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STATEMENT OF

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NUCLEAR, CHEMICAL, AND BIOLOGICAL DEFENSE PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

Chairman Cooper, Ranking Member Lamborn, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor and privilege to testify before you today on behalf of the diverse Department of Defense (DoD) workforce who underpin the United States' nuclear deterrent. These dedicated Americans are the backbone of our nuclear deterrence mission.

We are living in a decisive decade as articulated in the Biden Administration's National Defense Strategy: a decade marked by dramatic changes in geopolitics, a rapidly changing global balance of military capabilities, emerging technologies, and domains of conflict in which the logic of deterrence is not well defined. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense Programs (ASD(NCB)) is at the forefront of U.S. efforts to sustain and modernize the U.S. nuclear deterrent, while simultaneously providing chemical and biological defense capabilities and compliance with international NCB-related treaties and agreements. As the ASD(NCB), I also serve as a senior advisor and technical expert to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Defense and as the Staff Director for the Nuclear Weapons Council. I take these roles very seriously, particularly in light of today's security environment and the challenges facing our enterprise.

THREAT LANDSCAPE

While the U.S. nuclear deterrent is and will remain safe, secure, and effective, the strategic threat environment in which it must do so has dramatically worsened over the past decade. Russia is completing its longstanding plan to modernize its legacy nuclear forces and is aggressively pursuing new and advanced nuclear capabilities. Russia's irresponsible nuclear saber-rattling in relation to its invasion of Ukraine has further demonstrated the importance of its diverse nuclear capabilities in its overall security strategy. China is pursuing and fielding major quantitative and qualitative improvements to its nuclear capabilities that significantly change the strategic threat they pose to the United States and our allies and partners. These combined developments are resulting in long-lasting challenges that require the United States to focus and maintain long-term attention and resources on ensuring we have a modern and credible nuclear deterrent.

NUCLEAR MODERNIZATION FOR A DYNAMIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

In response to this security environment, the U.S. nuclear enterprise is shifting from maintenance and sustainment of legacy systems and embarking on a long-overdue modernization effort to ensure that U.S. nuclear capabilities remain safe, secure, and effective—as well as capable of addressing emerging threats. This modernization begins with production and infrastructure efforts within the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) and is dependent upon our ability to safeguard the world-class science and engineering required to maintain the nuclear stockpile without nuclear explosive testing and improve the safety, security, reliability, and survivability of the deterrent. As NWC Chair, Dr. William LaPlante stated in his testimony to your counterpart subcommittee in the Senate several weeks ago that we must ensure that our nuclear weapons and delivery system modernization programs are aligned across both the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy. Today, four major nuclear delivery system modernization programs are simultaneously underway while five warhead programs will reach milestone decisions in the coming months. These milestones include:

- The W88 Alteration (ALT) 370 achieved its First Production Unit in July 2021 and is on track for a full-scale production decision this summer. The W88 ALT 370 extends the life of the W88 without increasing the warhead's military capability.
- The B61-12 achieved first production in November 2021, further assuring allies of our extended deterrence commitment, and is on track for a full-scale production decision in the next month.
- The W80-4 cruise missile warhead, which will be mated to the modernized Long-Range Standoff (LRSO) weapon, is scheduled to shift into production engineering in the coming months.
- The W87-1, a warhead modification that is driving modernization of the full production enterprise, is on track to enter its engineering development phase in time to begin replacing the W78 on alert in 2030.
- Finally, the W93 just entered its feasibility study phase, and will ensure the U.S. submarine-based deterrent force remains robust for the long-term and furthering opportunities for both the U.S. and United Kingdom, through its separate but parallel program, to responsibly address challenges within legacy nuclear forces.

DoD's nuclear delivery system programs are steadily progressing. The COLUMBIA-class submarine program is on track to deliver the first hull in time for its first strategic patrol in FY 2031 and meet U.S. Strategic Command requirements. The COLUMBIA-class will be equipped with a modernized Trident II D5 strategic weapon system, which will ensure the effectiveness of the sea-based leg of the Triad through FY 2084. The Sentinel program—formerly known as the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent—is executing its aggressive schedule, and the Air Force is actively mitigating risks to achieving on-time delivery in the mid-2030s. Sentinel will close current ICBM capability gaps; provide increased accuracy, enhanced security, and improved reliability; and lower lifecycle costs. Sentinel will fulfill the requirements of the land-based leg of the Triad and remain adaptable to new threat environments.

