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# House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces Holds Hearing on Strategic Forces Posture

## LIST OF PANEL MEMBERS AND WITNESSES

DOUG LAMBORN:

[off-mic] morning. We look forward to your testimony. As this is the first Strategic Forces Subcommittee hearing of the 118th Congress, I'm going to take a chairman's prerogative and lay out some agenda and priorities for me. I would like to start by acknowledging the new ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Seth Moulton of Massachusetts.

Weren't you on the screen just a moment ago for C-SPAN? You must have hurried back over here?

SETH MOULTON:

I hustled. I'm a marine. I can hustle.

DOUG LAMBORN:

And just from our short time working together in our new capacities, I am already confident that we will continue a strong, bipartisan tradition of this subcommittee. So I'm pleased for us to officially start our work together today. And I would like to welcome the new members of the subcommittee, as well, who might be in and out as we are going through this hearing.

Mr. Bacon of Nebraska, Mr. Banks of Indiana, Mr. Strong of Alabama, Mr. Norcross of New Jersey, Ms. Houlahan of Pennsylvania, and Mr. Vasquez of New Mexico. I am honored to be the chairman of this subcommittee and privileged to be the first person from Colorado to

hold this position. I've been working on these issues for many years, as they are integral to the fabric of my district, as well as to our national defense.

I have big shoes to fill. Recently retired Jim Cooper, Mike Turner, Mike Rogers, Ellen Tauscher are among those who have served so capably in this position while I have been in Congress. Thank you to our witnesses for appearing today. And I wish we had the president's budget to inform our discussion. The budget was due last month, but it seems like we're still one day early.

Regardless, there are a lot of strategic issues that we can dig into today. Russia's unjustified invasion of Ukraine, which just passed its year mark, has been punctuated by attempts at nuclear coercion. Now Putin has suspended Russia's participation in the New START treaty. I understand that Russia has ceased providing the US with treaty notifications, yet we continue to provide them for Russia.

It is curious that we provide Russia with this benefit under our treaty, when Russia is no longer reciprocating. Given Russia's suspension and their false declaration that the US is in material breach, the Joint Staff, with the help of STRATCOM, needs to accelerate contingency planning, should Russia begin uploading warheads on its strategic delivery systems, beyond the numbers called for.

China is also building up its nuclear arsenal at an unanticipated and rapid pace and is pursuing aggressive activities in all domains. Most notably, there is public reporting that Russia's state owned nuclear energy corporation, Rosatom, is helping China acquire enough weapons grade plutonium to fuel its strategic nuclear breakout.

I'm hopeful that we will see a comprehensive strategy from the administration to break this relationship, and ideally, shutter Rosatom. Now that India -- excuse me, now that China has surpassed the United States in the number of intercontinental ballistic missile launchers, STRATCOM has additional targets to hold at risk.

I'm sure we'll hear from General Cotton about how that complicates his targeting efforts and challenges his ability to deter two, near pure nuclear adversaries simultaneously. We can't

also forget that North Korea has an ICBM program that is proceeding apace, and Iran has multiple space launched vehicle programs giving cover for the development of an Iranian ICBM. Given all these threats, my priorities for the subcommittee include the following -- we must accelerate and timely field hypersonic weapons systems for all three services; adjust our nuclear modernization program to deter both Russia and China simultaneously; and ensure our missile defenses can outpace the North Korean and forthcoming Iranian ICBM threats.

This includes ensuring that the Department of Defense maintains the necessary spectrum to discriminate targets at range in the atmosphere, at all times. I will also continue to push the Department to develop a space policy we can debate in public take. Take a -- so we'll take a hard look at classification and continue to push for changes in how we do space acquisitions, as well.

Finally, I want to highlight that last year, on a bipartisan basis, Congress authorized and appropriated funds to the Navy and the National Nuclear Security Administration for research and development of the nuclear, sea-launched cruise missile, or SLCM-N. The restriction in the NDAA only applied to production work and was not meant to constrain research and development in any way.

And I also hope to hear how the department is progressing on the hard and deeply buried target study. With that, I'll turn it over to Ranking Member Moulton for any remarks he would like to make.

SETH MOULTON:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and congratulations on your appointment as chairman of this subcommittee. I know that you believe, as I do, that the issues this committee tackles are at the very core of our national security as a nation. Therefore, it is important that we work together in a bipartisan fashion to address the critical issues before us. I already know that there is much that we agree on and I hope that through open and transparent dialogue and debate, we can expand that area of agreement, as we both learn more about these important and fascinating issues.

I would also like to welcome General Cotton, as this is your first Strategic forces hearing. I am encouraged by our discussion last week, and your leadership is critical, given the growing global strategic threat to the United States. I appreciate your view that strategic deterrence is much broader than nuclear weapons, as the world and the threats we face as a nation have evolved significantly since our nuclear triad was first established.

I look forward to learning more about how you understand and apply integrated deterrence across multiple domains as you take command of STRATCOM. And as we welcome you, I also want to acknowledge that this will be General VanHerck's final, or last Strategic Forces Posture hearing. Thank you, sir, for your 36 years of distinguished service to our nation and the past three years as head of Northern Command.

During that time, you have shown great leadership, across a range of critical issues, from welcoming our Afghan refugees, responding to COVID-19, and highlighting the need for better situational awareness over the continental United States, which as we saw very clearly last month, is not just a hypothetical or a future need?

And thank you to all our witnesses for being here and for helping us begin the important work of writing the fiscal year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act. As we sit in this hearing, Russia continues to wage and unconscionable war against Ukraine, using veiled threats of nuclear weapons, not to keep the peace between superpowers, but offensively, to try and turn around its losing war.

Meanwhile, China is launching satellites that have dual use capability, putting US systems at risk. North Korea has been consistently launching ballistic missiles that can reach the United States. And just last week, the UN International Atomic Energy Agency reported that they had found uranium, enriched to near bomb grade purity, at an Iranian nuclear facility.

The mission of this subcommittee is growing in scope, importance and urgency. Our witnesses do not oversee development of weapon -- weapon systems per se, but they are responsible for current operations and are given the challenging task of predicting what the Department of Defense will need in the future to maintain strategic deterrence across all domains -- air land, sea space and cyber.

While we are clear eyed about the advancements our competitors are making in various weapon systems, we must also reflect on how our decisions, actions and statements are understood by those competitors and adversaries, to avoid starting or escalating an arms race, or worse, a miscalculation that could have catastrophic effects.

Ultimately, we should have two, shared goals -- ensuring our credible deterrence and strategic advantage over our adversaries, and reducing the number of weapons and chances of warfare on all sides. I am encouraged that the Biden administration is taking a more balanced approach to strategic deterrence, while maintaining and modernizing the triad and focusing on the greatest strength of the United States, our partners and allies.

Dr. Plumb, I am heartened to hear you say clearly that, quote, "the department," -- you're nervous now about what you just said, "the department will protect and defend US space capabilities, along with those of our allies, partners, and the commercial sector, when directed to do so." And I welcome this administration's real investments in domain awareness for war -- NORAD, with the modernization of the over the horizon radars, along the existing Northern Warning System architecture.

But there remains much work to be done in the jurisdiction of this subcommittee, and the strategic posture of the United States must remain a top priority, across both the administration and Congress. I look forward to working -- to conducting that work together, over the next two years. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

DOUG LAMBORN:

OK. Thank you. Now we'll move from opening statements -- from our opening statements to those of the witnesses. I would note that you're prepared statements will be made part of the record, but you'll each have five minutes to make some opening remarks. And Dr. Plumb, we will begin with you.

JOHN PLUMB:

Thank you very much, Chairman Lamborn and Ranking Member Moulton. Thanks for inviting me to testify on strategic forces posture. I appreciated sitting down with both of you last week, and I look forward to working with you in your new roles, as well as with the rest of the distinguished members of this committee.

Today, the United States finds itself in a highly dynamic and challenging security environment. It's characterized by intensifying strategic competition, assertive behavior by multiple competitors, rapidly evolving domains of conflict, and a growing risk of military confrontation. China and Russia have placed nuclear weapons, space warfare, and long range strike at the center of their strategies to counter the United States and our allies and partners.

