaries, going back to 1992, who were  
20 responsible for the policy of our deterrence mission. I  
21 want to continue that discussion with those of you to  
22 understand your views on issues associated with our nuclear  
23 posture and with recent changes occurring in Europe and  
24 NATO.

25           I am also looking forward to hearing input from our

1 witnesses on how we can best manage costs to undertake the  
2 necessary modernization of our nuclear triad in the years to  
3 come. I am particularly interested in hearing your feedback  
4 today on how we can best leverage commonality across the  
5 services to reduce risk, enhance capabilities, and manage  
6 costs, starting with Air Force and Navy ballistic missiles.

7 Senator Sessions, thank you for arranging this hearing.  
8 I look forward to today's discussion.

9 Senator Sessions: Thank you, Senator Donnelly.

10 This is the order that we will go in: Mr. Scher, Dr.  
11 Hopkins, General Rand, and Admiral Benedict. I will  
12 introduce Mr. Scher first.

13 Mr. Robert Scher has been the Assistant Secretary of  
14 Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities since December  
15 2014. He is responsible for advising the Secretary of  
16 Defense and the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy on  
17 national security and defense strategy forces, contingency  
18 plans, and, most relevant for today, nuclear deterrence and  
19 missile defense policy.

20 He is well-positioned to understand the relationship  
21 between nuclear weapons and U.S. defense strategy.

22 Mr. Scher, Secretary, we are pleased to hear from you  
23 now.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. ROBERT M. SCHER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
2 OF DEFENSE FOR STRATEGY, PLANS AND CAPABILITIES

3           Mr. Scher: Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Donnelly,  
4 thank you for the opportunity to testify on U.S. nuclear  
5 policy and strategy, and to frame the budget's fiscal year  
6 2017 budget request on these issues within the context of  
7 today's security environment. Your continuing support for  
8 nuclear sustainment and the modernization plan is essential  
9 to ensuring the effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent  
10 forces.

11           As you said, last week, Secretary Carter, in previewing  
12 the budget, identified five evolving security challenges  
13 that have driven the focus of the Defense Department's  
14 planning and budgeting this year. Each, in fact, as you  
15 say, does have a nuclear dimension that our policy and  
16 strategy must address.

17           Two of these challenges reflect a return to great power  
18 competition in these regions where we face nuclear-armed  
19 potential adversaries that can pose an existential threat to  
20 the United States and to our allies.

21           Russia has undertaken aggressive actions in Crimea and  
22 elsewhere in Ukraine, adopted a pattern of reckless nuclear  
23 posturing and coercive threats, and remains in violation of  
24 the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty.

25           China continues its rise in the Asia-Pacific and is

1 introducing qualitative advances into its nuclear  
2 capabilities.

3 I also must also note that North Korea, a threat both  
4 to us and our allies, just conducted a space launch and,  
5 recently, its fourth nuclear test.

6 While the President's ultimate goal is a world without  
7 nuclear weapons, he has been consistent and clear in his  
8 commitment to maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear  
9 arsenal for as long as nuclear weapons exist. Effective  
10 deterrence requires that our nuclear capabilities and  
11 posture provide the ability to implement U.S. defense  
12 strategy, preserve that strategy's credibility, and  
13 reinforce overall strategic stability.

14 Our approach is to maintain a deterrent that is an  
15 inherently robust and stable rather than one that is simply  
16 reactive to every action of a potential adversary. This  
17 approach remains best served by sustaining a full nuclear  
18 triad and dual-capable aircraft with a diverse range of  
19 nuclear explosive yields and delivery methods.

20 The triad and DCA provide the credibility, flexibility,  
21 and survivability to meet and adapt to the challenges of a  
22 dynamic 21st century security environment without the need  
23 to mirror every potential adversary system for system or  
24 yield for yield.

25 As the invite letter noted, deterring nuclear use in

1 regional conflicts will be one of the challenges that we  
2 face for the foreseeable future. We must be able to deter  
3 not only large-scale nuclear attacks, the predominant focus  
4 during the Cold War, but also limited nuclear attack and  
5 deliberate nuclear escalation by an adversary that might  
6 arise out of a conventional regional conflict.

7 Our strategy for deterrence of a large-scale nuclear  
8 attack is well-established, so here I would like to touch on  
9 four important elements of a regional deterrence strategy  
10 aimed at minimizing the likelihood an adversary will choose  
11 nuclear escalation.

12 First, the United States extends nuclear deterrence to  
13 certain allies. These formal security arrangements are both  
14 a clear representation of our commitment to defend these  
15 allies and serve as a means to strengthen that commitment in  
16 the minds of both our allies and potential adversaries.

17 Second, we are working to ensure an appropriate level  
18 of integration between nuclear and conventional planning and  
19 operations for regional conflicts. Now, this type of  
20 integration does not mean lowering the threshold for U.S.  
21 nuclear use. Rather, integration means conventional  
22 operations must be planned and executed with deliberate  
23 thought as to how they shape the risk that the adversary  
24 will choose nuclear escalation. Similarly, nuclear planning  
25 needs to account for the possibility of ongoing U.S. and

1 allied conventional operations.

2         The integration really means also that we must  
3 strengthen the resiliency of conventional operations to a  
4 nuclear attack along with being prepared to restore  
5 deterrence following any adversary nuclear use.

6         Third, effective regional deterrence requires a  
7 balanced approach to escalation risk that deters escalation,  
8 but also prepares for the possibility that deterrence might  
9 fail. We accept that plans should not assume that we can  
10 control escalation.

11         There is no doubt that Russia's purported doctrine of  
12 nuclear escalation to de-escalate a conventional conflict  
13 amounts to a reckless gamble for which the odds are  
14 incalculable and the outcome potentially catastrophic. Our  
15 plans are developed to try to avoid such an outcome, but we  
16 have to be prepared if Russia creates a conflict and drives  
17 it across that nuclear threshold.

18         If deterrence fails and nuclear use occurs, we do not  
19 want to simply assume that once the nuclear threshold has  
20 been crossed, that escalation cannot be limited. Possessing  
21 options for responding to limited use with nuclear and/or  
22 conventional means, and making clear we have these options,  
23 makes credible our message that escalating to de-escalate  
24 will ultimately be unsuccessful.

25         Finally, and as a result of the three previous points,

1 we must sustain our diverse set of U.S. nuclear capabilities  
2 to be credible in ensuring we maintain regional deterrence  
3 and assurance, as well as the Cold War-era of deterrence.

4 The administration's nuclear sustainment and  
5 modernization plan sustains this broad set of capabilities  
6 and is necessary for sustaining effective deterrence. Our  
7 plans are affordable, if prioritized appropriately by the  
8 department, the Congress, and the Nation, and we seek your  
9 help to continuing this.

10 To be clear, as you noted from the Deputy Secretary,  
11 our choice is not between keeping our current forces or  
12 modernizing them. Rather, the choice is between modernizing  
13 these forces or watching a slow and unacceptable degradation  
14 in our capabilities, bringing on degradation in our ability  
15 to deter.

16 We in the department look forward to your continuing  
17 support in our collective efforts to ensure the United  
18 States is able to meet the security challenges we face today  
19 and those ahead. Thank you again for the opportunity to  
20 testify, and I look forward to your questions.

21 [The prepared statement of Mr. Scher follows:]

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1           Senator Sessions: Thank you, Secretary Scher.

2           Dr. Arthur Hopkins is the Principal Deputy Assistant  
3 Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological  
4 Defense Programs. He advises Under Secretary of Defense for  
5 Acquisition, Technology and Logistics in all manners across  
6 the nuclear, chemical, and biological defense portfolio.

7           He supports Under Secretary Kendall in his role as  
8 chairman of the Nuclear Weapons Council, which we hope  
9 continues to provide good leadership, and is, therefore,  
10 knowledgeable about the acquisition schedules for nuclear  
11 modernization programs in the Department of Defense.

