

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC FORCES

STATEMENT OF
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INTRODUCTION

United States Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM) is a global warfighting Combatant Command (CCMD) committed to strengthening the warfighter ethos, deterring through strategic capabilities, and delivering warfighting advantage. Our mission is to conduct operations to deter strategic attack and employ forces, as directed, to guarantee the security of the Nation and our allies. Our assigned Unified Command Plan responsibilities of strategic deterrence; nuclear operations; nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) enterprise operations; joint electromagnetic spectrum operations (JEMSO); global strike; and missile threat assessment underpin the Department of War's (DoW's) imperatives to defend the Homeland and maintain Peace through Strength.

I thank the President, Secretary of War, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their leadership. I also thank Congress for its continued support in providing us with the resources required to execute our assigned missions during this bi-generational period of critical modernization and recapitalization. Above all else, I extend thanks to the American people—their unwavering support makes us the most advanced, lethal, and credible fighting force in the world.

GLOBAL SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Today, the United States, its allies, and partners are confronted with the most complex and dynamic strategic environment since World War II. The People's Republic of China (PRC), the Russian Federation, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the Islamic Republic of Iran are seeking to undermine global and regional balances of power while strengthening ties and collaboration. Amidst these challenges, USSTRATCOM continues to deter strategic attack and stands ready to achieve Presidential objectives if deterrence fails.

Technological advances in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), autonomous systems, quantum communications, and quantum sensors are reshaping the character of war. Evolving threat vectors—cyber, a contested electromagnetic spectrum (EMS), counter-U.S. space capabilities, novel missile systems, and supply chain challenges—continue to impact our decision calculus and planning practices. The development of nuclear weapons with smaller yields, improved precision, and increased range increases strategic ambiguity and the possibility for coercive use by potential adversaries.

People’s Republic of China

China is increasing the capacity and number of dual use weapon systems and platforms while developing a range of theater and strategic nuclear capabilities. Driven by President Xi’s directive for military preparedness, China is heavily investing in its land-, sea-, and air-based nuclear delivery platforms. The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) seeks a larger and more diverse nuclear force, comprised of systems ranging from low-yield precision strike missiles to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with multi-megaton yields. China has now surpassed 600 deliverable nuclear warheads and is forecasted to have more than 1,000 by 2030.

The PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) continues to expand its silo-based ICBM force, including construction of 320 silos for the solid-fueled CSS-10 (DF-31) and up to 50 silos for the liquid-fueled CSS-4 (DF-5). The PLARF is also fielding additional mobile CSS-10 (DF-31) and CSS-20 (DF-41) ICBMs capable of targeting the continental United States.

The PLA Navy’s (PLAN) sea-based nuclear deterrent consists of six JIN-class ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs). The PLAN’s JIN-class SSBNs are each equipped to carry up to 12 JL-2 (CSS-N-14s) submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) or the newer JL-3 (CSS-N-20) SLBMs—capable of targeting the continental United States.

The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) is operationally fielding refuellable H-6N bombers, capable of carrying a nuclear air-launched ballistic missile. The PLAAF is also developing a strategic stealth bomber, the H-20, which may debut sometime in the next decade. This advanced bomber will likely have a range of approximately 6,000 miles and is intended to hold the continental United States at risk.

PLA senior leaders also recognize the evolving EMS landscape, seeking rapid maturation of PLA electromagnetic spectrum operations (EMSO), in scale and sophistication, tailored to contest U.S. EMS superiority in the future operational environment. Over the last two decades, the PLAAF has almost doubled its dedicated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)/electromagnetic warfare (EW) aircraft inventory with newer and fully operational jamming platforms.

China's continued endeavors to challenge U.S. global posture and presence has also expanded into the space domain with increasing offensive space capabilities, including a concentrated effort to undermine U.S. NC3 capabilities. These efforts include direct-ascent anti-satellite weapons capable of destroying satellites in orbit and advanced jamming technologies aimed at disrupting encrypted satellite communication links.