As Secretary Austin has said since his first days in office, China is the department's pacing challenge. China is engaged in a significant and fast paced expansion and diversification of its nuclear forces. Like Russia, China views space as a warfighting domain. And China is developing, testing and fielding sophisticated, counter space capabilities intended to deny the United States our space enabled advantage.

And China has an ever growing inventory of sophisticated, long range strike systems to hold US forces at risk at greater and greater distances. In Ukraine, Russia's illegal and unprovoked, full scale invasion has showcased the critical role of strategic forces in conflict. Space systems inform US national security decisions every single day.

President Biden has declassified intelligence gained from US space assets to counter Russian misinformation. The Ukrainian military has been leveraging proliferated satellite broadband constellations in innovative ways to support their own operations. Russia has repeated -- has conducted repeated missile attacks against civilian infrastructure, which highlights the need for air and missile defenses.

And as some of the members have already said, Putin's, irresponsible nuclear saber rattling has further underscored the importance of the US nuclear deterrent, which is the bedrock of our own national security. Just this last October, the department released unclassified

versions of the National Defense Strategy, the Nuclear Posture Review, and the Missile Defense Review.

Together, these documents recognize that the United States is entering a period of heightened risk and they articulate an urgent imperative to strengthen deterrence. The National Defense Strategy identified four priorities for the department. One, defend the homeland; two, deter strategic attacks; three, deter aggression while preparing to prevail in conflict.

And we're prioritizing China first and then Russia; and four, build a resilient joint force. All four of these priorities rely heavily on our space systems, our missile defenses, and our nuclear forces. Cooperation with allies and partners is also a core element of the national defense strategy, and it is central to our national security and deterrence goals.

The department is actively pursuing deeper cooperation to enhance our extended deterrence commitments, to achieve combined space operations, and to share data in real time to support air and missile defenses. Our allies and partners are an asymmetric advantage that neither China nor Russia can ever hope to match.

Now for the department, we are clear eyed about the threats we face and the importance of our nuclear space and missile defense forces in defending the nation. The Department is committed to making critical investments in our nuclear triad modernization in a more resilient space architecture and in homeland and regional missile defenses.

These investments will be detailed in the upcoming, forthcoming fiscal year '24 budget request, but these investments are necessary to deter conflict and to fight and win if deterrence fails. So thank you to the committee for its tireless dedication to the department and our service members. And I look forward to your questions.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you. And I didn't say it, but Dr. Plumb is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy with the US Department of Defense. Now we will hear from General Glen VanHerck,



Commander of the United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command.

GLEN VANHERCK:

Thank you, Chairman Lamborn, Ranking Member Moulton, and members of the committee, the Subcommittee. Thank you for your opportunity to appear this afternoon before the Strategic Forces Subcommittee, along with General Dickinson, General Cotton, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space Policy, Dr. John Plumb.

As you know, I testified this morning before the full committee, therefore I'll be brief in my remarks here in the open session. I look forward to the classified discussion later. The United States Military remains the most powerful and professional force in history. However, I'd like to reiterate, our competitive advantage is eroding and I believe our greatest risk for the United States stems from an inability to adapt to the pace required by the changing strategic environment.

Our commands and the Department of Defense need your continued support to outpace the rapid gains made by our competitors. On behalf of all the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, guardians, coast -- coasties, and the civilians at NORAD and NORTHCOM, I'd like to thank the subcommittee for your steadfast support for all those who defend our nation.

I look forward to your questions.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you. And our next witness is General James Dickinson. And I want to say, as was said for General VanHerck, this is probably your last testimony before this subcommittee. And you will be missed. And we want to thank you for your decades of service, including most recently the standing up and the shepherding of Space Command.

So, the Commander of US Space Command General James Dickinson.

JAMES DICKINSON:



Thank you, Chairman Lamborn and Ranking Member Moulton. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen of the committee. It remains my distinct honor to represent the 18,000 military servicemen and women, civilians, and families of US Space Command, who are serving our great nation today around the world. Thank you for this opportunity to testify before this committee.

I look forward to both this session, as well as the closed session. I am proud to lead such a talented and patriotic group of joint space professionals. Their expertise, diversity and creativity underpin our strength and effectiveness. Of all the elements of space power, our most valued asset is, and always will be, our great people.

My provisional headquarters achieved initial operational capability in just two years, and we will reach full operational capability through the disciplined initiative of our people. Space power enables our way of life and is a critical component of our national security. I want to thank Congress for its support to advance America's primacy in space.

We must maintain our position of advantage in the space domain and ensure it remains sustainable, safe, stable and secure. The joint force relies on space based capabilities to project and employ power. China and Russia consider this dependency a soft underbelly and seek to exploit it. They intend to limit our access to space during crisis and conflict and they are filled in capabilities to that effect today.

Our strategic competitors' irresponsible actions have transformed space into a contested domain. We must prevent today's strategic competition from growing into a conflict in space. We achieve this by deterring aggression, defending national interests, and if necessary, prevailing in any domain. US Space Command contributes to integrated deterrence by preserving freedom of action in space and by providing critical support to the rest of the Joint Force.

Our mission spans the spectrum of conflict and in every domain. For example, we are creating concepts to further integrate space, cyber and special operations, to generate asymmetrical advantages around the globe. Additionally, our protect and defend mission

involves all three segments of the space architecture -- the ground, link and space, an approach that requires all domain solutions.

My command's planning horizon is short. It is near term. We must be ready to fight today, because the threat will not wait. To this end, we are leveraging the joint force, our allies, and partners to integrate and maximize the capabilities that we have today. At the same time, we look forward to the capabilities our services are developing for the future fight.

As we observe in Ukraine, commercial space assets are a significant force multiplier. For years, our commercial mission partners have augmented our satellite communications and provided enhancements to our Space Domain Awareness Sensor Networks. Commercial integration is critical to mission success. So today's hearing reasserts the United States' resolve to maintain our leadership and position of advantage in the space domain.

But before I address the committee's questions, I just want to emphasize to the American people, my pledge that US Space Command will ensure that there is never a day without space. Thank you.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you. And the last of our four witnesses will be General Anthony Cotton, the commander of United States Strategic Command.

ANTHONY COTTON:

Good afternoon, Chairman Lamborn, Ranking Member Moulton and distinguished members of the committee. I appreciate this opportunity to testify next to SD Plumb, General VanHerck, and General Dickinson, and I thank the committee and Congress for its support for our national defense. First, I, along with my command, senior enlisted leader, Sergeant Major Howard Kreamer, want to assure you and the American people, that United States Strategic Command is ready today.

Ready to defend our nation, defend our allies and respond decisively if our adversaries miscalculate. As we speak, there are command watch standers at their stations, missile ears,

maintainers, security forces on alert, submariners on patrol, air crew on duty, standing guard. The men and women of United States Strategic Command are the foundation for the capabilities that underpin our nation's strategic deterrence.

They do this in an environment that continues to grow more complex and challenging. Russia's invasion of a sovereign Ukraine is an attempt to undermine the rules-based international order, with conventional force backed by nuclear saber rattling. As this conflict continues, and Russia's conventional forces fail to achieve President Putin's strategic objectives, Strategic Command is monitoring for any indications of escalation.

How this conflict unfolds and eventually ends will shape the strategic environment for decades to come. We see the People's Republic of China continuing to rapidly expand its nuclear capabilities. The PRC's actions are wholly inconsistent with its long professed policy of minimum deterrence. I reported to Congress in May that the number of land based, intercontinental ballistic missile launchers in the PRC now exceeds that of the United States.

Along with its significant modernization expansion of conventional capabilities, the PRC is also investing heavily in lower yield precision weapons with theater ranges, a new generation of mobile missiles, and a hypersonic glide vehicle with fractional orbital bombardment systems. The PRC's nuclear modernization provide it with an alarming number of offensive options that can negatively shape the environment before and during a crisis or conflict.

North Korea continues to be a rogue actor and poses a threat to the United States and our allies. North Korea conducted an unprecedented number of missile launches in 2022. And its new, intercontinental ballistic missile, referred to as the KN-28, highlights that the strategic challenge and security challenge will continue to grow.

We are meeting today's challenges, though, through integrated deterrence, the cornerstone of the NDS. Our unmatched network of allies is a key component of integrated deterrence. And these relationships are underpinned by our extended deterrence commitments. These commitments are enabled by a safe, secure, effective and credible nuclear deterrent.

