

Prepared Statement of

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Chairman King, Ranking Member Fischer, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding matters relating to the U.S. nuclear enterprise. I am pleased to join my colleagues to discuss what five successive Secretaries of Defense have called the Department of Defense's (DoD) highest priority mission: ensuring that the United States has a safe, secure, effective, and credible nuclear deterrent—now and in the future.

As we continue to persevere through the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term modernization of our nuclear enterprise, we want to assure you that U.S. nuclear forces remain ready and capable. Our nuclear deterrent underwrites every U.S. military operation across the world and is the foundation and backstop of our national defense. It has preserved peace and stability by deterring aggression against the United States and our allies for over 70 years and has received strong support from Congress and multiple Administrations throughout those decades. Furthermore, assuring allies and partners depends on their confidence in the credibility of our extended nuclear deterrent capabilities and commitments.

As the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear Matters (DASD(NM)), I am responsible for directing and overseeing a wide variety of activities that underpin and advance DoD's nuclear related missions. We lead and participate in activities across the nuclear enterprise: from executing the statutory responsibilities of the Nuclear Weapons Council; to coordinating stockpile management activities between DoD and our partners at the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA); to overseeing policies and actions that ensure the security and safety of our nuclear weapons, as well as prevent and respond to nuclear weapon incidents and accidents; to working closely with allies on nuclear issues. We succeed in our mission when our partners and stakeholders across the nuclear enterprise succeed in the execution of their own missions—our role in many activities is to serve as the focal point of coordination, and our goal is to ensure the enterprise as a whole is aligned in what needs to be done to support this highest priority mission.

The most vital piece of that mission is the modernization of the U.S. nuclear enterprise. Although decades-long sustainment efforts have allowed us to maintain a viable nuclear deterrent based on weapons and forces fielded many decades ago, sustainment alone cannot ensure that these capabilities continue to deter into the future—especially as threats continue to

exist and evolve. Nearly all the systems that compose the current nuclear deterrent—our weapons; delivery systems; Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3) systems; and supporting infrastructure and facilities—were built during the Cold War and are facing sustainment challenges that require modernization to ensure a viable deterrent. Ultimately, we know that programmatic risks in nuclear acquisition and sustainment programs, if realized, flow back to U.S. Strategic Command and put in danger its ability to meet deterrence and assurance objectives laid out by the President and the Secretary of Defense. To prevent this, the Department is carefully examining and taking action on both risks and opportunities as we transition from our current, legacy nuclear forces to their modern replacements.

Carrying out the Nation’s nuclear deterrence mission is a responsibility shared by DoD and our partners at NNSA. Similar to DoD, NNSA is addressing challenges as U.S. nuclear warheads and their key production infrastructure continue to age well beyond their original design lives while challenges posed by China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran continue to grow. Due to the long post-Cold War pause in nuclear weapons acquisition programs, we no longer have many of the production capabilities that built our current nuclear arsenal. Key nuclear facilities in NNSA’s production enterprise date to the late-1940s or 1950s—51 percent of this infrastructure is rated as being in no better than poor condition. NNSA is developing and executing plans to address these longstanding challenges by building modern replacement facilities, but we know that if NNSA production infrastructure investment is not prioritized the Cold War-era stockpile cannot be maintained or modernized before it ages out.

Core to this critical partnership between DoD and NNSA is the Nuclear Weapons Council (NWC), a coordinating body established by Congress to facilitate the alignment of requirements and to establish priorities as the two Departments fulfill their shared responsibility for providing the Nation’s nuclear deterrent. The NWC convenes monthly to maintain alignment of efforts between DoD and NNSA on the vision, strategy, and execution of nuclear programs. The NWC’s current structure and processes enable regular, senior-level attention and proactive decisions on capabilities and capacities needed to maintain and modernize an effective nuclear weapons stockpile that meets the requirements of an increasingly challenging international security environment. The NWC fully supports NNSA’s efforts to establish a responsive and resilient nuclear security enterprise to meet U.S. deterrence and assurance needs. A responsive

enterprise also ensures that NNSA can attract and retain a world-class workforce capable of responding to the dynamic and uncertain security environment we face.

The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Budget ensures a strong, credible nuclear deterrent for the security of the Nation and our allies. While the Administration is conducting a review of nuclear policy and posture, the President's FY 2022 Budget supports ongoing nuclear activities and programs while ensuring that these efforts are sustainable. Within the Office of the Under Secretary for Acquisition and Sustainment, we are mindful that we must ensure our legacy nuclear programs remain safe, secure, and effective up to the day they are replaced and retired. We must not lose sight of the need to sustain these aging capabilities even as we fund and prioritize delivering their modern replacements on schedule. As such, all nuclear programs remain on track. To continue to meet military requirements and better mitigate future risks, tracking sustainment and modernization programs across both DoD and NNSA—and their interdependencies—will continue to be a top priority.

