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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
STRATEGIC FORCES SUBCOMMITTEE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: Status of the Air Force Nuclear Security Roadmap

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AF Global Strike Command

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Chairman Langevin, Ranking Member Turner, distinguished Members of the Committee, it is an honor to appear before you today for the first time as the Commander of Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC). I thank you for the opportunity to discuss the current status of the Air Force's newest major command.

Upon assuming office in summer 2008, Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff General Norton Schwartz launched a comprehensive, multi-faceted roadmap designed to restore a culture of compliance, rebuild the nuclear enterprise, invest in nuclear capabilities, and ensure nuclear weapons will remain safe, secure and reliable. Air Force Global Strike Command was established as a key part of this roadmap. This Command is a visible commitment to the nuclear enterprise, clearly aligning the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and nuclear-capable bomber forces under a single chain-of-command, providing focused oversight and advocacy of the Air Force's nuclear forces.

The Command was founded on the premise that as important as other defense priorities may be, none are more important than the responsibility for operating, maintaining, securing and supporting nuclear weapons. For if there is one unchanging, immutable truth about this awesome capability — it is that it demands constant and undivided attention. This was true in the past, it is true now, and it will be true in the future, regardless of the size or composition of our nuclear deterrence and global strike forces.

Last year, in a speech in Prague, Czech Republic, President Obama made this point perfectly clear. "Make no mistake," he said, "as long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies." This, then, is the fundamental mission of Global Strike Command: to develop and provide safe, secure and credible nuclear deterrence and global strike forces both to

deter attacks and assure our allies. It performs this mission with an elite, highly disciplined team of American Airmen with special trust and responsibility for the most powerful weapons in our Nation's arsenal.

Air Force Global Strike Command is being established in a methodical, step-by-step approach, to once again bring all Air Force long-range, nuclear-capable forces under a single major command.

The first phase was the stand-up of a provisional command in January of last year at Bolling Air Force Base, under the leadership of Major General James Kowalski, now the Vice Commander of AFGSC. Its principal tasks were to develop the initial planning documents, to define the manpower requirements, and to begin actually assigning people to the Command.

The next phase took place on August 7th, with the formal activation of the Command at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. Upon activation, the first order of business was to ensure functionality of the headquarters, to include moving our newly-assigned personnel into existing facilities at Barksdale Air Force Base and providing the necessary communications and information technology for them to perform their duties. Each of our divisions began the process of reviewing and, if necessary, writing new instructions and guidance for the field units and forces slated to become part of the Command. A Response Task Force and Crisis Action Team were established, trained and equipped to respond to any serious incidents, including weapon system accidents and natural disasters. Our Inspector General developed a concept of operations that ensures AFGSC has a rigorous inspection process that instills an uncompromising adherence to standards. These are but a few of the hundreds of action items from the Chief of Staff-approved Program Plan the staff addressed while preparing to take control of operational forces.

The first transfer of forces occurred on Dec. 1, when Global Strike Command assumed responsibility for the intercontinental ballistic missile mission. Originally part of the Strategic Air Command, the Air Force's ICBMs were assigned to Air Force Space Command in 1993. Under the new command arrangements, 20th Air Force, headquartered at F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo. and its three ICBM wings — the 90th at F.E. Warren AFB, the 341st at Malmstrom AFB, Mont., and the 91st at Minot AFB, N.D. — now fall under Global Strike Command. On the same day, AFGSC also took charge of the ICBM test mission of the 576th Flight Test Squadron at Vandenberg AFB, Calif. and the targeting analysis mission of the 625th Strategic Operations Squadron at Offutt AFB, Neb. The transfer of these organizations added approximately 8,500 personnel to the Command. In conjunction with mission transfer, I personally visited each of the bases to meet with senior military leaders and civic leaders, and conducted “town-hall meetings” with all assigned airmen. Additionally on Dec 8, the AFGSC Inspector General conducted no notice limited Nuclear Surety Inspections simultaneously at all three missile wings—and, all three passed.