The credibility of our extended deterrence commitments is not only part of the nation's iron clad commitment to our allies, but has also been essential in limiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The nation's nuclear forces underpin integrated deterrence and enable the US, our allies and our partners to confront aggressive and coercive behavior.

To ensure our continued ability to serve as a bedrock of integrated deterrence, we're recapitalizing every leg of the nuclear triad and the nuclear command, control and communications spectrum, as well as addressing electromagnetic spectrum. These long term investments are going to be absolutely required for us to make sure that we have a predictable, stable, and efficient nuclear force.

Finally, I want to start as I ended. Our people are the foundation of every capability that enables strategic deterrence. I'm proud to serve alongside the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and -- and guardians, and our civilians at STRATCOM. I am very appreciative of everything that the committee and Congress is doing for us along those goals.

And it's an honor to be here and I look forward to your questions.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you, General. And you did mention hypersonic vehicles. This subcommittee will be having a hearing on that subject Friday morning at 9:00. And like the one here today, it will be a public hearing, followed by a classified hearing, afterwards. So we will start with questions. And with the first round of questions, we'll see if we have time for a second round or not.

We do have votes at 5:30, which means we should be able to have our classified session at 4:30. And it's -- the skiff is occupied until then, well before we have to go for votes, and should be able to wrap up everything by that time. Thank you all again for being here. Dr. Plumb, various open source outlets, along with a very detailed, Bloomberg story from last week, reported how Russia, specifically Rosatom, is providing highly enriched uranium for Chinese fast breeder reactors.

These reactors will almost certainly help accelerate the pace of the Chinese nuclear weapons program by producing weapons grade plutonium. How concerned is the department that Rosatom is helping China accelerate the pace of its nuclear weapons program?

JOHN PLUMB:

Thank you, Congressman. It's very troubling to see Russia and China cooperating on this. They may have talking points around it, but there's no getting around the fact that breeder reactors are plutonium and plutonium is for weapons. So I think the department is -- is -- is concerned. And of course, it matches our concerns about China's increased expansion of its nuclear forces, as well, because you need more plutonium for more weapons.

DOUG LAMBORN:

General Cotton, this highlights the concern that we all share about China's seeming nuclear breakout. It was mentioned that they have now more launchers than the US, and they're working on warheads, as well. So the number of targets we have to hold at risk is rapidly growing, because of China's nuclear breakout.

But the forces available to you remain unchanged. How does the department reconcile this?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Chairman, thank you for the question. I think as we discussed last week, one of the things that --

DOUG LAMBORN:

And if you could hold the microphone just a little closer. Thank you.

ANTHONY COTTON:

Does that work, sir? There we go. One of the things that actually the MPR [ph] gives us an opportunity to do, is have a conversation on strategy and have a conversation on force

posture. And as a conversation we had last week, I think that conversation is going to have to be had. When we talk about the -- the forces that we currently have today, that -- that force that we have today was based on an adversary of which, for the first time In the history of the United States of America, we now have two that are nuclear pure adversaries.

Now, we're going to have to have this conversation in regards to, what does it look like now, as far as force posture, moving forward.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you. And that's a critical conversation we'll all be having here in the subcommittee and the full committee, as well, On the issue of electromagnetic spectrum operations, General, can you describe -- or let me back up. As I emphasized in my opening statement, I think DOD needs to commit to fixing electromagnetic spectrum operations and plugging the holes identified in the Northern Edge exercise.

I understand that this is -- has the attention of Secretary Hicks and Admiral Grady and I hope that that we will have good progress on this. Can you describe some of the ways that STRATCOM relies on spectrum to support your missions. And what are some of the future spectrum that -- spectrum warfighter needs that will be essential to competing with Russia and China on a future battlefield, if necessary?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Chairman, thank you for that question. You know, I don't think it's any different than the requirements that are with my fellow commanders that are here. STRATCOM depends on EMS to successfully provide deterrence and deliver decisive response when called upon. The things that I worry about I, s we need to ensure that we have spectrum for employment of forces, to maintain situational awareness, to ensure communications via all domains -- space, maritime, air and land, and to assure positioning with PNT, with positional navigation systems.

Now, what we're doing within STRATCOM is -- my top priority is to execute the DOD EMS superiority strategy implementation plan. What we're going to do is we're actually in the midst of standing up a two star, joint EMS operations center known as the JEC -- direct report to me, that raises and aggregates force readiness across the department.

We'll continue to ensure that the joint force appropriately is organized and equipped to handle EMS. I am responsibility to -- for advocating the proper training when it comes to EMS. And as we said when I had my conversation with you last week, what makes this particularly helpful to me, is the fact that my direct report will be the Deputy Secretary of Defense, who can direct services to take action.

DOUG LAMBORN:

OK, Thank you. And I have a little follow up on that issue and then I'll turn it over to others. The 3.1 to 3.45 gigahertz band of radio frequency spectrum is being studied by DOD and the Department of Commerce for consideration for auction by the FCC. Can you speak to the value of this specific band for target discrimination, at range, in the atmosphere for -- from everything -- from missile defense to tracking Chinese spy balloons, which has been in the news?

And Dr. Plumb, you and General Cotton, please.

ANTHONY COTTON:

Well, from my perspective, it's what I had just mentioned, as far as the things that are required for to me to be able to execute and exercise and employ the forces. I think If we lose that spectrum, all of those things that I had articulated to you, that is required for me for force employment, for maintaining situational awareness, for having assured navigation and timing, and assured comms, that could potentially be lost.

And I would -- I would yield to Dr. -- Dr. Plumb for further questions.

JOHN PLUMB:



All right. Thanks, Congressman. That particular portion of the band, the S-band there, from 3.1 to 3.45, is absolutely essential for DOD operations. The Department of Defense is conducting a study with the Department of Commerce on whether we can share that spectrum. For DOD, we need to be able to maintain our operational capability and readiness, in any result.

And I'll just say, we've looked at what it might take to vacate, by which I mean leave that band and go somewhere else. We don't know where else we would go. And it would cost, easily, \$120 Billion, probably more, just to create the pieces. But that isn't the same as getting the studies and the physics done or the recapitalization.

It could take, easily, 20 years. It's a really difficult problem for us. And so we think that the only viable way forward be the -- is there some way to share so DOD can operate there, and so other commercial companies might be able to use that, as well, without impeding on us?

DOUG LAMBORN:

Did you say \$120 million or billion?

JOHN PLUMB:

That's billion, with a B, and that's kind of our low estimate. And I don't want that to be confused with what it would actually cost, because that's really just if you look, what would it cost to -- to make a new EGIS radar. But that's not the same as figuring out the physics and all the testing that would go into figuring out what bands we would have to use it in, let alone the decades of experience we have with the equipment now, to understand how they work.

DOUG LAMBORN:

OK, thank you both. Turn it over to Representative Moulton.

SETH MOULTON:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me begin with an apology to General Dickinson. I did not know that this is your last hearing before us, as well. I understand you've been serving



38 years. So you've -- you've outdone your seatmate by two. Thank you for your incredible service. You're the senior air defense artillery officer in the United States Army today.

And that's a job that, for a long time, we didn't think was terribly important, because of our air superiority. And now we realize how unbelievably critical it is. So we've been very lucky to have you. We're grateful for your service. And I think I can confidently say that we will probably miss you more than you will miss us. But good luck.

Let me start with this. This is for -- for General Dickinson for you, and for Dr. Plumb. Over 10 years ago, the joint operational access concept predicted that, quote, 'a logical opening operation to any anti-access campaign, China against the United States, is to neutralize US space assets, because space plays such a critical role in enabling operations on the Earth's surface.

Dr. Plumb, Gerald Dickson, do you believe this is a reasonable assessment?

JAMES DICKINSON:

First of all, thank you for those kind remarks As you -- as you got ready to ask the question, it's been an honor to serve in the US military for 38 years. To your question, I think we just have to look, quite frankly, at some of the PLA writings on doctrine and strategy that do suggest what you just mentioned, which is that the reconnaissance communications, navigation, and even early warning satellites could, I'm not saying will, could be among the -- the first targets to be attacked.