Russian Federation

Moscow views its nuclear weapons program as the cornerstone of Russian sovereignty and its military doctrine allows for nuclear use and signaling to manage perceived existential nuclear and conventional threats, to forestall theater defeat, and to compel an end to conflict on terms acceptable to Russia—the most recent example is employing nuclear coercion in the war in Ukraine. Moscow's strategic nuclear triad is composed of land-based fixed and mobile ICBMs, SLBMs deployed on its SSBNs, and strategic bombers. Russia's nuclear warhead arsenal

consists of approximately 4,600 nuclear warheads; 2,600 are intended for its strategic triad and up to 2,000 are warheads intended for theater nuclear weapons not accounted for under the now expired New START Treaty.

Russia's Strategic Rocket Force maintains a mix of road-mobile and silo-based ICBMs. As legacy SS-18, SS-19 Mod 3, and road-mobile SS-25 systems near the end of their operational lifespans, they are being replaced with more advanced systems. Russia announced the successful test of a delivery system in October 2025, the SSC-X-9 Skyfall, a nuclear-powered vehicle capable of delivering a nuclear-armed ground-launched cruise missile. This system could enable strikes on North American targets via unconventional and challenging-to-defend attack vectors.

The naval component of Russia's nuclear triad consists of 10 SSBNs under the operational control of the Naval High Command. This fleet includes Delta IV-class submarines armed with SS-N-23 SLBMs and the more advanced, quieter Dolgorukiy I- and II-class submarines equipped with SS-N-32 SLBMs. While Russia's SSBN modernization program has faced delays, it remains on track to be completed by the early 2030s. In addition to its SSBN fleet, Moscow is developing—and recently tested—the Poseidon, a nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed underwater vehicle representing a unique and unconventional delivery system designed to devastate coastal areas.

Russia is also modernizing the Long-Range Aviation fleets of Tu-95 Bear-H and Tu-160 Blackjack primary strategic bombers. Upgrades aim to equip the bombers with more advanced cruise missiles, longer ranges, and extended operational lifespans. Additionally, Moscow has announced plans to resume production of Tu-160 bombers and complete development of a next-generation strategic bomber, designated PAK-DA, within the next decade.

Russia's war in Ukraine highlights the critical role EMS plays in modern warfare, particularly the need for resilient communications, ISR, and navigation in a protracted and

spectrum-contested conflict. Moscow's forces have developed new EW capabilities to test and adapt its tactics, techniques, and procedures intended to achieve warfighting advantage. Russia's operations likely serve as a model for how Moscow will prosecute future conflicts—employing missile defense and EW capabilities to contest unmanned aerial vehicle operations, degrade precision munitions, and complicate command, control, and intelligence collection efforts across the Joint Force.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The DPRK continues to view its nuclear weapons program as the guarantor of state security and regime survival. Pyongyang is focused on improving its capabilities to strike the U.S. Homeland with nuclear warheads and is pursuing novel capabilities, such as underwater drones, while increasing its stockpile of weapons grade uranium and plutonium in support of its nuclear program. Since 2016, Pyongyang has displayed three separate nuclear warhead designs, including a purported 5-kiloton warhead suitable for use with numerous systems—likely optimized for theater employment.

Despite a decline in flight testing in 2025, Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un maintained his focus on replacing legacy liquid-propellant missiles with multiple classes of modernized solid-propellant missile systems. In October 2025, North Korea displayed the solid-propellant Hwasong-20, reportedly its most powerful ICBM system to date. Solid propellant systems are easier to maintain and can be launched on short notice with little to no indications and warning, reducing the time window for response. The DPRK also displayed possible hypersonic glide vehicles intended to avoid ballistic missile defenses. Recognizing shortfalls in its conventional military capability, Pyongyang's asymmetric military strategy also includes EW as a key component, primarily focused on disrupting enemy communications and navigation systems,

with recurring global positioning system (GPS) signal jamming used against South Korean civilian and military targets.