On Feb. 1, the transfer of forces to AFGSC will be complete as the new Command assumes responsibility for 8th Air Force and the long-range, nuclear-capable bomber mission from Air Combat Command. The Mighty Eighth has its headquarters at Barksdale AFB, La., and exercises command over the two B-52 wings, at Barksdale and Minot, and the B-2 wing at Whiteman AFB, Mo. Over 13,100 personnel are assigned to 8th Air Force.

Air Force Global Strike Command will achieve full operational capability in late summer 2010 with about 900 personnel on board at the headquarters and nearly 23,000 people in the entire Command.

The Minuteman III ICBMs as well as the nuclear-capable B-52 and B-2 bombers which will be a part of AFGSC have been, and most importantly remain, essential components of our nation's armed forces. Each makes important and unique contributions to the security of our nation, as well as the security of our allies and friends.

Of the three legs of the strategic nuclear triad, the ICBMs are the most responsive to national leadership. Continuously on alert and deployed in 450 widely dispersed locations, the size and characteristics of the overall Minuteman III force presents any potential adversary with an almost insurmountable challenge should they contemplate attacking the United States. Because an adversary cannot disarm the ICBM force without nearly exhausting their own forces in the process, and at the same time, leaving themselves vulnerable to our sea-launched ballistic missiles and bombers, they have no incentive to strike in the first place. In this case, numbers do matter. The ICBM contributes immeasurably to both deterrence and stability in a crisis.

The B-52 and B-2 are also critically important components of the strategic nuclear triad because of their great flexibility and versatility. They can avoid flying over sensitive areas in ways ballistic missiles may not be able to do. They can be used to signal resolve and intent through very visible steps to increase their readiness or to deploy them to different locations. Just as the various components of the triad provide mutually reinforcing, complementary capabilities, so too do the two different bombers, with the B-52 providing unique, unmatched stand-off capabilities and the B-2 providing the capability to attack heavily defended targets.

It is also worth noting that Air Force Global Strike Command will assume lead command responsibilities for the venerable UH-1N Huey helicopter that currently supports field operations and security at all three missile bases. While this helicopter remains a serviceable aircraft, thanks to the expertise and efforts of our helicopter squadron leaders and our contractor logistics

support, the UH-1N fleet is aging and its ability to meet post 9/11 security requirements is constrained by cargo capacity, range and speed.

The Air Force is planning to acquire a Common Vertical Lift Support Platform (CVLSP) to replace the current UH-1N fleet. It is considering an incremental acquisition approach, the first of which might be a production contract beginning in fiscal year (FY) 12. To this end, Air Force Material Command has issued a Sources Sought Synopsis/Capability Request For Information to obtain market insight into potential solutions and sources capable of providing at least 16 aircraft no later than the end of FY 17.

The nuclear deterrence and global strike forces of the Air Force remain vitally important to the nation, as well as to our friends and allies around the world. For the women and men of Air Force Global Strike Command that means we have an extraordinarily important mission; noble and worthy work to perform; work that demands the utmost in professionalism, discipline, excellence, pride and esprit.

For as Secretary of Defense Gates noted in his remarks to the bomber and missile personnel at Minot Air Force Base in December 2008, “Handling nuclear weapons – the most powerful and destructive instruments in the arsenal of freedom – is a tremendous responsibility. We owe you the attention, the people, and the resources you need to do the job right... Yours is the most sensitive mission in the entire United States military.”

Everyone across America — and the world — should know and never doubt that the senior leadership of the Air Force is extremely proud of the Airmen who currently serve in 8th and 20th Air Forces, and what they do every day. Indeed, our Airmen are doing truly magnificent work — flying sorties and performing alert duties; keeping our bombers flying and our missiles ready; defending our flight lines and launch facilities; deploying to Southwest Asia

and Guam; supporting our Airmen, their families and retirees; and caring for our wounded warriors. With every sortie, every alert tour, every shift, every post and every support activity — they demonstrate over and over that they rank among the best and brightest Airmen who have ever served in the United States Air Force.

This new Command reflects the Air Force's firm and unshakable conviction that strategic nuclear deterrence and global strike operations require a special trust and responsibility — one that we take very seriously. Air Force Global Strike Command will serve as a single voice to maintain the high standards necessary in the stewardship of our Air Force's strategic deterrent forces.