And so just in accordance with their own strategy, their own doctrine, we have reason to believe that that might be the case.

SETH MOULTON:

And Dr. Plumb is nodding his head. So I'll take that as an agreement. So if war with China could start in space, then deterring war with China seems to require having an effective space deterrent. Do you agree?

JAMES DICKINSON:

I do agree with that.

SETH MOULTON:

And one of the challenges with deterrence is, it's not just enough to have capabilities that exceed your adversaries capabilities. They have to believe that, right? I mean we can look back and say, you know, we knew we would be able to get together the most remarkable coalition of NATO allies since World War II, to push back Russia, out of Ukraine.

But the problem is that Vladimir Putin did not believe that before he started this war. And so we did not effectively deter -- prevent this war from happening. So Dr. Plumb, perhaps we could start with you. We're developing some exquisite space capabilities that you are overseeing. But how do we effectively communicate this to our adversaries so that they believe it?

JOHN PLUMB:

Thanks, Congressman. I would say, just to start with, I think they -- they know that, while we have space superiority right now, and they know that this is not an opportunity for them to move forward. And our goal in the Department of Defense is to make sure that, really every day, that President Xi wakes up is not the day that he thinks this is worth an attempt to go after Taiwan.

We use Taiwan as our pacing scenario. I think it's a good frame of reference, regardless of the actual scenario we play out. I'll just say on -- I think you're getting to the reveal-conceal question, and I actually think we should not overlook statecraft as well, right? So we do communicate, back and forth, between nations and they use their statecraft to see, or to try to discern what we're doing.

I personally believe there is great value in some ambiguity. But your point is well taken.

SETH MOULTON:

Gerald Dickinson, do you have -- and I know you've worked, in particular, on declassifying some of the work that we're doing, to better communicate this to our adversaries. Do you have anything to add?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Yeah, that is one of the areas within the command that we're looking very closely at, is how do we get to a part -- you mentioned the allies and partners and how critical they are, not only in the space domain and what we do there, but in the other domains, as well. And so, when we look to integrate, operate with the allies and partners, it's critical that we take a very close look at, you know, over classification and classification, period, so that we can share necessary information with our allies and partners.

And we're working on that every day in US Space Command. We've had a couple of areas where we've had some success in that. Like, for example, we run Operation Olympic Defender every day, which is really the operations that does our space enabling responsibilities to the joint force, each and every day. That has been, traditionally held at a - at a no foreign level.

And just within the last year, we've been able to start sharing that with the Five Eyes. There's many other examples, but that's -- that's one in particular that I think is worth noting.

SETH MOULTON:

Thank you. General Dickinson, another question for -- for you. As everyone on this committee well knows, the DOD has not invested sufficiently in space, until quite recently. My question is, will the budget that we receive tomorrow have enough in it to protect, defend and reconstitute our space assets, and -- and where should we invest more?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Well, first of all, I would say since we have stood up in 2019, as a command, the Congress's support to what we're doing, and I even mentioned it in my opening statement, where I said

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helping us sustain primacy in the space domain, has been very good. And I thank -- thank the Congress for the monies and the resources that are going towards us in that effect.

The command has had a good opportunity, over the last four years, as well, to start developing the requirements that we need in support of our operations. And we've -- we've done a lot of that and we've been able to codify that through the normal processes within the department, in terms of identifying requirements -- ICDs for example, JUONs, IPLs, those kinds of normal functions within the command, to put a demand signal, if you will, on the department and what we will need in the space domain.

So I'm pleased with that. And again, I think if you look at what one of my -- my number one priority is, in terms of what more do I need, is the ability to increase my space domain awareness. So as we look to today and into the future, and with the growing congestion, if you will, in the space domain, with regards to current satellites, operating satellites, defunct satellites, debris itself, it's becoming a bigger challenge to be able to do that.

We have to have the capabilities to be able to see and characterize what's going on in the space domain. So top priority for the command right now is to make sure that we increase that. And I can go into details if you'd like on how we're approaching that.

SETH MOULTON:

No, it's very helpful, and a message that we've heard loud and clear from General VanHerck, is that domain awareness is absolutely critical, and it's something that we need to -- to improve. So he may be two years your junior, but he's -- he's very much following in your footsteps on that -- and that -- on that count.

General Cotton, final question. Mr. Banks, I guess he's departed for a time, but he and I co-chaired the Future Defense Task Force. And we looked at a lot of things across the spectrum of warfighting, and try to determine where we need to be in the future. And of course, we focused a lot on technology and the technology that we need to invest in to keep pace with our adversaries across the globe.

But another point that we made is, that it's not enough just to invest in technology. You have to know how you're going to use that technology. And sometimes in the past, we've made the mistake of pursuing a technology because it seems like the hot new thing, without having a clear understanding of how we might actually employ that technology.

And, therefore, sometimes that money goes to waste. So we're putting a lot of money into hypersonics. But I asked this question -- but I asked this question recently, last year, of -- of some of your -- of your colleagues and people at the department, how do you actually plan to employ hypersonic weapons?

Where we got to invest a lot in them, because China has them, too. But how do you actually plan to employ them? What are the operational concepts for the use of hypersonic weapons? And I can tell you, we got a very dissatisfying answer. A lot of stares, a lot of blank stares, saying, we're not quite sure yet.

Well, that's not a good enough reason to invest them. So tell us how your thinking has evolved on the deployment of hypersonics and why? Explain to the American people why it's critical that we put such an enormous amount of money into these new weapon systems.

ANTHONY COTTON:

Think you, Ranking, I think the -- the answer to that is, is simple. Our adversaries already have them as a baseline, so they're using them as -- they're using them as a deterrence already. When it comes to us -- within STRATCOM, one of the things that we're already doing, is we're prepared to -- to accept utilizing hypersonic weapons as a strategic deterrent weapon, because it has strategic effects.

So one of the things that -- that we're thinking through, on my staff, and that -- that I'm having my team do, is to understand knowing that we're going to have low density, high demand assets at the beginning, that we can help in the planning and understanding on how we want to execute those weapons, just like we do any other strategic weapon.

That's not to say that, when the cache gets a lot larger, that it has to stay that way. But from my -- my vantage point, as a strategic deterrent lead, if you will, from -- from -- from

STRATCOM, I see that as the -- the entering argument on what I want to be able to do and utilize. And oh, by the way, the complementary factors of what it can do with the -- with the nuclear force, as well as just strategic deterrence are, at large.

So there's a nuclear deterrent aspect to this, where hypersonics can be complementary to some of the effects that we would do in our planning, as well as what you would see from conventional, long range strike.

SETH MOULTON:

Let me ask one quick corollary to that. A lot of theorists about nuclear weapons would argue that the weapons that we've had for some time, the triad, including ICBMs, which are sort of horrific in concept, are actually stabilizing weapons. I mean, they've prevented -- they've helped prevent war between our super -- the superpowers for decades.

Do you believe that hypersonics are a stabilizing or destabilizing, strategic weapon?

ANTHONY COTTON:

I see hypersonic weapons just like I see the ICBMs, as stabilizing weapons.

SETH MOULTON:

OK. Well, I will tell you a lot of people disagree. And I think this is something we need to get to the bottom of. Thank you, very much, And Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Representative Turner?

MICHAEL TURNER:

Well, I certainly think that hypersonic weapons in the hands of our adversaries are destabilizing. The -- General Cotton, you and I had the opportunity to talk about the concerns of Russia stepping out of New START. The United States took several steps to



comply with New START. The -- I, for one, believe that if they step out of New START, we should not give them a pass.

We shouldn't say we're going to continue to comply and stay within New START, and you can do whatever you want. That means, of course, that we're going to have to up our game for deterrence, because if they're going to expand their nuclear inventory, but also continue to expand their nuclear weapons capabilities, which I personally believe are many first strike weapon capabilities, we're going to have to look at remerve [ph]. We're going to have to be looking at the -- at the B-1, the B-52, how do we ensure the dual capability and the prevalence of the F-35, and certainly the expeditious completion and deployment of the B-21. My question to you is, as we look out at all the things that we need to do, let's say there -- we wake up tomorrow and there is no New START. Are there things the United States could and should do in response to that, that could ensure our deterrence of our adversary, that is self-declared, which is Russia?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Thank you for that -- that question, sir. First of all, nuclear -- responsible nuclear parties stick to the treaties that they sign up for. Suspending an STE, from the Russian's perspective, from my perspective, is irresponsible. That being said, my responsibility is to be able to offer flexible, deterrent options to the president.