Growing Relations Between Adversaries

In September 2025, China's President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and North Korean Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un appeared together publicly during a military parade in Beijing. This high-profile meeting suggests a shared ambition to reshape the global balance of power. Despite underlying tensions and divergent national interest amongst these nation-states, each sees advantage in challenging post-Cold War security arrangements and countering U.S. interests abroad. The United States and its allies must be prepared for the possibility that one or more potential opponents might act together in a coordinated or opportunistic fashion across multiple theaters.

China has sought to preserve its close ties with Russia while promoting its own image as a responsible great power, projecting public "neutrality" in the Russo-Ukrainian War while economically enabling Russia's war efforts. China also remains one of North Korea's principal supporters. In its December 2025 National Security White Paper, China omitted its long-standing policy request for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Russia has expanded its partnership with North Korea in a more overt and transactional manner. The June 2024 Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Moscow and Pyongyang highlights this growing relationship; Russia gains munitions and manpower for the war in Ukraine, while North Korea gains financial inflows and potentially technology in support of its nuclear and missile programs. Tehran is also contributing to the war in Ukraine by supplying Moscow with armed drones and short-range ballistic missiles, facilitating reconstitution of Russia's conventional forces.

STRENGTHENING THE WARFIGHTER ETHOS—OUR PEOPLE

USSTRATCOM recognizes that people are the cornerstone of credible deterrence, relying on a force of 41,000 military, civilian, and contractor personnel dedicated to its global mission. Our warfighters are trained, mentally and physically resilient, and stand ready to endure the rigors of conflict. To focus our efforts on warfighting, we are leveraging technology at every echelon within the command to facilitate the effectiveness and efficiency of options made available to the President.

To meet future challenges, we prioritize attracting, developing, and retaining talent through career-enhancing experiences, professional development, robust internship programs, and an extensive Academic Alliance consisting of over 60 colleges, universities, and institutions. Strategic education efforts include advancing knowledge in deterrence theory, NC3, JEMSO, and data advantage for decision advantage across the DoW, academia, allies, and partners, while addressing national priorities such as increasing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics expertise and revitalizing the defense industrial base (DIB). Installation-level readiness, training pipelines, and disciplined leadership development at operational units directly underpin strategic deterrence credibility and day-to-day force generation.

DETERRENCE—STRATEGIC CAPABILITIES

Our nuclear deterrent is foundational to our national defense. Each leg of the triad—land, sea, and air—provides unique and complementary strengths, ensuring the resilience, effectiveness, survivability, and flexibility required to address strategic challenges. JEMSO, a critical enabler, ensures spectrum superiority and supports the integration of strategic capabilities across all domains. Together with the ongoing modernization of the NC3 enterprise, these efforts reinforce the United States' ability to defend the Homeland, deter aggression, assure allies

and partners, and hold adversaries at risk anytime and anyplace to achieve Presidential objectives if deterrence fails. Maintaining operational readiness while simultaneously modernizing U.S. warheads, delivery platforms, and NC3 in an environment where potential adversaries are increasing the role, diversity, and size of their nuclear arsenals is critical to our success.

Land-Based Triad Component

The land-leg of the nuclear triad remains our most responsive, enduring strategic deterrent capability. Our ICBMs are controlled by a resilient and diverse NC3 system providing assured connectivity. On alert around-the-clock and dispersed across thousands of miles, this flexible and adaptable force raises the bar for any adversary considering a strike against United States' nuclear forces. No adversary could confidently attack our ICBMs without incurring devastating and intolerable cost.

The Minuteman III (MMIII) missile was initially deployed over 50 years ago with a planned 10-year service life. It continues to achieve a 98% Mission Capable rate with missiles on alert 24/7/365. Increasing sustainment and maintenance costs continue as defense industry partners contend with obsolete parts, aging support equipment, and a reduction in specialized manufacturing capabilities.