As the committee requested, although I will refer you to my colleagues from the Services for specifics, I'd like to provide a brief status update on several major modernization programs. I provide this update with the recognition that the Administration has expressed its intent to take steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, while ensuring our strategic deterrent remains safe, secure, and effective and that our extended deterrence commitments to our allies remain strong and credible. As the Administration conducts this review of nuclear policy and posture over the coming months, I provide the following status on the Department's major nuclear modernization programs of record.

The Ground Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) program is intended to deliver the next generation Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) weapon system to support the nuclear deterrent. The objective of the GBSD program is to deliver a low technical risk, total system replacement of Minuteman III to address sustainment challenges, close capability gaps, and ensure the U.S. maintains an effective land-based nuclear deterrent through 2075. The development of a modern ICBM system seeks to reduce the total cost of ownership over sustaining the legacy Minuteman III by increasing system reliability and adopting specific design features focused on increasing maintainability. In addition, the implementation of a modular open system architecture, coupled with the Air Force's plan to own the technical baseline,

greatly enhances the ability of the weapon system to adapt to future threats and sustainment modifications. The Air Force has assessed that there is no margin to delay development and fielding of GBSD; its legacy counterpart, the Minuteman III is 40 years beyond its designed life expectancy and will begin experiencing attrition and age-related component degradation resulting in the number of available ICBMs falling below military requirement levels in the late-2020s. Additionally, Minuteman III is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to sustain, and will not meet military effectiveness requirements in the 2030s as adversary threats advance. The GBSD program is currently in the Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) phase with Milestone C planned for FY2026.

The Long Range Standoff Weapon (LRSO) will replace the early-1980's AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) with a missile capable of penetrating advanced air defenses long into the future. LRSO will maintain the viability of the B-52 in the nuclear triad and support the long-term effectiveness of the bomber leg, while imposing costs on our adversaries by greatly complicating their air defense strategies. LRSO also represents the first simultaneous integrated nuclear weapons program that the DoD and NNSA have executed since the 1980s. This means that the DoD-provided LRSO cruise missile and the NNSA-provided W80-4 refurbished warhead are being developed as an integrated system.

The B-21 will support the Nuclear Triad with a visible and flexible deterrent capability, and provide operational flexibility across a wide range of military objectives in fulfillment of national objectives. The B-21 Raider provides the ability to penetrate modern adversary air defenses and will replace aging B-1 and B-2 bombers and complement modernized B-52 bombers. The Air Force plans to procure a minimum of 100 B-21 Raider aircraft in support of its full range of nuclear and conventional missions. The first two test aircraft are currently being manufactured and the first flight for the B-21 is estimated for 2022.

The COLUMBIA-class ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) is the U.S. Navy's number one acquisition priority. COLUMBIA will replace the nearly 40-year-old OHIO-class SSBNs. SSBNs are critical, stabilizing, and efficient elements of U.S. nuclear deterrence and assurance and are the most survivable leg of the triad. Twelve COLUMBIA-class SSBNs are required to meet strategic nuclear deterrence requirements. The COLUMBIA is being designed to have a longer service life, better operational availability, and better survivability than their predecessors.

Not only will COLUMBIA provide the United States with 21st century capability, it will do so at a responsible cost. Full ship construction is planned to begin in FY2024 with a first strategic patrol in FY2031. The Navy has started a weapon system modernization program (D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2)) to support the COLUMBIA-class deterrent for its full service life. COLUMBIA- class SSBNs and the D5LE2 program will provide a credible and survivable at-sea deterrent while facing a future dynamic threat environment. Additionally, the Navy and NNSA have initiated the W93/Mk7 program to meet U.S. strategic deterrence modernization needs. The program is also vital for continuing the longstanding U.S. commitment to support the United Kingdom's Continuous at Sea Deterrent. The W93/Mk7 provides the opportunity for aligning our independent programs and collaborating, within the constraints of existing treaties and agreements, to allow both countries to responsibly address challenges within their legacy nuclear forces.

Finally, the United States requires a robust NC3 system. The modernization of our NC3 systems will address 21st century threats and ensure the President has the ability to command control U.S. forces at all times, even under the most extreme circumstances.

Our nuclear modernization efforts—including delivery systems, warheads, infrastructure, and NC3—will take decades to complete but are critical to our nation's security. These efforts will help ensure that no adversary ever believes it can carry out a strategic attack on the United States or our allies for any reason, under any circumstances, without risking devastating consequences. I thank this Committee for its longstanding, bipartisan support for our nuclear deterrent mission and for the men and women—both in and out of uniform—across the nuclear enterprise. I look forward to your questions.