And we've already -- we've already worked, and have always worked in STRATCOM, to be able to offer flexible, deterrent options, when required. So to answer your question, flexible, deterrent options are always available to the president of the United States.

MICHAEL TURNER:

Excellent. General VanHerck, the -- we've obviously had a relatively robust conversation, nationwide, about our capabilities to -- to see and understand threats and warnings to the United States and North America. We are also in the process of reinvesting, because some of these systems are very old. And of course, some of these systems, now with the -- with China's -- having China having chosen to test a hypersonic weapon that orbits the earth, that

looks like it's something that could be -- that remain in orbit and be a space-to-ground weapon, and for which, all indications are, their intentions to, perhaps make this a nuclear weapon.

We're going to have to look at, how do we see better, how do we get greater fidelity, how do we look at areas where we might have blind spots? But the next step we're going to have to look at, is as China increases its nuclear weapons capabilities, and China -- and Russia increases its nuclear weapons capability, that we're going to be sort of beyond a world that's just mutually assured destruction and deterrence of, we have nuclear weapons and you have nuclear weapons.

China is building them at such a pace that it's clearly not just their territorial integrity that they're -- they're concerned about. They're building them at a pace where we can even see, in non-classified areas, their new ICBMs areas. If we're going to go beyond deterrence, we're going to have to add missile defense.

If we're going to have to add missile defense, and we're going to have to add it in a robust fashion, where we look at China and Russia as, perhaps perpetrators. To do so, we're going to have to upgrade what we look at for radars and sensing for North America. Could you speak for a minute about what our current system is, what we're currently planning on doing for upgrade, and what would that leap look like, that we would have to do, in order to be able to do integrated missile defense for the United States?

GLEN VANHERCK:

Yeah, thank -- thank you for the questions. First, to be clear, our missile defense today does not, from a policy perspective, defend against Chinese --

MICHAEL TURNER:

Right. This is a radar question.

GLEN VANHERCK:

OK. Chinese or Russia -- radar question. So first I'm concerned and very challenged for domain awareness. I'll start with hypersonics. If you can't see hypersonics, it's hard to do continuity of government, and it's certainly hard to -- to protect your nuclear posture. So, therefore, I would say that would be destabilizing or erode our strategic stability, from a standpoint of not being able to see them.

From -- the way forward, I would ask two things -- for radars over the horizon radars. We need those soon as possible. 10 years to field over the horizon radars does not make sense. Then the question becomes, what do you do with the data and information from those over-the-horizon radars? That needs to feed an integrated air and missile defense system that ultimately feeds some type of a endgame effector.

That could be non-kinetic or kinetic, either one. This problem is much larger than radars, by the way. It is also the P-LEO, US space forces fielding to give us domain awareness for hypersonics and other missile systems.

MICHAEL TURNER:

Thank you.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you, Mr. Garamendi.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for the meeting and congratulations on your chairmanship. And Mr. Moulton, the same on the ranking. Fascinating discussion, thus far. I'm going to ask the big question -- a question that has been on my mind since I came to this committee, and that is, gentlemen, are we now, the United States, engaged in a new, nuclear arms race?

Mr. Plumb, and then on down the line -- yes, no, and qualify, I you want.

JOHN PLUMB:

Thanks, Congressman. I -- I don't think I would characterize it as a new nuclear arms race, based on current numbers and based on what the historical arms race looked like, when the numbers were multiples of this.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

So it is different.

JOHN PLUMB:

A different kind, maybe a capabilities race, perhaps. I don't know if that's quite the same as a nuclear inventory race.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Does that include General Cotton's new, strategic weapon, similar to a nation -- similar to a nuclear weapon, otherwise known as a hypersonic? I think that's what he just said. Am I correct, General Cotton, didn't you just say that?

ANTHONY COTTON:

I've said that, if you were to ask what we could use, as far as can a hypersonic be seen as a strategic weapon.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

And then you went on to say, part of the nuclear strategic weapons.

ANTHONY COTTON:

I said it could be -- it could be complementary to our nuclear forces.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

In other words, part thereof. Correct?

ANTHONY COTTON:

No, because, sir, we still use conventional forces to complement our nuclear forces today.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

So it is not a strategic weapon.

ANTHONY COTTON:

You can have conventional, strategic weapons --

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Or I could pose a --

ANTHONY COTTON:

As opposed to just nuclear, strategic weapons, is -- is what I was alluding to.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Similar to HIMAR being a strategic weapon? I guess I want to know where you're going here? Are we going to consider the hypersonic weapon being part of our strategic defense systems, as we consider the nuclear triad to be part of our strategic --

JOHN PLUMB:

So, Congressman, I'd say the word strategic --

JOHN GARAMENDI:

No, the question was for General Cotton. General Cotton, you raised this issue. What's the answer?

ANTHONY COTTON:

What I'm saying is, strategic deterrence is not just nuclear. Strategic deterrence can also be through conventional means. We do it every day, today.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Then why did you raise the question of the hypersonic being specifically in that array?

ANTHONY COTTON:

I did not. I said it could actually complement in the --

JOHN GARAMENDI:

I will check in the nuclear -- checked the record. Enough of that. We've got this issue of the [inaudible], which is a strange name. The United States already deploys a low yield warhead, 762. on submarine based missiles. And we have the B-6112, low yield. And we have -- we will soon, I suppose, or someday, have an LSRO that's nuclear capable.

Why do we need a cilicum? Which one of you want to answer that. I guess Mr. Plumb.

JOHN PLUMB:

Congressman the administration's position is that we do not.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Ah. Oh, the -- the Congress thinks differently, unfortunately. So we're -- and what does that mean for our nuclear submarines, that are presently not necessarily stationed at ports where nuclear weapons are allowed? It changes everything, doesn't it, if we put this on our attack submarines?

JOHN PLUMB:

Congressman, to be fair, I was a fast attack submariner. Fast attack submarines used to have nuclear cruise missiles on them. They were removed by presidential nuclear initiatives years ago, just as I was entering the force. So I don't know if it would change everything. I guess I would argue that it would not, but it would certainly change some things.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

What things?

JOHN PLUMB:

I -- I'm, you know, some nations are not keen --

JOHN GARAMENDI:

Those submarines [inaudible] --

JOHN PLUMB:

On having nuclear weapons in their ports. So kind of, from a port standpoint, that's a problem from a --

JOHN GARAMENDI:

And we wouldn't be able to use those -- those submarines couldn't use Gordon or Norfolk. They'd have to go to a different --

JOHN PLUMB:

I wouldn't -- I wouldn't be willing to say that, sir. But additional investments would be required if they were going to use other naval ports.

JOHN GARAMENDI:

My time's expired. Thank you. I'll yield back.



DOUG LAMBORN:  
Mr. Wilson?

JOE WILSON:

Thank you very much, Chairman, Doug Lamborn and Ranking Member Seth Moulton. Look forward to working with you and your leadership. And we've got a great team and, truly, it's significantly bipartisan. So I'm just grateful to be here. Now, it's really humbling -- OK -- to look out there. I've never seen this many stars -- 24. And so, you've done a good job the first meeting.

And -- but thank you for your service and I truly appreciate your service. My dad served in the 14th Air Force Flying Tigers to liberate China and Kunming, Chengdu, Xian, China. So I appreciate that. And then I'm really grateful, General Dickerson -- Dickinson, you beat me by seven years, in terms of the number of years' service.

And so I appreciate that, although, I'm grateful. My oldest son Allen is field artillery -- received a CAB in his service in Iraq. So I appreciate that branch. And then, I'm all service behind you. My second son is a doctor in the Navy and the third son is signal, and youngest and engineer, having served in Iraq, Egypt and Afghanistan.

So thank you for your service. With that, General Cotton, the communities in South Carolina's Second District, and our adjacent communities in Georgia, are extremely supportive of the plutonium production mission at the Savannah River site. The Savannah River site, which, with its workforce and expertise, is ideally suited to complete this important mission that is so vital for national security.