Sentinel development and deployment remain top priorities for the Air Force and USSTRATCOM. Every opportunity is being explored to expedite Sentinel program deliverables. The forthcoming Milestone B recertification (scheduled for not later than 2026) will provide a more concrete deployment timeline. It is critical we maintain stable requirements, seek executable opportunities to decrease schedule timelines, and keep the program fully funded through fielding. Any further delay to the Sentinel program will have cascading negative impacts across the triad, driving increased risk to strategic deterrence. Sentinel will dramatically

improve the overall effectiveness of the land-leg of the triad to meet the Nation's needs in terms of accuracy, range, responsiveness, safety, security, and sustainment.

Sea-Based Triad Component

The sea-leg is the most survivable leg of the triad, representing 70% of our Nation's day-to-day nuclear capabilities and providing a credible assured second-strike capability. The 14 OHIO-class SSBNs, armed with the highly capable Trident II D5 Strategic Weapon System, maintain continuous at-sea presence capable of imposing unacceptable cost to an adversary from a virtually undetectable platform. On-time delivery of the COLUMBIA-class and Trident II D5 Life Extension 2 (D5LE2) remains a top priority to sustain U.S. dominance in the sea-based strategic deterrence capability.

Originally designed for a 30-year service life, the average age of the OHIO-class fleet is now 35 years, with a planned life extension to 44 years. The OHIO-class will serve longer than any previous U.S. submarine and must be replaced. During transition from the OHIO-class to COLUMBIA-class, the Navy is conducting service life extensions of OHIO-class submarines as necessary to mitigate schedule delays. USSTRATCOM, in close collaboration with DoW partners, is actively pursuing risk mitigation options as we modernize the sea-leg of the nuclear triad.

The COLUMBIA-class SSBN will incorporate numerous advancements, including a life-of-hull reactor, electric drive propulsion, significant acoustic improvements, and state-of-the-art combat control systems, delivering unparalleled operational capabilities to ensure our SSBN fleet maintains its strategic advantage in the undersea domain. The COLUMBIA-class remains one of USSTRATCOM's highest priorities and will achieve its first strategic deterrent patrol no later than 2031. The Navy is assessing potential opportunities to recover schedule in post-delivery

activities to meet USSTRATCOM's required initial operational capability, and continued submarine industrial base investment remains vital to meeting the demand of the COLUMBIA-class as it enters full rate serial production.

Sustaining acoustic superiority in the undersea domain through the transition from OHIO- to COLUMBIA-class submarines and beyond necessitates investment in advanced large vertical arrays, cutting-edge materials science, coatings, continued regular modernization of the tactical SSBN combat system, and other initiatives within the Acoustic Superiority Program. The Integrated Undersea Surveillance System and its planned recapitalization efforts deliver real-time intelligence on submarine and surface ship operations, allowing Combatant Commanders to strategically position forces to support deterrence patrols and combat operations.

Air-Based Triad Component

The air-leg of the nuclear triad serves as a visible and flexible component of our strategic deterrent, providing response options from conventional strikes to nuclear operations. In 2025, our Bomber Task Force (BTF) demonstrated its global reach with over 243 days of overseas presence, conducting more than 100 missions in partnership with all CCMDs, integrating with 27 ally and partner nations. The demand for bomber support continues to strain the fleet, presenting maintenance and aircrew challenges that will not be cured solely by the future B-21. The continued funding of bomber modernization programs and improving critical parts availability will be critical to ensuring a capable long-range strike bomber fleet that will deter potential adversaries and assure our allies and partners.

The B-52 is not a legacy platform; it is a critical component of the air-leg. Together with the B-21, these two platforms will serve as the backbone of the bomber fleet for the next 30-50 years. Maintaining this capability requires committed investment and modernization. The most

significant of these efforts is the B-52 Commercial Engine Replacement Program. Replacing the aging TF33 engines with new, more efficient and sustainable engines will dramatically improve the B-52's fuel efficiency, range, and operational availability while reducing maintenance costs. USSTRATCOM looks forward to the DoW's new acquisition strategy to accelerate this process and allow the continued adoption of the most current technologies available.

