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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
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UNITED STATES SENATE

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE  
UNITED STATES SENATE

SUBJECT: Air Force Strategic Programs

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Chairman Nelson, Ranking Member Vitter, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to represent the men and women of the Eighth Air Force and to answer your questions regarding the use of bomber aircraft in the United States Air Force. A key component in our nation's ability to conduct long-range strike missions is found within our Air Force bombers. This unique capability is not possessed by any other branch of our armed services or by any other nation. Globally, the distance of our potential adversaries and lack of basing options hampers our ability to perform in a variety of theaters and scenarios. Long-range strike aviation is one of the few hedges our nation maintains to mitigate these fundamental challenges. Air Force strategic bombers are a critical element of our National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy, providing unique capabilities to fulfill combatant commanders' mission objectives from shaping and deterring to large scale conventional operations and even nuclear scenarios.

Despite the age of our nation's three bombers, the Air Force long-range bomber force is unmatched in its ability to provide conventional power for initial response to regional crises within hours. Additionally, our bombers can provide sustained operations in any region of the world employing either conventional or nuclear options. As we move away from forward overseas basing, the speed, range and payload of today's manned bombers allow for a US presence anywhere on the globe within 24 hours.

The end of the Cold War brought about a false feeling of global security, especially surrounding the long feared use of nuclear weapons between the Cold War superpowers. Shortly after the end of the Cold War we saw the world in its new form—violent and unstable. Different from the last century, non-state actors, specifically radical fundamentalists, moved to the

forefront of the international stage. Our national security debates centered on not only how to counter this threat, but whether insurgent radical fundamentalism is the likely dominant form of warfare for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are critically important questions when deciding the best national military force structure size and composition. But in an effort to “tailor” our force structure we would be remiss if we were to assume this type of warfare will totally dominate the global security horizon for the foreseeable future. For at least the first 25 years of the 21st century, instability, violence, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and cultural/religious clashes will be center stage on the global arena. However, we must guard against absolute predictions of what forms of warfare may occur in the future.

As we moved into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the 2002 Nuclear Posture Review revealed that the Cold War’s Triad was limited in scope and in need of an update. Our deterrence foundation still relies on our strike capability composed of a formidable balance of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM) and manned recallable and re-targetable bombers. In today’s threat environment where non-state actors and counter insurgency operations are center stage, the importance of our bomber force to deterrence is often overlooked and little understood. The strategic bomber is unique in its ability to assure allies, shape the environment, dissuade potential adversaries, complicate adversary strategy, provide the President and Secretary of Defense escalation control options, and ultimately offer alternatives to the insertion of precious ground forces on foreign soil.

Unquestionably, there are a myriad of applications for the use of bombers. These include but are not limited to: 1) the demonstration of national resolve through force generation and arming with either conventional or nuclear weapons; 2) upon order, covert or overt dispersal

within the US or deployment to forward locations; 3) strike operations from single-aircraft to multi-aircraft conventional and/or nuclear packages, which, most importantly, can be executed, retargeted, or recalled; and 4) employment of a vast array of weapons to include conventional unguided general purpose bombs, cluster munitions, precision guided munitions, hard target penetrators, nuclear gravity weapons, and conventional or nuclear cruise missiles. Further, bombers have a unique ability to communicate de-escalation through visible down-loading and removal from alert status and/or redeployment to home stations. Overall, and possibly most notable, bombers are differentiable from other strategic nuclear weapon systems—there-by not forcing an enemy into assuming a worst case nuclear scenario.

In the new Strategic Triad, it is the bomber that provides the most flexibility to US command authorities, with this flexibility being multifaceted and unique among the triad components. Air Force bombers are recallable, scalable, directional and visible and provide our President and Secretary of Defense with both assurance and deterrence at the same time. This deterrence flows not only from the bombers' nuclear strike capability but also from the robust demonstrated conventional capability that can hold any target on the planet at risk. Another unique feature of our bomber force is the ability to deter even while strike operations are being executed. Simply put, deterrence from bombers can continue despite shots being fired. Furthermore, by enabling the effectiveness of other US and partner instruments of power, bomber conventional capability can provide alternatives for deterrence beyond the obvious threat of annihilation. The most illustrative example is US bombers operating in conjunction with indigenous ground forces in Serbia, which ultimately helped facilitate enemy capitulation without large scale NATO ground force insertion.

To be sure, all components of the Strategic Triad are critical to our National Security Strategy but the bomber force has and will continue to be unique in its ability to assure allies, shape environment, dissuade potential adversaries, complicate adversary planning, provide escalation control, and offer alternatives to our combatant commanders and the President and Secretary of Defense. Bombers are the only platform in the Strategic Triad which can be employed in either conventional or nuclear roles.

As our forces continue to redeploy from forward bases around the world, long-range strike aviation will remain one of our nation's key power projection capabilities in the foreseeable future. This long-range strike capability provides the nation the most powerful means to rapidly respond or attack around the globe and offers our nation's leaders freedom of choices and freedom of action in the new world environment. Our national security will increasingly depend on strategic bombers to meet the demands of responding rapidly and decisively to security threats. Thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to your questions.