

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

STATEMENT OF
DR. YISROEL BRUMER
DIRECTOR
STRATEGIC, DEFENSIVE, AND SPACE PROGRAMS
COST ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to join you today. I appreciate the opportunity to testify about how my team is executing the Secretary of Defense's direction to track, monitor, and independently assess the implementation of recommendations from recent internal and external reviews of the Nuclear Enterprise and to support efforts to ensure the viability of our Nation's strategic deterrence in the 21st century.

In February 2014, former Secretary Hagel directed both internal and external reviews of the entire Nuclear Enterprise. These reviews were conducted over the course of several months by highly esteemed nuclear professionals, including civilians as well as active duty and retired military. The review teams conducted hundreds of field interviews with individuals whose experiences spanned the Nuclear Enterprise, from first-term Airmen, Sailors, and Marines to the most senior commanders. Both reviews concluded that without intervention, issues related to resourcing, personnel, organization, and culture have the Nuclear Enterprise on a path to more frequent and greater problems than we have previously witnessed.

As you are aware, these were not the first studies detailing the shortfalls within the Nuclear Enterprise, and several had noted very similar, if not identical, findings. With that in mind, the Secretary of Defense directed that the Department must place a renewed emphasis on improving the health of the nuclear force.

To enhance senior leader visibility and ensure effective implementation that addresses root causes, Secretary Hagel directed the Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE), with the support of the Joint Staff, Air Force, Navy, OSD, and U.S. Strategic Command, to:

- 1) Track, monitor, and independently assess the implementation of the reviews' recommendations.

- 2) Conduct analysis to determine if corrective actions are having the desired effect and yield long-term sustainable solutions.
- 3) Assess the health of the nuclear enterprise.
- 4) Provide monthly updates to the Deputy Secretary of Defense.
- 5) Provide quarterly updates to the Secretary of Defense.

My division within CAPE is charged with this task because our portfolio includes program assessment and evaluation of the Nuclear Enterprise.

In his tasking letter to CAPE, Secretary Hagel directed the Military Departments and other DoD Components to provide CAPE everything necessary to conduct robust, complete, rigorous, and timely assessments. I am pleased to report we now have nuclear-specialized representatives from the Air Force, Navy, and USSTRATCOM on our team. Additionally, we have been granted access to the Joint Staff, USSTRATCOM, and Service agencies to gather pertinent data to meet the Secretary's charge of robust, complete, rigorous, and timely assessment.

Our eight-member team includes active duty military officers that have served in the ICBM and ballistic missile submarine career fields, as well as scientists and data experts to support technical assessments. Additionally, we utilize a contractor team to conduct deep dive data analyses and leverage subject matter expertise. The diversity of the team, including expertise in nuclear operations, social science, data analysis, and more, has provided a broad understanding of the reviews' recommendations so we can properly assess the wide range of subjects brought forward. I am extremely proud of the team, which has been willing to put in the intensity and the hours necessary to do the job right. They have shown unwavering dedication to

improving the Nuclear Enterprise by delivering the most honest and objective analysis, data, and assessments possible.

BEYOND BOX CHECKING

Department of Defense senior leadership has been very clear that the Secretary was keenly interested in comprehensive and sustainable solutions, rather than short-term efforts that merely meet recommendations by checking boxes without placing the enterprise on more solid footing. The Secretary charged our team to go beyond ensuring that tasks are completed and to answer questions like “Are DoD efforts having the intended effect?”, “Are unanticipated risks arising?” and most critically, “Is the Nuclear Enterprise getting healthier?”

This charge has proven to be both the most important and most difficult aspect of our task. It is comparatively easy to verify that an instruction has been modified to relieve the nuclear force of an unnecessary burden or that needed equipment and gear has been delivered to the force. It is much more difficult to measure changes in culture or personal attitudes toward the mission. For this reason, we added a social scientist to the team and have leveraged the expertise of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, which conducts surveys of the command climate in units across all the Services, to help us gather the pertinent data for accurate assessments of the overall health of the Nuclear Enterprise. Additionally, we remain vigilant to identify unintended second- and third-order effects of changes driven by the recommendations.

We have also initiated efforts to ensure that we are capable of independently verifying the accuracy of the reports we are receiving, without becoming another inspection agency that places an additional burden on the force. We are gathering a broad array of data and are creating relationships with key agencies to obtain on-the-ground data from existing inspections to support

our assessments. Lastly, we plan to regularly interact with forces in the field at all ranks, on a non-attribution basis, to better understand the challenges they are facing and the changes they are seeing.

PROGRESS TO DATE

I am proud to report to this Committee that our team has made significant strides in a short time. Since September, we have combed every possible recommendation from the two reviews, nearly 200 in all. We held meetings with all stakeholders and formulated problem statements in an effort to identify the root cause of each issue. We worked with each responsible organization to develop detailed approaches to correct the root problems. Finally, metrics and milestones were developed to provide mechanisms for moving the various efforts forward and for assessing their effects. In keeping with the spirit of the task to go “beyond box checking,” the team developed both process metrics to determine whether a particular task is completed, as well as outcome metrics to assess whether the cumulative effects of the tasks are achieving the desired intent of the recommendations and improving the overall health of the Enterprise.

In line with the Secretary’s charge for complete, rigorous, and timely assessment, the CAPE Director and our team has visited and will continue to visit key Nuclear Enterprise locations. During these visits, the team becomes more familiar with the unique mission and quality-of-life challenges of that particular location. Additionally, the team holds individual and group non-attributional discussions to gather empirical data to determine what issues are most pressing to those individuals or groups, and solicits feedback on whether personnel in the field think our metrics are appropriate for tracking the health of the Enterprise.

As stated earlier, we recognize the outcome metrics will be the most challenging to assess. We also recognize these are the most challenging for those in the field to execute, and it

will take years of dedicated efforts to restore the risk margin that has been lost. We intend to provide leadership with our best analysis and advice to help them guide these efforts to completion.

CONCLUSION

The Department of Defense leadership, from Secretary Carter on down, has been clear that the nuclear enterprise – and the deterrent effect it provides – is a high priority and will remain so as long as nuclear weapons exist. My team has embraced that challenge and they are proud to have been entrusted with the role of ensuring appropriate resourcing, personnel, organizational, and policy issues are addressed to provide the Nation with the safe, secure, and effective strategic deterrent that is so critical to our national security. The CAPE team will continue to report our progress to this committee on a regular basis. You have our assurance that we will remain vigilant and will maintain our reputation for rigor, honesty, and integrity in this important mission.