12           Dr. Hopkins, thank you.

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1 STATEMENT OF ARTHUR T. HOPKINS, PH.D., ACTING  
2 PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR NUCLEAR,  
3 CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE PROGRAMS

4 Dr. Hopkins: Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member  
5 Donnelly, and distinguished members of the subcommittee,  
6 thank you for this opportunity to discuss the department's  
7 2017 budget request for nuclear deterrence systems.

8 In addition to serving as Principal Deputy Assistant  
9 for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs, I am  
10 the acting staff director for the Nuclear Weapons Council.  
11 The council provides an overarching, coordinated vision and  
12 strategy for the nuclear enterprise, and it synchronizes the  
13 Departments of Defense and Energy efforts to ensure a safe,  
14 secure, reliable, and effective stockpile.

15 The Nation's nuclear forces are the department's  
16 highest priority. The nuclear mission continues to be  
17 fundamental to our Nation's security strategy, and it  
18 ensures that we maintain our extended deterrence commitments  
19 to our allies.

20 The council has developed a strategic plan to integrate  
21 all three components of the nuclear enterprise -- warheads,  
22 platforms, and infrastructure. Portions of the plan are  
23 well underway, including production of the W76-1 refurbished  
24 warhead and the design engineering for the W88 warhead  
25 modernization -- both of those are for the Navy's submarine

1 launched ballistic missiles -- as well as the B61-12 bomb  
2 life-extension for strategic missions and extended  
3 deterrence.

4 In fiscal year 2017, the National Nuclear Security  
5 Administration, NNSA, will continue to deliver W76-1  
6 warheads for the Navy's Trident D5 missiles and will  
7 complete production in fiscal year 2019.

8 The W88 warhead alteration effort, also for the D5  
9 missile, is on schedule to deliver the first production unit  
10 in December 2019.

11 The B61 bomb life-extension program is also on schedule  
12 to deliver a first production unit in March 2020. The B61-  
13 12 will enable a reduction in the total number and types of  
14 nuclear weapons in the stockpile.

15 Modernizing our nuclear delivery platforms is also  
16 essential to nuclear deterrence. In fiscal year 2017, the  
17 Defense Department plans to continue funding for several  
18 delivery systems: first, the Ohio class submarine  
19 replacement and its Trident D5 life-extended missile;  
20 second, sustainment of the Minuteman III intercontinental  
21 ballistic missile and its follow-on capabilities, the  
22 ground-based strategic deterrent; third, upgrades to the B-2  
23 and B-52H heavy bombers; fourth, the development of a long-  
24 range strike bomber; and finally, the development of a long-  
25 range standoff cruise missile to replace the aging air-



1 launched cruise missile.

2 The department will ensure alignment of cruise missile  
3 development with the associated nuclear warhead life-  
4 extension program, the W80-4, that is being executed by the  
5 Department of Energy.

6 With respect to the Nation's nuclear enterprise, the  
7 reviews conducted in 2014 identified a number of  
8 longstanding systemic issues that continue to be addressed.  
9 The department's fiscal year 2017 budget request includes  
10 significant resources for enterprise improvements.

11 The strategy also requires investment in the Department  
12 of Energy nuclear infrastructure. The department supports  
13 National Nuclear Security Administration efforts to achieve  
14 a responsive infrastructure for the future stockpile.

15 Our fiscal year 2017 budget request is critically  
16 important for sustaining and revitalizing the Nation's  
17 nuclear deterrent. We ask that you support both the  
18 Departments of Defense and Energy budget requests in this  
19 area.

20 My written testimony has more detail, and I ask that it  
21 be included in the record of this meeting. Thank you.

22 [The prepared statement of Dr. Hopkins follows:]

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1           Senator Sessions: Thank you, Dr. Hopkins.

2           Next, we have General Robin Rand. He is the Commander  
3 of the Air Force Global Strike Command. He is responsible  
4 for organizing, training, and equipping two legs of the  
5 triad, the intercontinental ballistic missile and strategic  
6 bomber forces.

7           General Rand, thank you.

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL ROBIN RAND, USAF, COMMANDER, AIR  
2           FORCE GLOBAL STRIKE COMMAND

3           General Rand: Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member  
4           Donnelly, and distinguished members of the committee, thank  
5           you for allowing me to appear before you today to represent  
6           the men and women of Air Force Global Strike Command.

7           As you know, Air Force Global Strike Command was  
8           created to provide a focus on the stewardship and operations  
9           of two legs of our Nation's nuclear triad, while also  
10          accomplishing the conventional global strike mission.

11          I will tell you freely that our airmen are doing a  
12          fantastic job providing effective nuclear and conventional  
13          global strike forces for combatant commanders around the  
14          globe. The key to our continued success will be our ability  
15          to modernize, sustain, and recapitalize our forces.

16          Our mission set is always evolving and growing in order  
17          to ensure we continue to provide effective forces for these  
18          combatant commanders. Part of accomplishing this goal is to  
19          make sure we are right-sized with manpower and resources,  
20          and balancing those efforts with ongoing modernization and  
21          recapitalization programs.

22          Our airmen in the missile fields are accomplishing a  
23          critical mission for this Nation. They are operating,  
24          maintaining, and securing the most responsive leg of the  
25          nuclear triad.

1           However, we must continue efforts to modernize the  
2 Minuteman III weapons systems, where appropriate, until we  
3 can bring the ground-based strategic deterrent online. This  
4 is an absolutely critical national interest that will  
5 provide strategic deterrence and, if needed, global strike  
6 for years to come.

7           Our diverse bomber forces made up of the B-1, the B-2,  
8 and the B-52, deter our potential adversaries and ensure our  
9 allies across the globe. But when that is not enough, they  
10 execute a variety of missions, ranging from long-range  
11 global strike to close-air support in-country.

12           As you are aware, the B-1s have been departing the  
13 Central Command area of responsibility to help facilitate  
14 needed upgrades. These airmen have done an amazing job for  
15 many years, and I am proud of each and every one of them.

16           Air Force Global Strike Command stands ready to support  
17 any combatant commander with our capable platforms to ensure  
18 there is no gap in requirements coverage. Therefore, I have  
19 directed our B-52 wings to be prepared to backfill the B-1s  
20 later this spring, should they be asked to do so.

21           I am aware that one of the big reasons I am here today  
22 is to answer any questions on the command's progress in  
23 addressing the nuclear enterprise review findings. We have  
24 closed over 300 action items that complement the ongoing  
25 nuclear enterprise review efforts. We have reinvigorated

1 the ICBM operations and are effecting positive cultural  
2 change throughout the community. We have also overhauled  
3 the bomber program, the B-52 training, and streamlined other  
4 aircrew programs.

5       Additionally, Air Force Global Strike Command has been  
6 declared the lead command for Nuclear Command and Control  
7 Communications, or NC3, systems throughout the Air Force.  
8 To recognize the absolute criticality of these systems, NC3  
9 has been declared a weapons system, which means it is  
10 tracked, sustained, and modernized just like the rest of our  
11 weapons systems in the Air Force.

12       But let me be clear, we are not done. Cultural change  
13 is not something that you can just flip a switch on. We  
14 must continue to foster a culture where we are not afraid to  
15 question how things are done.

16       Innovative airmen should have a way to push their ideas  
17 to the top, and I will not lose sight of how far we have  
18 come, but also that we can never stop working to be better.

19       Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you again for the  
20 opportunity to appear before the committee to highlight the  
21 great airmen of Air Force Global Strike Command. I look  
22 forward to your questions. And, with your permission, I  
23 would like to have my written testimony entered into the  
24 record.

25       [The prepared statement of General Rand follows:]

1           Senator Sessions: It will be made a part of the  
2 record, and thank you.

3           Vice Admiral Terry Benedict has been the director of  
4 the Navy's Strategic Systems Program since 2010. I think  
5 that is a good tenure already.