Maintaining enacted levels of funding for the Savannah River plutonium processing facility is necessary to ensure that our nation can reach our nuclear modernization needs and maintain an effective, nuclear deterrent. In fact, Congressman Moulton was absolutely correct. We've got to have a real deterrent that the enemy understand that they are very effective.

As February 2023, the National Nuclear Security Administration notified Congress that it will be unable to meet the congressionally mandated timelines to achieve a rate of 30 plutonium pits by 2026, or achieve the 80 pits per year Congress mandated by 2030. The question is the NNSA will not be able to meet the requirements of reducing 80 pits per year by 2030, how critical is it that we do everything we can to minimize the delay and reach the requirement as soon as we can?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Congressman Wilson, it's nice seeing you again, sir. Bottom line, it's critically important. Eighty pits per year -- the 2030 statutory requirement -- has not changed, when it comes to delivery for us. We are working hand in hand with our -- with our partners in NNSA to -- to understand how they'll be able to achieve that.

But it is -- it is actually crucial and critical for us to make sure that they can get as close to meeting that requirement as they can.

JOE WILSON:

Well, I'd like to assure you that the citizens of central South Carolina and CSRA, and to Georgia are ready to back this up in every way. And General VanHerck, rising threat of China, acute threat of Russia, the unabated threat of Iran building intercontinental, ballistic missiles and unstable North Korea, with the capacity to deliver long range missile threats, continue a greater -- to develop a greater capability and capacity, with the intent to strike the United States and our allies.

How concerned are you about the continued missile development and production? Is NORAD preparing adequately to deter, detect, deny and protect the homeland from threats?

GLEN VANHERCK:

Congressman, I'm encouraged with recent funding for NORAD modernization, specifically ballistic missile threat -- the basic ballistic missile threat from DPRK. I'm confident today in



my threat warning and attack assessment capabilities, and also to defend in my NORTHCOM hat, against a limited attack. I'm very concerned by the numbers I see and the capacity out of DPRK today, as far as the total numbers that they actually have produced and are capable of potentially launching at our homeland.

JOE WILSON:

Well, please keep us advised what we can do to -- to reach and match the threat. And General Dickinson, with China continuing to strengthen its military space capabilities, if China were to conduct an illegal invasion of Taiwan, what would be the implications of these satellites and would they be a threat to the United States?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Congressman, first of all, thank you for those kind remarks, as you began your question period. I would -- I would just tell you that, space is global in nature. And so, in particular for us, the US Space Command and for the Department of Defense. So any regional conflict, if you will, will depend upon space and utilize space assets.

Both blue and both China, as well as China. So I think what we would see would be a -- a use, because we know China is leveraging space capabilities now. They've watched us for many, many years, more than 20 years, on how -- how space based capabilities facilitate our global reach and our global ability to employ forces.

So I think we could see a similar thing with -- with China.

JOE WILSON:

Thank you, each of you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Representative Carbajal.

SALUD CARBAJAL:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to all the witnesses for being here. General VanHerck, General Dickinson, thank you for your service to our country. Reminds me of that movie, A Few Good Men. We wanted you on that wall. Now you're leaving. But if General Cotton's any indication of the bench we have and the people that are ascending to the capacities that you will leave behind, I think we're in good hands.

Secretary Plumb, we just wrote Mr. Plumb instead of Dr. Plumb or assistant secretary. I think we need to correct that, because we need to give you your due. Again, thank you for being here. General Dickinson, space activity from the Department of Defense, the United States commercial sector, as well as partners, allies and competitors is growing.

And in the next few years, a significant number of satellites are planned to be launched into orbit, particularly in LEO. As the launch industry continues to grow and other countries develop their own launch capabilities, it is reasonable to believe that there will be more traffic in space, not to mention debris.

Will this increased traffic pose challenges to space domain awareness. And has space com prepared for this?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Congressman, thanks for those words -- kind words as we started out. I would tell you that frankly, yes, that presents a challenge to us. As we watch, and I think we might all agree that watching the commercial market around the world start showing a lot of interest in space and wanting to be part of the space community space faring nations, we are watching it grow.

We see it every day. I'll give you a statistic, just to think about. In terms of when this command stood up, in 2019, we tracked about 25,000 pieces of debris -- old satellites, new satellites in the space domain. Today, were up over 48,000. So you can see that the growth that you mentioned earlier and how that is creating a more congested domain.

So as we look at that, there's two things I want to point out that we're -- we're working on right now. One, as I mentioned earlier, my top priority is to increase space domain awareness. And how I do that is through commercial integration, as well as bringing on nontraditional type assets that we haven't used before, to look into the space domain, specifically air defense radars, missile defense radars around the world, both maritime, as well as ground based, leveraging the commercial market.

The other thing we're looking at very carefully, is how we will do that transition with the Department of Commerce, for them to start doing the space traffic management functions that are required to do space domain awareness. I think, when you look at the size, as I described, of how much it's populated, how much it's grown in numbers, we're going to need the Department of Commerce to do that type of civil type of operations, to account for the debris and things that are on -- on orbit.

Sir, that will allow me to use the assets that I have, to do characterization of things that I need to look at, that aren't necessarily just civil or pieces of debris. So in other words, I'll have a better opportunity, with the resources I have, to do better characterization of the space domain.

SALUD CARBAJAL:

Thank you. General Dickinson, as the number of launches continues to grow, can you speak to how you envision the space force range of the future, and ensuring access to launch ranges meets your needs, as the combat combatant -- combatant commander responsible for space, particularly -- particularly when it comes to responsive space capability?

And how can the department further help ensure access to ranges?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Congressman, I think a robust launch infrastructure and responsive launch capabilities are absolutely essential to our assured use of space, which remains a top, national security priority. The launch stations themselves, launch facilities is critical to the tactical responsive

space. But I will tell you, it's not just the only piece to it, it's a piece to it. The other pieces are, having more assets on orbit that are -- that can be looked at to provide capabilities.

It's also what's on each of the satellites that go up and how quickly those can be actually deployed upon a rapid -- rapid response launch type capability. So it's really kind of those three together. But the launch infrastructure is absolutely critical to what we're going to do today, and in the future.

SALUD CARBAJAL:

Thank you. Dr. Plumb and General Cotton, I have limited time now, but I'm concerned by Russia's decision to suspend implementation of the New START Treaty. In your statement, you note the continued degradation of Russian conventional capabilities in Ukraine will likely increase Russia's reliance on its nuclear arsenal.

Can you speak to the role Russia's failures in Ukraine played in their decision to suspend New START? And how important is it for us to maintain our commitment to the New START Treaty?

JOHN PLUMB:

Thanks -- thanks. Congressman I -- I -- I will say, I do think that the more Russia shows that its conventional forces are being degraded or not up to par, then they do rely more and more on nuclear weapons. I do think that's a hallmark of a conventionally weak state, that has -- that has -- that you rely more on nuclear weapons as their conventional forces fail in the field, or continue to be degraded against Ukraine, in this case.

I am not convinced, sir, that the problems Russia's facing the field are directly related to the New START peace. There is a lot of political and narrative pieces inside the Russian government and inside Putin's mind, that may be more related to this. It is troubling, nonetheless. I will just say, at the top of the meeting a few -- I forget who, but someone noted -- maybe it was Congressman Lamborn -- on the -- but their -- have stopped their -- suspended their notifications.

This is new. This is just happened in the last couple, really of the last week. And so we're going to see what they're doing there. We are looking at this closely to understand what that means for us.

SALUD CARBAJAL:

Thank you. I'm out of time. General Cotton, you're saved by the bell. Mr. Chair, I yield back.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you, Dr. DesJarlais.

SCOTT DESJARLAIS:

Thank you, Chairman. And I would like to join my colleagues in thanking General VanHerck and General Dickinson for your commitment and your contribution and service to our country. And don't worry, General Cotton, we appreciate you, too, and you'll get your day. But it seems like we have too many hearings -- and Mr. Plumb.

We have too many hearings now, where it seems like the -- our -- we're talking about how our adversaries are looking in the rearview mirror at us, when it comes to hypersonic weapons or expansion and modernization of nuclear forces. And that's very concerning. So General Cotton, I wanted to let you, for a minute if you would, describe how delays in modernization programs impact your ability to field sufficient forces in the future.