The air-leg of the Triad is modernizing as well. The B-21 Raider is both a conventional and nuclear-capable bomber that will eventually replace the nuclear-capable B-2 and conventional B-1 bombers, supporting the Triad with a visible and flexible deterrent capability. The first test aircraft entered formal ground test in March 2022. The B-21 will carry the LRSO, a replacement for the nuclear-armed AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile. LRSO is a joint effort involving DoD and DOE/NNSA, with the Air Force responsible for cruise missile development and integration and DOE/NNSA responsible for the W80-4 warhead. This program will maintain the viability of the B-52H fleet and ensure the U.S. continues to provide a visible, flexible, tailorable, and credible nuclear deterrent through the airborne leg of the Triad. The F-35 Dual Capable Aircraft (DCA) program remains on schedule and is an important aspect of our support to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) nuclear deterrent. The F-35A DCA ensures the continued capability and mission effectiveness of Allied forces. As the Vice-Chair of the NATO High Level Group, I support our Allies in matters concerning the safety, security, and survivability of NATO's nuclear deterrent. These and other efforts in support of our NATO Allies will continue to be of critical importance in the current and future security environment.

Underpinning the strategic Triad is the Nation's nuclear command, control, and communications system (NC3). DoD has embarked on a sweeping and long overdue modernization of NC3 to improve the efficiency and alignment of the 200+ individual systems that compose the overall NC3 architecture. This modernization is essential to continue to provide assured and resilient command and control to the President.

Ensuring U.S. nuclear forces remain safe and secure requires collaboration within the nuclear enterprise. Stakeholders are continuously collaborating on U.S. nuclear weapons surety policies and activities. Nuclear security threat capability assessments are being updated to reflect evolving adversary cyber, asymmetric, and conventional capabilities against nuclear command and control systems, physical security systems, and material supply chains. We continue to execute a robust DoD Force-On-Force Exercise Program that assesses adversary capabilities against legacy and future nuclear weapons security systems. These exercises evaluate the effectiveness of current security policies and system standards against assessed threats. If and when gaps are identified, we explore, test and implement innovative material and policy mitigations. These solutions are then shared across the nuclear enterprise to identify efficiencies and promote cross-agency collaboration. To that end, reviews such as the safety, security, and reliability failsafe review directed by the FY2022 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) are key to having continued assurance in the security and reliability of U.S. nuclear systems.

In a reflection of the kind of collaboration and integration nuclear modernization requires, the Department, led by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, conducted a review of U.S. nuclear posture over the past year. This collaborative effort resulted in continued support for modernization of the Triad and the resulting guidance emphasizes the need for strong cooperation between all partners in the nuclear enterprise. I applaud the success exhibited by this process and remain committed to leading the NCB organization through Nuclear Posture Review implementation efforts going forward.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS COUNCIL

As the Staff Director for the NWC, I am happy to report that the NWC is dedicated to enabling a modern, flexible, and balanced stockpile underpinned by a resilient and responsive production enterprise. The NWC recognizes that production issues are of great interest to this subcommittee and have garnered significant public attention. We are committed to working with our NNSA partners, through the NWC process, to mitigate production and infrastructure challenges. I want to thank our NNSA partners for their diligence and transparency. The NWC depends on the close relationship with NNSA to successfully satisfy its statutory responsibilities, which we have done since the inception of the Council. As modernization progresses, the NWC

will remain a focal point for both Departments to answer critical questions and make key decisions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I cannot overstate the importance of ensuring the successful execution of key programs and the development and funding of plans to continue to ensure that the United States retains a safe, secure, and effective deterrent. On behalf of the NCB organization, I would like to thank this Committee for its longstanding, bipartisan support for our nuclear deterrent mission and for the dedicated professionals across the nuclear enterprise. Thank you for your time today, I look forward to your questions.