6           We appreciate your service, and I do think, in these  
7 kinds of programs, it is beneficial if you can have a longer  
8 tenure.

9           Would you agree?

10          Admiral Benedict: Yes, sir.

11          Senator Sessions: These are complex systems, and I  
12 think a little longer tenure is probably helpful.

13          In this capacity, you have been responsible for the  
14 development, acquisition, and training of the nuclear  
15 weapons systems carried aboard our strategic ballistic  
16 missile submarines, the underwater leg of our nuclear triad,  
17 and perhaps the most secure leg of our triad.

18          Admiral Benedict, we would be pleased to hear from you.

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1           STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL TERRY J. BENEDICT, USN,  
2           DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC SYSTEMS PROGRAMS

3           Admiral Benedict: Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member  
4           Donnelly, distinguished members of the committee, thank you  
5           for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee on  
6           Strategic Forces.

7           Today, I represent the men and women of your Navy's  
8           Strategic Systems Programs, or SSP. Your continued support  
9           of our deterrence mission is appreciated, and all of us  
10          thank you.

11          My mission as the director of SSP is to design,  
12          develop, produce, support, and ensure the safety and  
13          security of our Navy's sea-based strategic deterrent  
14          capability, the Trident II D5 strategic weapons system.

15          My written statement, which I respectfully request be  
16          submitted for the record, addresses my top priorities. Due  
17          to time constraints, I would like to briefly address three  
18          priorities today, nuclear weapons safety and security, the  
19          Trident II D5 life-extension efforts, and collaboration with  
20          the Air Force on weapon system commonality.

21          First, my top priority is the safety and the security  
22          of the Navy's nuclear weapons. Custody and accountability  
23          of the nuclear assets entrusted to the Navy are the  
24          cornerstone of this program. Our approach to the nuclear  
25          weapons mission is to maintain a culture of excellence and

1 self-assessment, one that produces the highest standards of  
2 performance and integrity.

3         Second, the Navy is proactively taking steps to address  
4 aging and technology obsolescence. SSP is extending the  
5 life of the Trident II D5 strategic weapons system to match  
6 the Ohio class submarine service life and to serve as the  
7 initial baseline mission payload for the Ohio replacement  
8 submarine platform. This is being accomplished through a  
9 life-extension program for all of the Trident II D5  
10 strategic weapon systems subsystems to include launcher,  
11 navigation, fire control, guidance missile, and reentry.

12         In November 2015, the USS Kentucky conducted her  
13 demonstration and shakedown operation, launching two D5  
14 life-extension missiles marking 157 out of 159 successful  
15 launches. This milestone continues to ensure a sustainable  
16 sea-based strategic deterrence capability.

17         Finally, I fully support strategic collaboration  
18 between our services. The Navy and the Air Force are both  
19 addressing challenges in sustaining aging strategic weapons  
20 systems. As a result, I remain committed and I believe  
21 commonality between the ground-based strategic deterrent at  
22 the Trident II D5 systems will improve affordability while  
23 reducing risks to ensure a safe, secure, effective, and  
24 credible strategic deterrent.

25         Leadership commitment and focus are required to



1 accomplish this parallel undertaking.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I  
3 am pleased to answer your questions, Mr. Chairman.

4 [The prepared statement of Admiral Benedict follows:]

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1 Senator Sessions: Thank you.

2 Thank you, all. Those are important opening  
3 statements, and our subcommittee has some important work to  
4 do. I feel that we are not coming in to an entirely new  
5 situation, but that we have been observing developments for  
6 some time. We know where the danger areas are, and we know  
7 we have to avoid those danger areas and make the right  
8 decisions.

9 Dr. Hopkins, last year, you testified before the House  
10 that, "We have reached a point where we have removed all  
11 flexibility for nuclear weapons life-extension programs, and  
12 we are losing flexibility in our platform modernization  
13 programs."

14 I assume by that you mean that, financially, we do not  
15 have any room for error at this point. Would you comment on  
16 that comment you made previously?

17 Dr. Hopkins: Yes, thank you, Senator.

18 It is a matter both of financially as well as schedule.  
19 The modernization schedule is really tied closely to our  
20 estimated timeout of the systems that are existing today.  
21 So after several years of delaying the modernization -- I am  
22 sure partially for financial reasons, partially for other  
23 programmatic reasons -- we have reached a point where  
24 virtually every leg of the triad is nearing the end of its  
25 anticipated service life. And we have extended as many as

1 we possibly can, as long as we can.

2 So what we are seeing now is the requirement for the  
3 department to modernize the delivery systems and to extend  
4 the lives of the various nuclear weapon components.

5 Senator Sessions: Do you have confidence or can you  
6 guarantee that at the funding level we are talking about  
7 now, if we maintain it, we will be able to replace our  
8 current platforms before they reach the end of their service  
9 life?

10 Dr. Hopkins: Well, I would say that our budget request  
11 is designed to support the program to replace the triad, as  
12 described. I do not think I could guarantee too much at  
13 this point, just because we are so relatively early in the  
14 programs. As you know, things tend to change over time.

15 However, we are giving careful thought to the timing  
16 and to the cost estimation, the estimation of the costs of  
17 these various legs.

18 Senator Sessions: Now, is it the view of the Nuclear  
19 Weapons Council, which you are the staff director for, that  
20 our out-year funding for the life-extension programs for  
21 nuclear warheads and bombs, and the new facilities, is  
22 inadequate, as suggested by Secretary Moniz?

23 Dr. Hopkins: I think that the funding for the warhead  
24 modernization is adequate, but I believe Secretary Moniz was  
25 referring to infrastructure.

1 Senator Sessions: That means?

2 Dr. Hopkins: Plutonium, uranium, high-performance  
3 computing, that sort of thing.

4 Senator Sessions: Okay.

5 Dr. Hopkins: Those will need additional resources in  
6 the out-years, in order to keep pace and provide the support  
7 that is needed.

8 Senator Sessions: Well, we did challenge some of the  
9 structures, building of new structures. And I think there  
10 was a good response to that, and I think it saved us some  
11 money.

12 Admiral Benedict, one of the things that is talked  
13 about, sometimes openly, sometimes just around the table, is  
14 that we are going to reach a crisis with regard to the Ohio  
15 class replacement financially, because it is going to pop  
16 the Navy's budget, and we have to have a plan in place so we  
17 can proceed at the right pace with that replacement of that  
18 critical part of the triad.

19 Do you have concerns there? Are we reaching a point  
20 that could be a crisis? And what, if anything, do we need  
21 to do to deal with it?

22 Admiral Benedict: Yes, sir. Thank you.

23 We have worked closely within the Navy. As we  
24 discussed yesterday, there are three major components to  
25 deliver the Ohio replacement platform. One is, certainly,

1 the propulsion reactor, which is under the auspices of  
2 Admiral Caldwell in naval reactors. The other one is the  
3 platform itself, which is the responsibility of PEO  
4 submarines, Admiral Jabaley. Then the third piece is the  
5 mission package, which I, as the director of SSP, am  
6 responsible to deliver.

7 As we have looked at that Ohio replacement program  
8 under the direction of Mr. Stackley, who is our acquisition  
9 executive in the Navy, I think we have presented a platform  
10 that delivers the requirements necessary to meet our leg of  
11 the triad at the most cost-efficient price point that we can  
12 come up with.

13 You are well-aware that we took a 2-year slip at the  
14 beginning of the program, which basically removed our float.  
15 So we have done a number of things within the Navy, trying  
16 to ensure that is the most cost-effective solution that we  
17 are presenting to the Congress. Our design maturity is  
18 higher than any other platform that has ever or ever will  
19 enter production. And we will make some requests of other  
20 opportunities to reduce the costs -- economic order  
21 quantities, advanced construction authorities, things like  
22 those, which I am certain that Mr. Stackley will address  
23 when he comes up here and testifies.