Maintaining a robust B-1 and B-2 bomber force as the Air Force fields, integrates, and fully operationalizes the B-21 is imperative to long-term strategic deterrence. The long-range, high-speed B-1B Lancer provides massive conventional capacity and flexibility. The Air Force is modernizing the B-1B with new weapons and improving its networking capabilities for seamless integration in a joint, all-domain environment while simultaneously ensuring the B-2 remains operationally relevant with upgrades to radar absorbent materials, weapons integration capabilities, multi-function displays, GPS reception, and communication systems. Sustainment remains essential to maintaining a favorable conventional military balance until the B-21 achieves operational mass; depot throughput, parts funding, and aircrew retention directly affect near-term deterrent credibility.

The B-21 will serve as the premier long-range penetrating bomber and command and communications enabler. Fielding success depends on early investment in installation infrastructure, workforce development, and nuclear certification resourcing at operational Wings. The B-21's open architecture will allow for rapid integration of new technologies and capabilities, ensuring it remains at the forefront of long-range strike airpower for decades to come. The current program of record (POR) calls for 100 B-21 bombers; however, last year, USSTRATCOM, along with other Combatant Commanders, advocated to continue assessing the POR to meet global warfighting demands. We continue to work with the Air Force and the DoW on assessments to determine the final procurement quantity.

While upgrades extended its service life, the AGM-86 Air-Launched Cruise Missile is approaching obsolescence. To maintain our strategic advantage, we must deliver the AGM-181 Long Range Standoff (LRSO) weapon, a modern replacement of the nuclear air-launched cruise missile with greater targeting flexibility and enhanced capability to penetrate defended areas. The LRSO weapon delivers an extended range, enabling us to hold targets at risk from distances beyond previous capabilities. Compared to other nuclear modernization efforts, the LRSO program has consistently met its milestones and has been on track to meet planned delivery dates.

Our bombers rely on tankers; the tanker fleet serves as the foundation of our air-based global strike capabilities. Across the Joint Force, CCMD demand for these global reach assets is increasing. The declining availability of the aging KC-135 requires the acceleration of tanker modernization and recapitalization. Increasing connectivity and survivability are paramount, and USSTRATCOM fully supports Air Mobility Command's efforts with the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center to certify the KC-46 for nuclear operations.

Nuclear Command, Control, And Communications (NC3) Enterprise

The President holds sole authority over the execution and termination of nuclear weapons use, necessitating resilient, survivable, and secure NC3 systems to ensure communication with the Nation's nuclear forces under all conditions. Sustaining legacy NC3 capabilities while accelerating modernization efforts—including next-generation technologies, enhanced cybersecurity, and artificial intelligence integration—is critical to maintain assured command and control of our forces.

USSTRATCOM is leveraging high-quality data to enhance system and network sensing, monitoring, and response capabilities, ensuring the detection and prevention of intrusions and

denial-of-service attacks. Pursuant to the DoW's initiative to cultivate an "AI-first" workforce, AI and ML are now integral to USSTRATCOM's mission, enabling the analysis and interpretation of vast data streams. While we leverage AI and ML to expand decision space for senior leaders, we also remain committed to ensuring that these capabilities will not replace the human decision-making critical to advising and executing Presidential directives regarding the use of nuclear weapons.

In collaboration with the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment (OUSW(A&S)) and other stakeholders, the NC3 Enterprise Center (NEC) ensures warfighter communications capabilities to detect adversary threats, correlate data for Presidential decision-making, and direct force employment. The ability to disseminate emergency action messages throughout all phases of conflict relies on a robust combination of terrestrial-, aerial-, and space-based systems to provide the President, advisors, and military commanders with the decision space needed to evaluate options and take decisive action.