And are there steps STRATCOM can take now, to better hedge against the possibility that some programs do not deliver on time?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Congressman, thank you for the question. First of all, what it -- what it shows us, and the ability of us being -- having a triad, shows that -- that that strategic theory works. Because what a triad does, is it allows me to be able to balance amongst the three legs. Those three legs have to work together.



Some folks try to talk about the triad in stovepipes. They are not stovepipes. So the -- the balancing of being able to understand -- and -- and what we're facing today is the legacy systems across the triad are all being modernized. That's a good thing. But to your point, how do we balance as we make that transition?

The other good news is, the legacy systems are safe, they're secure, they're effective and they're credible today. So we constantly look at all three legs to ensure that we can balance, to ensure that we can cover, to your point, and make sure we have an effective deterrent.

SCOTT DESJARLAIS:

Would you say if we stay on our current modernization trajectory, will the president and the STRATCOM commander, if it's not you, have the capabilities they will need to deter both Russia and China, if our intel on their modernization continues at the current pace, say in 2030?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Sir, I think I said it in an earlier statement. I think we probably need to have a conversation, in regards to strategy, as well as force posture, to ensure that we can -- that we can make sure we have what we need, in regards to -- I would say probably the mid-30s and beyond. The transition to our newer weapon systems are happening in a time frame that you just mentioned, and I think I can deliver, as long as we stay in alignment and -- and produce and deliver the weapon systems, the new modernization systems as close to on time as we can.

SCOTT DESJARLAIS:

OK. Shifting gears just a little bit -- we had a conversation regarding non-strategic, nuclear weapons and how many non-strategic nuclear weapons does Russia have, and in what ways is their arsenal expanding and expecting to expand?

ANTHONY COTTON:

So I have to take that for the record, to get you the exact number. But, by definition non-strategic nuclear weapons or anything that -- that is not counted in New START.

SCOTT DESJARLAIS:

OK. What is your assessment of Russia's motivation for investing so heavily in these non-strategic, low yield nuclear weapons? And do they detect a gap in our deterrent that they believe can derive a military advantage from exploiting?

ANTHONY COTTON:

I think it is based -- based on their strategic theories on the utilization, that it is below threshold, where they can actually utilize non-strategic nuclear weapons or tactical nuclear weapons.

SCOTT DESJARLAIS:

OK. General VanHerck, I had a question for you this morning on North Korea's missile capabilities, but we'll address that in the next, closed session. So with that, I'll yield back.

DOUG LAMBORN:

OK. Now to one of our new members of the subcommittee, Representative Houlahan.

CHRISSY HOULAHAN:

New to the subcommittee, but not new to this. Served in the Air Force myself. And this is what I did when I was in the Air Force as a -- of a -- 30 something years ago. So I'm grateful to be here with you guys today. My questions are for General Cotton and for General Dickinson and Dr. Plumb. General VanHerck, we asked questions at the last con -- calls meeting, so maybe we will skip that today and maybe something in the classified session.

First, for General Cotton, three days ago reports emerged that the PRC is increasing their defense budget by 7.2 percent next year. And we already know, as you said in your written

testimony, that the PRC has rapidly increased their supply of both warheads and missiles, with the expectation that they will control about 1,000 warheads over the next decade.

So as commander of the Strategic -- Strategic Command, I guess having spent the next 30 years working in industry, with KPI's and learning to measure what matters, what matters to you? How do you measure success with strategic deterrence? Is it the number of warheads. Is it the size, or is it the range, or is it comparison against our pacing threat?

Or is it something else, as you mentioned, that's a balance of -- of non-nuclear and -- and unre -- and other assets, as well? Do you believe that we have to outspend or have a larger missile supply than the PRC to maintain our effective levels of deterrence?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Congresswoman, thank you so much. And whoo-hoo, that is your -- you're a Air Force veteran. I think it's a little bit of -- of all the above. And what I mean by that is, the definition of strategic -- excuse me, of deterrence, from my perspective. For me, deterrence is about first, understanding what the adversary values.

And when you understand what the val -- what the adversary values, ensuring the adversary understands that the action you impose. That imposition is so great that they will not risk what they value. I think an incredible start for that, and what we're doing right now, with the modernization of our nuclear forces, is a start to that.

I agree with you, I think adding different capabilities that we were talking about today, from a strategic deterrence perspective, is also something that needs to be added in that calculus.

CHRISSY HOULAHAN:

Thank you. I appreciate your -- your brevity in your answer. So it allows me time to ask Dr. Plumb a question. As we're rightfully focusing more of our time on space and improving our security and collaboration in space, we are running into some issues working with our allies, due to the tendency that many of us have to over classify space related information.

And Representative Moulton asked about this, too. The fiscal year '22 NDAA required that the Secretary would conduct a review of the classified programs under space force to determine whether any level of classification of the program could be changed to a lower level or if the program could be declassified and reported back to us. Dr. Plumb, my understanding is that report was due last April.

Do you have any expectation of when we might be able to get that report out?

JOHN PLUMB:

Thanks Congresswoman. I -- first, let me just say I've got three C's for my ASD space hat that I wear, all related to space. I'm interested in space control. I'm interested in space cooperation with allies, which you raised, and both of those are also contingent on kind of our tendency to over classify space.

It really does make it hard to share information with our allies. General Dickinson and I have been to New Zealand to talk about this with some of our closest allies, as a matter of fact. I will say, I'm aware that the report was due then. It's actually a pretty Herculean task. The Deputy Secretary of Defense has, started last year, a SAP reform effort.

It might have even been before that, but which is coming to a -- at least a new stage. I don't think any of those things -- I don't expect any of those things are going to become unclassified. But we are hoping to find ways to better share information with industry, just as an example, another partner we don't talk about as much.

CHRISSY HOULAHAN:

Do we have an estimation on when that report would be due?

JOHN PLUMB:

I don't have a great one for you, but I'm hoping for later this year.

CHRISSY HOULAHAN:

I look forward to following you up on that -- with that. And with my last half a minute, General Dickinson, you talked a little bit about sort of the implications about working with our allies. And -- and Dr. Plumb, you talked a little bit about industry. But I'm also thinking about the American people. A lot of what is effectively -- been effective about Ukraine has been that release of information by the administration and others, that has been sanitized and is allowed to be advanced, you know, to the American public to help them understand -- space and Space Force and Space Command is one of those problems, where people just don't understand its impact.

I know I've run out of time, but I'd be interested, perhaps afterwards, in learning more from you about whether you think there's an appetite or an ability to have that information available to the American public in more -- in a more abundant way, in a more sanitized way. And -- I'm sorry. And I yield back.

DOUG LAMBORN:

OK. And now we have another new member, although not new to this issue, just like Representative Houlahan is not new to this issue, and that's Representative Bacon.

DON BACON:

I'm glad to be on this committee. Thank you. I want to welcome all fi -- all four of you here today. We appreciate your leadership and what you do. And I want to welcome General VanHerck and General Dickinson to Omaha when you retire. And you can join Gerald Cotton, who's been well received and -- and welcome there.

So -- but congratulations to both. And we thank you. I volunteered to be on the Strategic Forces Committee to focus on NC3, as General Cotton knows. We're investing in the triad. I think we're on a great glide path for success to modernize all three of those legs of the triad. But I am concerned about the survivability of our NC3. I know STRATCOM and our DOD has been working on the comm systems and the architectures.

But the area that I'm focused on is -- or worried about is the survivability of command. With hypersonics and cruise missiles, perhaps submarines off our coasts, at some point again, it's harder to ensure that command authorities can survive a first strike and conduct a second -- a second counter strike.

I want to have 100 percent confidence that the Russians and Chinese have 100 percent confidence that we can do a second strike, because that ensures deterrence. And that's ultimately what we're about.

Job number one is strategic deterrence. So with that, General Cotton, can you share your thoughts on what parts of our deterrence, our alert, and our readiness posture that you're watching most closely, and what elements you believe may warrant more attention from us and more funding?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Congressman Bacon, thank you so much for the question. It's all of it. You know, I look at our E6B fleet, I look at our E4B fleet. I look at the mission readiness of those fleets. I look at our submarine fleet, as well as the ICBM leg, and our bomber fleet, to include all of the bomber forces, not just those that are directly assigned, which is the B-52 and the B and the B-2. We carefully manage that, Congressman, to make sure that -- that -- that we're -- that we're confident that we can do exactly what you're -- what you're saying, in regards of being able to disperse when we need to disperse and get to locations of safety when we need to get to locations of safety.