24 If we are to replace the Ohio without reducing the  
25 number of platforms necessary to support Admiral Haney's

1 requirements at STRATCOM, then we must stay the current  
2 program of record for the Ohio replacement.

3 Yes, sir.

4 Senator Sessions: And you agree with that, Secretary  
5 Scher?

6 Mr. Scher: Absolutely.

7 Senator Sessions: Senator Donnelly?

8 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 And thanks to all the witnesses.

10 Admiral Benedict, thanks again for having me aboard on  
11 the tests on the USS Kentucky. It was a privilege.

12 Is the Navy committed to commonality as a means to  
13 modernize and maintain the triad? And if so, what elements  
14 do you see as most applicable for commonality with ICBM  
15 modernization program?

16 Admiral Benedict: Yes, sir. The Navy is absolutely  
17 committed to commonality. I think we have worked very  
18 closely with our sister service, the Air Force.

19 At the direction of Mr. Stackley and Mr. LaPlante, both  
20 the acquisition executives for the Navy and the Air Force,  
21 as well as Admiral Haney, we have been working since this  
22 summer to identify opportunities for commonality with the  
23 Air Force.

24 We have five teams that we have stood up. They have  
25 done detailed analysis of opportunities in areas where we

1 could focus with commonality. That report is completed, and  
2 we will shortly brief out the secretaries, as well as  
3 Admiral Haney.

4 But commonality is simply a tool. It is a tool to  
5 identify risks. And when you are doing a program as  
6 complicated as the Air Force is right now with the GBSD, or  
7 we will do -- and we have just come through with the life-  
8 extension programs -- I believe that, in today's  
9 environment, and the fragile industrial bases that we face  
10 in some of our niche areas that only we do, the Navy and Air  
11 Force, that it is a means to address schedule, cost,  
12 technical, and the industrial base appropriately. It is a  
13 risk-reduction tool.

14 So we have been meeting now with Mr. Kendall, the OSD  
15 acquisition executive, on how we will implement the  
16 opportunities that these five teams that have been working  
17 under the direction of the service secretaries, how we will  
18 implement those opportunities.

19 So, yes, sir, we are fully committed.

20 Senator Donnelly: General Rand?

21 General Rand: Sir, I will just echo what Admiral  
22 Benedict said. We are committed to pursuing commonality in  
23 the GBSD and the SLBM.

24 I think we are going to brief. Again, I will not be  
25 part of that briefing, but I think Secretary Kendall will

1 give a brief later in March.

2 Senator Donnelly: Where are we with commonality on  
3 guidance systems?

4 General Rand: I am going to defer a little bit to the  
5 Admiral on that question.

6 Senator Donnelly: Admiral?

7 Admiral Benedict: Yes, sir. Thank you.

8 So as part of the Trident II D5 life extension, we  
9 completely rebuilt our guidance system. We modernized it in  
10 terms of instruments, our accelerometers, our gyros, our  
11 radiation-hardened memory, our radiation-hardened  
12 processors, our architecture. So as we have gone through  
13 that effort over the last 10 years as part of life  
14 extension, significant investments have been made.

15 We have shared that information with the Air Force.  
16 The Air Force is working with Mr. Kendall on how they would  
17 incorporate that into their acquisition strategy.  
18 Certainly, competition is a major player as they move  
19 forward in GBSD.

20 So I think we are collaboratively working with the  
21 Secretary to find a way to both achieve competition and yet  
22 ensure that we take advantage of the investments that the  
23 Navy has made as part of commonality. That is a trade-off  
24 right now. As the General said, we have had three meetings  
25 with Mr. Kendall, and there are more to happen.



1           Senator Donnelly: Dr. Hopkins, how are you working to  
2 ensure commonality with the SLBM fleet as you modernize the  
3 ICBM fleet by 2030?

4           Dr. Hopkins: Thank you, Senator.

5           As already mentioned, on the acquisitions side, the  
6 Under Secretary for Acquisition is leading the charge for  
7 commonality. I think a lot of that is driven by the  
8 perceived benefit, the anticipated benefit, that commonality  
9 will support affordability.

10           In addition, as the chairman of the Nuclear Weapons  
11 Council, the Under Secretary will also help to integrate the  
12 opinions and the guidance and the oversight of all the  
13 senior leadership within the enterprise.

14           Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

15           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16           Senator Sessions: Senator Fischer?

17           Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18           General Rand, there has been really a number of calls  
19 recently for the abandonment of the LRSO. And we have heard  
20 that it is redundant; it is unnecessary; it is a  
21 destabilizing weapon. That runs directly counter to the  
22 efforts of this committee and also of the department. We  
23 have been focused on trying to move that up.

24           I realize we are not in a classified forum here, but  
25 could you comment on the need for the LRSO, and whether

1 there is any basis in fact that it is unnecessary?

2 General Rand: Certainly, Senator. I am glad to talk  
3 on that.

4 I think it is absolutely critical to our bomber fleet.  
5 With the advent of the LRSB, that will be a primary weapon.  
6 The B-52s ALCM needs to be replaced, and it needs to go on  
7 the B-52 and we need to put on the B-2. So three of the  
8 bombers need LRSO.

9 A major reason why is because the ALCM has outlived its  
10 usefulness. It was intended to be a 10-year missile. It  
11 has now been in existence for almost 36 years.

12 And, unfortunately, the enemy gets a vote, and I think  
13 that it will not have the capabilities as we get into 2025,  
14 2030, to do exactly what it is intended to do.

15 So in this increasingly contested environment that we  
16 will be operating in, we need LRSO. The Air Force is  
17 committed to this. It is in our 2017 budget, and it is  
18 funded fairly strongly for the FYDP. We hope to be able to  
19 start production in 2026 with an IOC in 2030.

20 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

21 Mr. Secretary, would you like to comment on that?

22 Mr. Scher: Yes, thank you, Senator.

23 I second all the points of General Rand. I think the  
24 arguments that it is a destabilizing weapon I think are ones  
25 that -- I am glad we have this robust discussion in the

1 United States, but I think the LRSO is a continuation of an  
2 existing weapon. So I would argue that it is not inherently  
3 destabilizing, as it is a weapon that already has existed.

4 I also think that it is important to recognize that  
5 having --

6 [Audio Disruption.]

7 Mr. Scher: It is something that will be important  
8 today and into the future.

9 Senator Fischer: So you believe the flexibility of the  
10 LRSO is very important?

11 Mr. Scher: Absolutely. The goal is to make sure that  
12 we have, as I said, this full range of capabilities, yields,  
13 and the flexibility to employ them in multiple ranges and  
14 options to give the most choices to the President. And that  
15 gives the most credibility deterrent, and, frankly, I think  
16 then is the most stabilizing.

17 Senator Fischer: I would agree.

18 Dr. Hopkins, do you have any comments on that?

19 Dr. Hopkins: Yes. Thank you.

20 I would just reinforce the comment about strategic  
21 stability, and that is that the United States has had  
22 nuclear cruise missiles since 1982, so I think it is a  
23 difficult argument to make that a cruise missile is  
24 destabilizing.

25 Senator Fischer: Thank you.

1           General, you mentioned the funding that is proposed in  
2 the budget of 2017. Do you think that is on target, online?  
3 Will the Air Force make that a priority?

4           General Rand: Yes, ma'am, I do.

5           Senator Fischer: Thank you.

6           Gentlemen, I would ask if you all agree with the  
7 statement that further reductions in our nuclear forces  
8 should only be made as a result of a negotiated bilateral  
9 agreement and also one that is verifiable. Would you all  
10 agree with that?