The USSTRATCOM NEC is advancing both materiel and non-materiel solutions to maintain combat advantage by shaping next-generation capabilities in collaboration with OUSW(A&S), OUSW for Research & Engineering, the Services, academia, national laboratories, and industry. We are also integrating Golden Dome for America (GDA) into USSTRATCOM's deterrence and Homeland defense posture by strengthening strategic capability, reinforcing nuclear command and control, and advancing a layered defense architecture. Other key focus areas for USSTRATCOM include the Survivable Airborne Operations Center (SAOC), E-130J Take Charge and Move Out (TACAMO) recapitalization, replacement of the E-6B Airborne Command Post (LOOKING GLASS), resilient satellite communications, survivable missile warning and tracking systems, ground-based NC3

components, securing cyberspace data processes, and harnessing AI, ML, and other leading-edge technologies to enhance operational effectiveness.

Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (JEMSO)

Assured access to the EMS is critical for all-domain operations. As the Joint Force lead for JEMSO, we oversee the assessment of JEMSO readiness, the standardization of JEMSO education, and the reporting of operational risks and capability requirements. Spectrum superiority supports essential capabilities such as command and control; ISR; positioning, navigation, and timing; and advanced weapons systems.

Achieving force readiness requires training in operationally realistic environments. The USSTRATCOM JEMSO Center (JEC) collaborates with the Joint Staff and the DoW Chief Information Officer to ensure regulators understand the operational impact of spectrum sharing or reallocation. The JEC also coordinates with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to improve GPS testing, training, and exercise processes, ensuring the reliability of FAA air traffic control and navigation systems while supporting military training.

USSTRATCOM integrates JEMSO explicitly into long-range strike mission planning and low-observable employment to elevate bomber survivability in contested EM environments. In 2024, USSTRATCOM coordinated with the Under Secretary of War for Intelligence & Security and the intelligence community to focus on potential adversary use of the EMS to ensure we have a comprehensive understanding of the threat. Subsequently, the Defense Intelligence Enterprise established a new Complex Analytic Issue for EMSO to increase analysis of potential adversary EMS-dependent systems, emerging threats to the EMS, and development of countermeasures.

Integrated Planning and Operations

Effective deterrence requires the integrated and synchronized employment of joint and combined forces and capabilities. We accomplish this through integrated planning, exercises, and wargames. Our focus on conventional nuclear integration (CNI) and regional deterrence capabilities, including theater nuclear forces (TNF), underscores our commitment to adapting to evolving threats and maintaining a credible deterrent posture across multiple domains and theaters of operation.

Exercises and wargames exemplify USSTRATCOM's essential role in safeguarding national security and maintaining global stability. The ELITE CONSTELLATION 25 (EC25) Campaign, the first iteration of a Joint Staff-led fiscal year (FY) 2024-2027 initiative, provided a critical platform to enhance Joint Force warfighting capabilities. Conducted in partnership with eight other CCMDs, interagency partners, allies, and partner nations, EC25 focused on advancing joint integrated operations. Following this success, USSTRATCOM conducted GLOBAL THUNDER 26, a field training and command post exercise centered on nuclear mission execution addressing the employment of strategic assets, nuclear deterrence and assurance, and escalation dynamics, while refining layered defensive strategies for the NC3 enterprise.

To further enhance integration, USSTRATCOM conducted a gap analysis tabletop exercise (TTX) in August 2025 to identify vulnerabilities and to strengthen the coordination of conventional and strategic forces. Building on lessons learned, USSTRATCOM executed four GIANT DRAGON/NIGHT BLUE exercises in 2025 with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) focused exclusively on CNI execution. This collaborative approach will continue with U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) in 2026, ensuring the refinement of CNI concepts from planning through operational execution across multiple theaters. USSTRATCOM

also executed a biodefense TTX with USINDOPACOM, U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), and partners across the Military Health System aimed at mission assurance and health services support to nuclear surety in a bio-degraded environment.

USSTRATCOM is committed to enhancing combined force interoperability. In 2025, USSTRATCOM conducted combined operations with 31 allies and partners—from BTF missions to SSBN port visits. USSTRATCOM also participates in the U.S.-Japan Extended Deterrence Dialogue, the U.S.-Australia Strategic Policy Dialogue, and the U.S.-Republic of Korea Nuclear Consultative Group to strengthen extended deterrence with our allies and enhance strategic and operational planning in joint/combined environments.