DON BACON:

You know, a lot of this is predicated on strategic warning. But I'm an intel officer, by trade and historian. I love reading history. And more often than not, adversaries are caught flat footed. So I'm just -- I want to ensure that we have it baked in every day that we have that survivability there. A follow up question with you, General Cotton, is, how was our -- how is the Nuclear Enterprise Center at Offutt working to design the next generation NC3 architecture?

And how is it work informing DOD NC3 modernization?

ANTHONY COTTON:

Thank you for that question -- excuse me. You know, as -- as I -- as I took command on the 9th of December, one -- one of the things that we did on the 12th of December was we created a cross-functional team within the command to really get after, how do we describe the incredible things that are going on within the NC3 portfolio, and describe it, to be frank, to the members of Congress and to my own bosses within the department.

So one of the things that we're doing, is we're changing what we would call a OV1 strategy to describe what we're doing within the architecture. And I've directed our team to come out with what we would call a roadmap construct -- construct to better describe the dollars and the investments and -- and everything else that's happening within -- within the enterprise.

It's still nascent, but we'll be ready to present that to -- to my bosses in the Pentagon, as well as to the members here, shortly. But there is a lot of work that is going on with the next-gen NC3 implementation plan, and I look forward to being able to describe that to you.

DON BACON:

I have a question for General Dickinson. But before I do, before my focus on NC3, I've been working on electronic warfare. I really appreciate the great work STRATCOM and the whole DOD is doing on it. It's an area that we've fallen behind on. So I appreciate your focus on that, as well as STRATCOM. General Dickinson, I have about 30 seconds left, can you explain a little more about the dynamic space operations and your requirements?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Thank you, Congressman. So dynamic space operations is a -- is the concept where we get to the point where we're not having to -- to worry about consumables that might be on spacecraft. In other words, we need to be able to have dynamics, space capabilities, that don't -- you -- an operator or a warfighter can actually use that in the actual context, or the tactics they want to employ, without having to worry about replenishment, whether it's a



battery drain, whether it's a fuel consumption, something along the lines where you can refuel, be able to have a replenishment of that capability.

So you can use it, not only today, but in the future. And then when you're actually doing operations, that you're not limited in what you can do because of that.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Thank you. And for everyone's situational awareness, I have asked Joint Staff, OSD, and STRATCOM to put together a classified NC3 brief for members. So be looking for a notice coming soon. I was going to ask Representative Norcross. He wants to defer. So Representative Strong you are next.

DALE STRONG:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor, when I get to see a panel of generals who have spent a lot of time in my hometown of Huntsville, Alabama at Redstone Arsenal, where I served 26 years on the Madison County Commission, the last 10 as the chairman. General Dickerson, Redstone Arsenal and the surrounding community, was sorry to see you leave SMDC in 2019. We were proud of everything you've done for the US Space Command.

Your successor, General Dan Karbler, has done a fantastic job, as well. And I know General Cotton will agree. General Cotton, thank you for taking time from your schedule to come by my office last week and give me a brief. In our discussion, you stressed the importance of guaranteeing the US strategic forces are safe, secure, effective and credible.

This applies to the three legs of the nuclear triad and nuclear command, control, and communications. Can you briefly summarize what Strategic Command is doing to ensure that all ongoing modernization efforts and our strategic forces and capabilities are safe, secure, effective and credible?

ANTHONY COTTON:



Congressman Strong, thank you so much. And I had a great opportunity. It was a great time talking with you last week. You know, there's -- there's nothing more sacred than ensuring that we have a safe, secure, and effective, and credible nuclear deterrent, just because of the weapon systems that we're describing themselves.

When we talk about the men and women that are working those systems each and every day, and the training and readiness that goes in ensuring that they are ready to -- to do their job, that's paramount for us. So I oversee the service components that have that mission set every day, to ensure that they're properly trained or properly equipped, and have the means to be able to deliver effects that -- when they're required to do so.

DALE STRONG:

Thank you, General, Dr. Plumb, as you know, my hometown of Rocket City, USA, Huntsville, Alabama is a haven for traditional defense contractors and commercial industry alike. As the Department of Defense continues to increase its reliance on commercial partners in space, I have two questions. One, what is the DOD doing to ensure there's no foreign adversary influence on commercial partners and their dual use service or technology?

Two, what are -- authorities does the DOD have to safely integrate commercial partners into current architectures and information sharing?

JOHN PLUMB:

Well, thank you, Congressman. So two-part question. So first, I think, if I have you right, you're asking about supply chain.

DALE STRONG:

That is right.

JOHN PLUMB:

So obviously, or if not, obviously let me just stress how important supply chain integrity is to the Department of Defense, for any, really any capability. But certainly any high end capability. And that is a thing that the department takes seriously and works on every day. Your second question was authorities, I think, on integrating commercial into -- so it's a good question.

I think -- I'm not aware of any authority limitations. I think it is very clear to those of us at the table, and anyone working on space that the industry -- right? -- commercial providers are moving at a pace that's probably rapid than the Department of Defense typically can move at. And so we're trying to harness that and see how we can use that to our advantage.

We are looking at different ways we can use commercial space. There are some missions that are probably almost -- completely could be filled by commercial and there are some that are very unique to DOD. I'll just say, I think their general approach, going forward, and I'm not the acquisition authority here, sir, is that we should buy what we can and build what we have to.

DALE STRONG:

Thank you, Dr. Plumb. General Dickinson, I've heard a lot of talk about dynamic space operations and maneuvering satellites without regret. Can you explain on what your requirements are for this and how it intersects with ensuring robust and redundant situational awareness capabilities?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Thank you, Congressman, and good to see you. Thanks for those kind words. I would say, for dynamic space operations, we -- we are still looking at crafting our requirements, drafting our requirements, what that really means, and being able to describe that. But in essence, as I mentioned earlier, it is being able to maneuver, on orbit, in any manner that we need to, given the situation, and not be constrained by fuel, electricity, batteries, whatever the consumables might be on that particular spacecraft or that particular capability.

So like in other domains, where you're able to refuel trucks and tanks and aircraft, we need to be able to do the same thing in space.

DALE STRONG:

Thank you. I think each of you for being here. I yield my time.

DOUG LAMBORN:

Representative Norcross? Oh -- in a moment. We're about to recess and go up to 2337 for the conclusion of this hearing in a classified setting. I have one, quick follow-up on something you said, General Dickinson, earlier. You talked about achieving initial operating capability at your provisional headquarters at Peterson Space Force Base.

I know that reaching full, operational capability is a high priority, but there have been complications regarding Space Command's permanent headquarters and where it will be located? Can you talk about the readiness challenges you face, should those headquarters be moved from Colorado Springs, and the additional time that would be involved?

JAMES DICKINSON:

Chairman, I did say I reached IOC initial operational capability a couple of years ago, and we're on the glide path right now, moving aggressively towards full operational capability in the provisional headquarters and infrastructure that I have in Colorado Springs right now. To me it's all about readiness.

It's all about being able to -- to do the mission sets that I've been given by the president of the United States. And so, as we move with resourcing, that -- both infrastructure, as well as people, which are the most important part of the command, we're moving in that direction.

DOUG LAMBORN:

All right. Thank you. We will now go into recess and reconvene in a few moments in 2337.

## List of Panel Members and Witnesses

### PANEL MEMBERS:

REP. DOUG LAMBORN (R-COLO.), CHAIRMAN

REP. JOE WILSON (R-S.C.)

REP. MICHAEL TURNER (R-OHIO)

REP. ELISE STEFANIK (R-N.Y.)

REP. SCOTT DESJARLAIS (R-TENN.)

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REP. SCOTT FRANKLIN (R-FLA.)

REP. LIZ CHENEY (R-WYO.)

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STRATEGIC COMMAND COMMANDER ANTHONY COTTON

SPACE COMMAND COMMANDER JAMES DICKINSON

NORHTERN COMMAND AND NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE

COMMAND COMMANDER GLEN D. VANHERCK

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