11          Admiral Benedict: Yes, ma'am.

12          Senator Fischer: All are nodding yes.

13          Mr. Secretary, has Russia taken any steps to come back  
14 into compliance with the IMF treaty?

15          Mr. Scher: We have seen no steps that Russia has taken  
16 to come back into compliance. And in fact, we still hear  
17 the discussions that Russia has not yet said that they  
18 believe they are out of compliance.

19          Senator Fischer: And I assume that you are aware of  
20 the report requirement in Section 1243 of the most recent  
21 NDAA, and it requires the department to provide this  
22 committee a plan to develop the counterforce capabilities,  
23 the strike capabilities, active defenses, in response to  
24 Russia's violations of that treaty?

25          Mr. Scher: Yes.

1           Senator Fischer: That report, is it on track to be  
2 submitted by March?

3           Mr. Scher: My understanding is that it is, but I can  
4 assure you that I will go back and make sure that that  
5 continues to be the case.

6           Senator Fischer: I would hope so. As we continue to  
7 look at the past actions of Russia, dating back to 2008, and  
8 their current belligerence, I think this report is very  
9 valuable, and this committee needs to see it. So I would  
10 encourage you to make sure that we receive that.

11           The President himself said rules must be binding.

12           Thank you.

13           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14           Senator Sessions: Thank you.

15           Well, we know that Russia is modernizing, as is really  
16 every other nuclear power in the world, working on new  
17 systems. We understand that there are threats to NATO from  
18 this new Russian nuclear strategy.

19           Mr. Scher, what is the administration's assessment  
20 about the threat posed to NATO by Russia's nuclear strategy  
21 and new nuclear capabilities, some of which are in violation  
22 of existing arms-control treaties?

23           Mr. Scher: Senator, obviously, the IMF violation is a  
24 very serious violation to begin with, a treaty that the  
25 Soviet Union and the United States came to realize, and both

1 countries realized that they were better off with this  
2 treaty in place. The fact that that has broken down and  
3 that Russia no longer believes that is the case is a serious  
4 challenge to the environment of arms control and a serious  
5 threat to Europe.

6 We are, however, looking at it not just as a standalone  
7 issue but really as part of a broad range of aggressive and  
8 assertive actions that Russia is taking in Europe and  
9 elsewhere. So we believe that our response needs to be one  
10 that looks at this holistically as well.

11 Clearly, we want to make sure that Russia does not  
12 obtain a military advantage because of the violation that  
13 they have pursued in violation of the treaty. But we also  
14 want to make sure that we look broadly.

15 So we are looking at operations in conjunction with our  
16 allies, very closely in conjunction with our allies, on how  
17 we can strengthen deterrence in Europe; how we can ensure  
18 that we can protect our forces and our allies in Europe, no  
19 matter what capabilities Russia brings to bear; and that we  
20 can ensure that we have the ability both through  
21 conventional means, primarily, but also nuclear means, if  
22 necessary, to address the capabilities that Russia has that  
23 threaten us, our allies, and our friends in the region.

24 Senator Sessions: Our committee last week hosted  
25 experts and thinkers on this subject and went through all

1 the difficulties of anticipating what Russia might do, what  
2 we might do in response.

3 Do you feel like those possible responses to Russia's  
4 actions, some of its niche-type weapons, are adequate now?  
5 Or do we have much more to do to think through what our  
6 response would be?

7 Mr. Scher: I believe both of those are true. I  
8 believe they are adequate now, but I do not want to stop and  
9 rest on that. I want to make sure that we continue to look  
10 at all the capabilities, understanding Russian doctrine even  
11 more, and continuing to play out the responses that we could  
12 have.

13 So I do feel comfortable with our responses now. I  
14 feel confident in the work that has been ongoing in EUCOM  
15 over in Stuttgart, as well as in STRATCOM, to deal with the  
16 full range of Russian aggression and potential actions they  
17 could take.

18 I am also comfortable with what we have looked at  
19 within the Department of Defense and within the  
20 administration, in terms of games and responses and tabletop  
21 exercises to kind of understand this issue.

22 But I assure you, we are not stopping now. That is  
23 something that we need to continue to look at as the  
24 security situation evolves, and as we work closer with our  
25 friends and allies to see what they can bring to the table

1 on this.

2 Senator Sessions: There are a lot of reasons to not  
3 sit idly by. One of them is, if we are apparently unable to  
4 respond to these kinds of new challenges, I think our allies  
5 and our adversaries may get the wrong impression about the  
6 willingness and capability of the United States to respond.

7 Right now, we are not on a path to say we are going to  
8 develop a new weapon. But I think if it becomes clear that  
9 that is needed, I hope that you will ask for it. If we do  
10 it in the right way, perhaps we can have congressional  
11 support for that.

12 One more point, the President is requesting \$3.4  
13 billion in fiscal year 2017 for the European Reassurance  
14 Initiative to reinforce our defense posture in Europe. Is  
15 there a nuclear component to this initiative? If not, why  
16 not?

17 Mr. Scher: There is not a specific nuclear component  
18 to the European Reassurance Initiative. What I would say is  
19 that there are things ongoing and in the budget as part of  
20 the nuclear mission for what we are doing in Europe,  
21 specifically one of the most important ones to point to is  
22 the B61 life-extension program that is directly related to  
23 our nuclear DCA mission in Europe that we share with the  
24 NATO allies.

25 So ERI, for lack of a better -- we have used to focus



1 on both pre-positioning infrastructure and keeping forces  
2 rotating through, and increasing exercises with our allies.  
3 But by no means should the budget line for ERI be seen as  
4 the full spectrum of what we are doing to address Russian  
5 activities and to ensure the deterrence of Russia or the  
6 reassurance and assurance of our NATO allies.

7 Senator Sessions: I will just wrap up, but I would say  
8 a couple things.

9 First, we need to keep the pressure on Europe to do  
10 more financially. We are now at 75 percent paying the costs  
11 of NATO.

12 I mentioned that to a German delegation of  
13 parliamentarians here 6 months or so ago, and the leader  
14 said it is unacceptable that the United States has to pay 75  
15 percent of the cost. He did not offer to put up any money.

16 [Laughter.]

17 Senator Sessions: But it is an acknowledgment of what  
18 Secretary Gates said in his last remarks about leaving the  
19 Defense Department.

20 So I am at a point where they have to step up. Every  
21 time the Russian bear growls, we provide more to reassure  
22 Europe. They must not be so afraid if they are not willing  
23 to put up any of their money for this.

24 So I feel pretty strongly about that, and we will be  
25 looking at it further. And as we go through this

1 initiative, I think some of it ought to be contingent on  
2 more work from our allies, including such things as them  
3 deploying some brigade toward the east, not just us.

4 Secretary Donnelly -- Senator Donnelly?

5 Senator Donnelly: I already have one job. I do not  
6 need another.

7 [Laughter.]

8 Senator Donnelly: Secretary Scher, we have seen North  
9 Korea take a number of actions in recent weeks. There have  
10 been discussions as to what is the best way to have a  
11 deterrent effect against North Korea. I would like to hear  
12 your opinions on what you think are the best deterrent steps  
13 in regards to North Korea.

14 Mr. Scher: This is a problem that has faced multiple  
15 administrations for a long time, but I do think that, first  
16 of all, we are not willing to accept that North Korea is a  
17 nuclear weapons state. That does not mean that we do not  
18 believe that they have nuclear weapons. But the goal here  
19 is for a complete and verifiable denuclearization of North  
20 Korea, and we believe that the international community, in  
21 general, supports that principle.

22 So the first effort is really to make sure that we can  
23 pull everyone together to really put pressure on North Korea  
24 to denuclearize.

25 Separately, we have and will maintain capabilities and

1 plans to address the nuclear threat that exists in North  
2 Korea, so that we have options for the President, should he  
3 so choose to use them.