CNI is the seamless planning and operation of joint and combined conventional and nuclear forces, in sequence and in parallel across the competition continuum. CNI extends beyond conventional kinetic support to nuclear operations, emphasizing the incorporation of non-kinetic and influence operations to complement, amplify, or enhance nuclear capabilities. USSTRATCOM continues to advocate for conventional, long-range, precision strike weapons systems capable of holding distant, defended, and time-sensitive targets at risk. As potential adversary military capabilities expand, this capability becomes increasingly critical. To accelerate the technological maturation process, USSTRATCOM continues to advocate for partnerships with commercial infrastructure and launch vehicle providers to enhance U.S. capacity for ground and flight testing of hypersonic technologies.

China, Russia, and North Korea are actively developing theater-range nuclear weapons to counterbalance the conventional military advantage of the United States and its allies and partners. Addressing these efforts requires theater nuclear capabilities that provide credible deterrence options and incentivize off-ramps. To this end, USSTRATCOM is collaborating with

USINDOPACOM, USEUCOM, Nuclear Weapons Council partners in the DoW, and the Department of Energy to identify the most effective strategies for deploying future TNF.

The Joint Force Requirements Council (formerly the Joint Requirements Oversight Council) validated USSTRATCOM's requirements for TNF, which outlines the need for a diverse set of enduring, multi-domain theater nuclear capabilities. Key components of this portfolio include deployed gravity weapons in Europe and the planned fielding of the Nuclear-Armed Sea-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM-N). SLCM-N will provide an additional at-sea nuclear deterrent capability with limited operational deployment in FY 2032 and initial operational capability in FY 2034. This program will deliver a low-yield, non-ballistic theater nuclear option to support Presidential objectives, providing additional range, flexibility, and survivability.

These capabilities enable flexible force posture to expand the President's decision-making space and enhance the ability to manage nuclear risks across the conflict continuum. USSTRATCOM remains committed to working with the Nuclear Weapons Council, other CCMDs, the Services, and the National Nuclear Security Administration to explore rapid prototyping and other opportunities to accelerate the development and deployment of additional theater nuclear capabilities.

DELIVERING WARFIGHTING ADVANTAGE—INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE & SECURITY

The USSTRATCOM portfolio relies on a robust and modernized national and defense industrial base, nuclear stockpile, and security infrastructure to address evolving threats and maintain global stability. Stringent nuclear security measures are also necessary, requiring investments in early warning systems and rapid response capabilities.

National And Defense Industrial Base

A nation that builds is a nation that wins. The national industrial base and the DIB provide the materials, products, and services necessary to sustain and modernize the Nation's defense capabilities. For USSTRATCOM, the DIB acts as a force multiplier, with production serving as a signal of U.S. readiness and resolve to potential adversaries. This includes public and private organizations that supply the DoW with critical materials and services—extending beyond the United States to allies like Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea.

Stockpile And Weapons Infrastructure

The U.S. nuclear stockpile is aging, and its supporting infrastructure has significantly atrophied since the end of the Cold War. The current nuclear weapons modernization program of record is absolutely necessary to field the world's most robust, credible, and modern nuclear deterrent. However, our supporting infrastructure for nuclear modernization is challenged to meet the demands of the evolving global security environment. To address these challenges, the United States must shift from incremental extensions to the next generation of nuclear forces with new and modern capabilities, underpinned by a flexible, capable, and efficient nuclear security enterprise. Future weapon designs will prioritize adaptability, allowing for integration of new technologies throughout their lifecycles.

In recent years, the nuclear enterprise has demonstrated the ability to act with urgency by delivering the first B61-13 gravity bomb ahead of schedule while continuing to make steady progress on the W80-4 LRSO, the W87-1 ICBM, the W93 SLBM warhead programs. Major programs to address plutonium pit production, high explosives formulation and manufacturing, uranium and lithium processing, radiation case production, and strategic radiation hardened

component manufacturing are all experiencing schedule pressure and will be challenged to meet expanding modernization requirements. In the long-term, maintaining and growing a robust science and technology portfolio and creating an enterprise with residual capacity are essential to ensuring the nuclear deterrent remains agile and responsive to future strategic threats.

Nuclear Security

USSTRATCOM warfighting posture differs significantly from other CCMDs due to our continuous alert status and force generation requirements. DoW policy mandates stringent protection and security for U.S. nuclear weapons and platforms, recognizing their political and military significance, destructive potential, and the catastrophic ramifications of unauthorized access. USSTRATCOM remains steadfast in its commitment to maintaining rigorous security standards while advocating for programs that mitigate potential security challenges.

The MH-139A Grey Wolf platform provides significantly improved rapid response capabilities against threats to our land-based ICBMs and associated supporting infrastructure. Compared to its predecessor, the UH-1N, the MH-139A offers substantial improvements in speed, range, endurance, payload capacity, and survivability.

The Air Force's Weapon Generation Facility (WGF) recapitalization program is replacing aging 1960s-era Weapon Storage Areas with modern, reinforced facilities that consolidate nuclear weapons maintenance, storage operations, and weapon generation activities under one secure roof. WGFs are designed to meet current and emerging weapon system requirements while enhancing nuclear security, sustainment, and the fielding of next-generation systems such as Sentinel, B-21, and the LRSO weapon.

Ukraine's June 2025 drone strike against Russian combat support airfields, Operation SPIDERWEB, demonstrated the disproportionate lethality Unmanned Systems (UxS) can

achieve against strategic forces at a fraction of the cost of traditional weapon systems, underscoring the urgent need for robust countermeasures, especially within the Homeland. The Joint Force Requirements Council's validation of USSTRATCOM's initial capabilities document, Protection of Strategic Forces: Countering UxS, highlights the gravity of this threat and prioritizes the protection of our assured second-strike capability.

In accordance with the GDA Executive Order, and in close collaboration with USNORTHCOM and other DoW stakeholders, USSTRATCOM is actively assessing strategic missile threats and prioritizing locations for defense against attacks by nuclear-armed adversaries. GDA is a multi-domain, layered missile defense initiative designed to defend the U.S. Homeland against advanced ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles, cruise missiles, and space-enabled threats. GDA strengthens deterrence by denial while reinforcing the credibility of U.S. strategic forces. By integrating space-based sensors, ground-based interceptors, and advanced command and control into a coherent Homeland defense architecture, GDA enhances the Joint Force's ability to defend North America and safeguard U.S. global interests, including the Arctic. USSTRATCOM strongly supports a disciplined, operationally grounded Homeland defense architecture that reinforces strategic stability while protecting the American people.

Nuclear surety is a no-fail mission, and the success of military operations depends on adequate and modernized military medical support. The Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) is a critical DoW program designed to maintain the highest standards of individual reliability for personnel working with or supporting nuclear weapons and systems. Military Health System support to PRP plays a vital role by monitoring the healthcare of these individuals and advising certifying officials on how medications, medical conditions, or treatments may impact reliability or mission readiness.

CONCLUSION

USSTRATCOM remains ready to defend the Homeland and deter strategic attacks to ensure the security of the United States, its allies, and partners in an increasingly complex and contested global environment. As the Nation faces potential adversaries who are modernizing their nuclear arsenals, advancing novel weapon systems, and seeking advantage in emerging domains, the mission to deter strategic attack and, if necessary, prevail in conflict has never been more critical.

Through the modernization of the nuclear triad, the enhancement of NC3 systems, and the development and integration of advanced capabilities such as hypersonic weapons and counter-unmanned systems, USSTRATCOM is addressing the threats of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. These efforts, combined with investments in the defense industrial base, workforce development, strategic partnerships, and continued congressional support with stable budget funding/appropriations will ensure that the United States maintains a safe, secure, effective, and credible global strategic combat capability.