4 We also want to focus on defense and defense of our  
5 allies, especially the Republic of Korea and Japan, and  
6 making sure that we can effectively defend them from North  
7 Korea, both conventionally and nuclear, if it comes to that.

8 It is going to be a long, hard process that we really  
9 need the international community behind. And I know that my  
10 colleagues in the Department of State are working very hard  
11 to try to bring everyone together to bring the kind of  
12 pressure on North Korea that will make it clear to them that  
13 they are worse off having nuclear weapons than they are now.

14 Senator Donnelly: I guess the question I am asking you  
15 is, what do you think that pressure is that sends that  
16 message?

17 Mr. Scher: I think, certainly, building up  
18 capabilities on the peninsula and in Japan are part of it.  
19 Certainly, we have to bring economic pressure and continue  
20 to bring it. And it has to be from the entire international  
21 community.

22 I think you have seen a lot of talk about the entire  
23 international community decrying the latest tests. I think  
24 we need to see that put into action. I know they are  
25 working on that at the U.N. and elsewhere, and hopefully

1 revival of the six-party talks will get us closer. But  
2 clearly, that has, up to this point, not worked.

3 Senator Donnelly: Without categorizing it specifically  
4 this way, but it seems that China seems to pull their  
5 punches in regard to North Korea. Why do you think that is?  
6 And what do you think an active Chinese role to help start  
7 moving North Korea back to denuclearization would be?

8 Mr. Scher: Honestly, sir, I do not know the  
9 intricacies of our approach to them. I, certainly, do not  
10 want to characterize what China is thinking.

11 But I do believe that a more prominent role and  
12 effective role from China to live up to the commitments that  
13 they have made and that the international community has made  
14 will put pressure on North Korea.

15 If you want to pursue this, I am happy to do it in  
16 closed session, along with some other colleagues from the  
17 Asia side.

18 But I think there are ways that we can pursue this, but  
19 we are not there yet.

20 Senator Donnelly: We asked this question last week in  
21 regard to Putin and the Russian leadership, when they talk  
22 about offensive use of nuclear weapons. Do you think they  
23 believe that NATO and/or the United States would let that  
24 occur without response?

25 Mr. Scher: Senator, I do not think so, but I also know

1 that we need to continue to make that clear, both in our  
2 declaratory policy and in the credibility of the  
3 capabilities that we bring to bear on that.

4 I cannot imagine that Russia does not fully understand  
5 the implications of the Article 5 commitments of the NATO  
6 treaty. But again, that is something that we need to both  
7 make sure is credible from both a policy perspective and a  
8 capabilities perspective, and that is really our role here.

9 Senator Donnelly: So what you are saying is that we  
10 have to, when those things are said, just make it  
11 extraordinarily clear that nothing will be let to stand  
12 without a response and a strong and active response in  
13 return?

14 Mr. Scher: I would never want to prejudge responses,  
15 but I do think it is fair that, as we see increasing nuclear  
16 saber-rattling from Russia, we make it clear that we will  
17 maintain our commitments to the NATO alliance, and that we  
18 will respond effectively, and that, most importantly, and  
19 sort of the fundamental piece of deterrence is that the  
20 risks to Russia from them taking action will be far  
21 outweighed because of our response. They cannot believe  
22 that any advantage will accrue to them. And they need to  
23 understand that we will impose costs that will far outweigh  
24 anything they might even think that they will gain by taking  
25 that action. That is the core of deterrence, and that is

1 something we must maintain the credibility of.

2 Senator Donnelly: One more question. Vice Admiral  
3 Benedict, you have recently assumed expanded responsibility  
4 as the regulator for the Navy's nuclear deterrence mission  
5 as well. How do you see that mission?

6 Admiral Benedict: Thank you, sir.

7 I see that mission as it is really beginning to pay  
8 dividends. I have the opportunity to brief the CNO on a  
9 quarterly basis. And, of course, the regulator role is one  
10 in which I oversee the other Echelon II commands within the  
11 Navy who have a purpose of ensuring that an SSBN can go to  
12 sea and basically support Admiral Haney's requirements. So  
13 Fleet Forces Command, Pacific Fleet, the submarine force,  
14 BUMED who does the personal reliability program, our  
15 shipyards, all of those entities that have a piece in  
16 deploying a submarine now all report to me.

17 They report four times a year. Two reports are  
18 readiness reports. Two reports are sustainment reports.  
19 And we have access to all the information that is flowing  
20 around the community as it relates to the ability to  
21 execute.

22 I think it is coming together nicely. We have never  
23 done this before. It is maturing rapidly. I have a meeting  
24 with the CNO in 2 weeks to give him the next update. I  
25 think it will be a very positive report.

1           And I believe that we are finding niche pieces of the  
2 community where things could potentially drop between the  
3 cracks of nine different commands, and we are pointing those  
4 out and addressing those proactively. So I am very pleased  
5 with where we are.

6           Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Admiral.

7           Thank you, Chairman.

8           Senator Sessions: I want to follow up on that,  
9 Admiral. If you find a defect or a problem, what would be  
10 your role?

11          Admiral Benedict: First and foremost, my role is to  
12 ensure that the individual commanders within those nine  
13 commands see the same problem that I have identified, as the  
14 regulator. First and foremost, in the areas of --

15          Senator Sessions: "Regulator" is an unusual word.

16          Admiral Benedict: Yes, sir.

17          Senator Sessions: What does it mean?

18          Admiral Benedict: I guess in the broad terms, I look  
19 for problems in the seams. Every command has authority,  
20 accountability, responsibility. As Admiral Greenert, when  
21 he was CNO, was pretty clear with me, identified my job as  
22 not to go in and fix problems. My job is simply to identify  
23 the problems, most importantly in the interfaces between the  
24 various commands.

25          So to your point, to your question, what would I do,

1 and what I have done, is, when I see those, I identify those  
2 to the commander. I have never had one yet that they have  
3 not readily identified and gone off and fixed.

4 If we had a disagreement that it was an issue, then  
5 there is an escalation plan within the regulator role where  
6 we would both go address that with the CNO. Obviously, the  
7 CNO would have the final authority of what would be fixed  
8 and how. But I do not ever foresee that happening. It is  
9 really a constructive tension backup regulator role, in  
10 which we are trying to ensure that we provide to this Nation  
11 the most credible sea-based deterrent.

12 Senator Sessions: The history of all government  
13 agencies and even the Defense Department, which, in general,  
14 does better than most government agencies, is that sometimes  
15 it has to be kicked upstairs. So you be sure to do it, if  
16 it is necessary.

17 Secretary Scher, Center for Strategic and International  
18 Studies, a good group, says, as the nuclear shadow has grown  
19 over the Asia-Pacific region, the credibility of the United  
20 States security assurances has come under strain for both  
21 Japan and South Korea. It goes on to say, "Today, the  
22 United States lacks a sufficient range of response options  
23 to signal, compel, and defeat nuclear adversaries facing our  
24 allies and, by extension, to inspire confidence in the U.S.  
25 nuclear guarantees."



1           Does the administration share that concern? And what,  
2 if anything, would we do or are we doing to fix it?

3           Mr. Scher: As you say, CSIS is an excellent  
4 organization. I am not sure I would agree quite with that  
5 entire characterization. I think we are in a good place  
6 now. I think we bring a full range of conventional and  
7 nuclear assets that are in the region, or can be deployed to  
8 the region, or can be operated in the region.

9           I also know that we keep very close discussions with  
10 the Republic of Korea and Japan specifically on deterrence  
11 policy and on these issue areas.

12          Senator Sessions: Would you agree that additional  
13 response options are needed?

14          Mr. Scher: I think we actually have a full range of  
15 response options now, but I accept that, as our potential  
16 adversaries develop more, we need to constantly review that.  
17 And we may need to take a look and have additional options.

18          But I do believe that the variety of systems, weapons,  
19 yields that we have in the arsenal now should cover, and I  
20 believe our allies believe they do cover where we need to  
21 today.

22          Senator Sessions: Well, that is a January 2016 report,  
23 this year's report. So I think it is something you should  
24 examine and look at.

25          Briefly, I think, Secretary Scher, maybe you should be

1 the one to answer, but if any of the others would like to  
2 answer, the United States and certain NATO allies have  
3 operating dual-capable aircraft. According to unclassified  
4 NATO information, these aircraft are available for nuclear  
5 roles at various levels of readiness. The highest level of  
6 readiness is measured in weeks.

7 Is this alert level adequate, given that we now see  
8 Russia has new nuclear capabilities and is flexing its  
9 muscles?

10 Mr. Scher: So I think, right now, honestly, we are  
11 looking at that as an alliance. That is one of the key  
12 issues we are examining together. Dr. Hopkins and I are the  
13 chair and vice chair of a high-level group in NATO that is  
14 charged with examining this. We, as an alliance, are trying  
15 to determine if those readiness levels are what they should  
16 be.

17 It does place a large premium on indications and  
18 warning. We do not assume that things will happen out of  
19 the blue, so there is some ability and time to get to that  
20 level of readiness, so that these DCA can operate.

21 But as I said, I think this is something that the  
22 alliance is looking at now, and we may have some indications  
23 of where the alliance wants to go, certainly by the June  
24 ministerial.

25 Senator Sessions: Well, the alliance is not overly

1     impressing me about how it operates. The United States has  
2     always had to push, and I think maybe more so now in recent  
3     years than in the past, push to make sure that we do the  
4     things necessary for real defense capability. For the  
5     Russians to assume they have weeks before they have a  
6     threat, then I think that sends a bad signal in itself.

7             Mr. Scher: Senator, I am sorry. I apologize. I agree  
8     with you, Senator. One of the ways that we address that as  
9     well is that there independent nuclear capabilities of the  
10    United States, the U.K., and France, that can be brought to  
11    bear immediately. All are ready today, currently. So the  
12    full extent of our nuclear deterrent capability of the  
13    alliance does not rest solely on DCA. There are other  
14    elements that back that up as well.

15            General Rand: Senator, if I may?

16            Senator Sessions: Yes, General Rand?

17            General Rand: I cannot resist the opportunity, being  
18    one of the last people in the Air Force to ever serve alert  
19    on a dual-capable aircraft, when I did that in the 1980s in  
20    the F-16 at Incirlik.

21            I would agree with Secretary Scher's comment about our  
22    ability to respond to Russia in many forms, particularly our  
23    B-2 and our B-52. If I may, in the last 2 years, we have  
24    increased the number of what we call BAAD, bomber assurance  
25    and deterrence missions, that we provided General Breedlove

1 and General Gorenc in the region.

2 In fact, three B-52s will be going to Moron, Spain,  
3 later this month for a 2-week exercise. The beauty is we  
4 can have planes take off from Barksdale or Minot or Whiteman  
5 and be over and spend considerable time on station and even  
6 return where they do not even need to land in Europe.

7 But the effect that that has is it is easy to judge the  
8 assurance value. The intel community is always scratching  
9 their head of the deterrent value it has, but we believe it  
10 does have a deterrent value or we would not do it.

11 And if I may, when you talked about China and Korea,  
12 for the last 10 years, we have not taken a single airplane  
13 off the Republic of Korea. And we have put continuously six  
14 B-52s operating out of Guam, doing a continuous bomber  
15 presence.

16 So are we doing more today than when I left the  
17 Republic of Korea in 2004. We have increased our presence  
18 in what we are doing. So I think that has a very calming  
19 effect both on the Republic of Korea and Japan.

20 Senator Sessions: Thank you.

21 Senator Donnelly?

22 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Senator Heinrich, do you want to go now? It is up to  
24 you.

25 Senator Heinrich: Have you had a chance?

1           Senator Donnelly: I have.

2           Senator Heinrich: Mr. Scher and General Rand, thanks  
3 for being here today.

4           The CBO noted that DOD will spend about \$15.4 billion  
5 on nuclear weapons modernization in 2015, which is about 3  
6 percent of DOD's entire budget. When you look at that  
7 together with NNSA's investment, which was about \$19 billion  
8 last year in total, that is around \$35 million, or roughly  
9 about 6 percent of the base defense budget.

10          In other words, we spend about 6 cents out of every  
11 defense dollar on our nuclear deterrent, which, in my view,  
12 has effectively prevented another world war for over 70  
13 years now.

14          What is your current assessment of other nations'  
15 efforts to modernize their nuclear infrastructure? And do  
16 we have a good sense of what kinds of investments they are  
17 specifically making?

18          Mr. Scher: Certainly, the full details of this we  
19 could provide to you in a closed session or an intel  
20 briefing. But as I mentioned a little bit, certainly, we  
21 see modernization across Russia and China. To some extent,  
22 the Russian modernization, they reached a point earlier than  
23 we did, where they were aging out of their systems and  
24 needed to modernize. That is not to say that these are not  
25 modern and fully up equipment. They are. They have

1 modernized across the full range, I think we seen.

2 And China, we have seen that they have made qualitative  
3 investments in their nuclear forces.

4 Those are the main ones we track. Obviously, we talked  
5 a lot about North Korea and see that they are continuing to  
6 test both their nuclear weapons as well as potential  
7 delivery systems.

8 Senator Heinrich: How important is the B61 LEP to  
9 DOD's nuclear policy and the deterrence strategy that you  
10 talked about?

11 Mr. Scher: So the B61 as the remaining gravity bomb  
12 for the nuclear forces is very important to us, from a  
13 strategic perspective. We want to make sure that we have a  
14 full range of options, a range of yields and delivery  
15 systems. As a result, that is a critical piece of the air  
16 leg of the triad.

17 In terms of the technical advantages of consolidating a  
18 life-extension program, Dr. Hopkins would know more about  
19 that. But from a strategy perspective, it is very  
20 important.

21 Senator Heinrich: Doctor?

22 Dr. Hopkins: One of the most significant advantages of  
23 the B61 modernization, which is going to produce the B61-12,  
24 is it is going to enable the Nation to eliminate the need  
25 for -- it will take the place of four different variants of

1 the existing B61. So there is a certain degree of  
2 efficiency and a certain degree of safety associated with  
3 reducing the numbers and types of weapons in the inventory.

4 Senator Heinrich: Is that largely related to your  
5 ability to address yield?

6 Dr. Hopkins: Yes, it is. In fact, the expected damage  
7 from a bomb, the utility of a bomb, is primarily a function  
8 of its yield and its accuracy. They are inversely related,  
9 so the more accurate a system is, the lower the yield that  
10 can be used to achieve the desired effect.

11 Senator Heinrich: General Rand, do you want to add  
12 anything to that observation?

13 General Rand: No, sir. I think that summarizes it  
14 well. I think the pragmatics of it is that it is going to  
15 be very helpful for us. I was at Whiteman earlier in  
16 January, and they had the different B61s. That just becomes  
17 much more difficult to manage and to secure.

18 So this will be viewed, from that very pragmatic point  
19 of view, as a helpful thing.

20 Senator Heinrich: One last question, and then I will  
21 turn it back over.

22 What are the steps that the services are taking broadly  
23 to improve the morale of the nuclear mission force? And how  
24 is each measuring the effectiveness of those actions?

25 Mr. Scher: Obviously, the services will comment on

1 this, but I do want to note, first of all, the great job  
2 that I know each of the services are doing and the fact that  
3 we in OSD are not forgetting that we also have a requirement  
4 to track this and to make sure that that happens. Now, each  
5 of the services is doing it, and we can track that as well.  
6 But it has to be a system- and enterprise-wide focus on  
7 this, as well as a service-specific one.

8 Admiral Benedict: So, as Secretary Scher said,  
9 leadership starts from the top on this issue. Certainly,  
10 the Secretary of Defense and Secretary Work, as a Deputy  
11 Secretary of Defense, have been leading this effort.

12 Within the Navy, we have focused primarily on our  
13 shipyards, our manning of the shipyards, to ensure that we  
14 can do the throughput, as well as our strategic weapons  
15 facilities, which is where we support the SSBNs.

16 We are, as I stated in my opening statement, about 79  
17 percent complete with the tasks that we were assigned and  
18 accepted under the Secretary of Defense reviews. All the  
19 remaining ones are really long-term perspectives, which we  
20 will not be able to complete physically this year.

21 It is the number-one priority of the CNO. He tracks it  
22 personally. So we are very committed to stay on course with  
23 what the cape reports to the Secretary.

24 Senator Heinrich: General?

25 General Rand: Yes, sir. I can spend the entire



1 session on this topic, as you well realize. Senator  
2 Donnelly had brought it up, of how we were doing to  
3 implement the changes that were very much needed.

4 But if I may, briefly, as we took all the reviews that  
5 were done in our force improvement program, came up with  
6 over 300 recommendations. We put those into six buckets.

7 Those buckets are leadership and organization as number  
8 one; culture is two; resources and materiel is three; surety  
9 is the fourth one; and the fifth and sixth are personnel and  
10 training. We are just mowing through it, sir. We are going  
11 through each one of these. We are tracking them. Some of  
12 these we will never be able to say we are done with, because  
13 they will be just repeating.

14 That is how we are doing it. It is, certainly, my  
15 number-one focus. And I would tell you that Secretary James  
16 and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Welsh, have  
17 given me very strong guidance on their expectations of the  
18 emphasis. We have a superb proponent in our chief and  
19 secretary.

20 Senator Heinrich: Thank you, all.

21 Senator Sessions: Senator Donnelly?

22 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Secretary Scher, when you look at North Korea, how  
24 important of a role do think missile defense systems in  
25 South Korea can play?

1           Mr. Scher: I think when you look at the range of  
2 capabilities that North Korea has, I think there is no  
3 question that we need to figure out how we can deploy, and  
4 we do deploy, missile defense to the peninsula. As you saw  
5 after the potential test of ballistic missile components,  
6 but the satellite launch, the alliance together decided that  
7 it was time to look at placing THAAD on the peninsula. I  
8 think that is an important step for the alliance, and one  
9 that I hope we can look to figure out how we can conclude  
10 quickly.

11           Missile defense, of course, is never going to be the  
12 system that protects every place from every kind of missile  
13 ever coming in. But it needs to be able to be in place to  
14 protect key assets, to protect critical infrastructure, and  
15 to sow doubt in the mind of an adversary that they will be  
16 successful in a quick launch and a decapitation or a strike  
17 of getting out capabilities.

18           So we have to balance missile defense with the  
19 capabilities to ensure that we continue effective  
20 deterrence, and continue to make the case that, in this  
21 case, North Korea will not achieve its objectives, that it  
22 will not be able to see any benefit from taking aggressive  
23 action against our ally, the Republic of Korea. I believe  
24 strongly that we have in place forces now to do that,  
25 missile defense and offensive forces, but we are going to

1 continue to do this as the situation changes.

2 Senator Donnelly: Do you think the Chinese pass on the  
3 message to Kim Jong-un and he just does not listen? And  
4 what I mean by that is, the message of, look, whatever you  
5 do will be met with significantly more coming back into you.  
6 That message has been given to the Chinese.

7 Does Kim Jong-un not even listen to this? Is this all  
8 internally related more than externally related?

9 Mr. Scher: I think I can give you the --

10 Senator Donnelly: We are trying to gain your wisdom  
11 here.

12 Mr. Scher: I understand. And to be very honest,  
13 Senator, I used to spend a lot of time trying to figure out  
14 the ins and outs of people's motivation. Right now, I spend  
15 a lot of time trying to figure out -- I do not care. I am  
16 looking at their capabilities, and I am going to make sure  
17 that we can address the threats posed by their capabilities  
18 and make sure that we have effective systems to ensure  
19 deterrence.

20 I have never made a lot of money being a good predictor  
21 of what people are actually thinking or doing.

22 Senator Donnelly: Is your regular rule basically just,  
23 when you show them significantly more firepower,  
24 significantly more deterrence, at some point, all you can do  
25 is show them the very best that you have, that you would

1     overwhelm them in return?

2             Mr. Scher: I personally believe that Kim Jong-un does  
3     does have a rational side and does think about regime and  
4     his own survival. Hence, us demonstrating exactly what you  
5     said goes a long way to ensuring the deterrence on the  
6     peninsula and overall stability. We still need to do more,  
7     as does everybody in the international community.

8             Senator Donnelly: Let me just close with this, and  
9     this is like a lightning round, almost. So do the very best  
10    you can.

11            What keeps you up the most at night in your present  
12    responsibility? This would be to everyone on the panel.

13            Mr. Scher: Miscalculation. The broad answer is  
14    miscalculation. But it is either miscalculation from North  
15    Korea, from Russia, from Pakistan and India, the number of  
16    countries that have at their disposal some of the most  
17    destructive weapons known to mankind. That keeps me up at  
18    night, miscalculations about that.

19            There are a lot of other problems and a lot of my  
20    colleagues and I spend a lot of time on those, but none of  
21    them pose that same existential danger, I think, to the  
22    United States, to the Western system, to our allies and  
23    friends, as miscalculation amongst the nuclear powers.

24            Senator Donnelly: Dr. Hopkins?

25            Dr. Hopkins: In addition to miscalculation, what I

1 would be most concerned about is making sure that we have  
2 thought of everything with respect to potential threats  
3 against our system. We have an active program to try to  
4 stay ahead of threats, and we want to make sure that we are  
5 staying ahead of both terrorist and state threats.

6 Senator Donnelly: General Rand?

7 General Rand: Yes, Senator, I agree with those  
8 concerns expressed, but the practicality for me is that we  
9 are doing operations every day. The movement of nuclear  
10 weapons, B-1s and B-52s flying combat, those are the reality  
11 of doing the mission, and the risks associated with that  
12 would be what keep me up at night.

13 Senator Donnelly: Admiral Benedict?

14 Admiral Benedict: Sir, I would say it is people. We  
15 just celebrated our 60th anniversary as a program with an  
16 outstanding record, and I love to make that statement. Then  
17 I follow it up with, but we are not halfway done. We have  
18 68 more years to go, because we are building a class of  
19 submarines that will be in the water through 2084.

20 So we develop hardware, software, I can do all that,  
21 and I think we have demonstrated that we can do that. It is  
22 maintaining, training, and putting that fundamental  
23 philosophical discipline that got us here in those folks for  
24 the next 68 years. That is what keeps me up.

25 Senator Donnelly: Thank you.

1 Senator Sessions: Thank you.

2 I think North Korea needs to know that we may not be  
3 the best of all times in creating a new government, but we  
4 are pretty good at taking one down. They need to know that  
5 there are things we will not accept, and their existence is  
6 at stake.

7 Sometimes I think, in our desire to try to have a  
8 rapprochement and work with our adversaries, they may get  
9 the wrong message. Ultimately, we have to use these  
10 powerful weapons -- hopefully not these -- but powerful  
11 military force to defend the interests of the United States  
12 and the world.

13 Anything else that you would like to add to the  
14 discussion?

15 Well, we thank you very much. Our subcommittee will be  
16 working on this. We have a very good subcommittee that has  
17 made itself very knowledgeable about the challenges that we  
18 face. We will try to treat respectfully your requests for  
19 funding and authority, and do our best to respond as a good  
20 Congress should. We are adjourned.

21 [The information follows:]

22 [Whereupon, at 3:57 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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25