MR. PETER HUESSY: Good morning. My name is Peter Huessy, and on behalf of the Reserve Officers Association of America, National Defense Industrial Association and the Air Force Association, I want to thank you for being here for the fifth in our series of breakfast seminars on ballistic missile defense, nuclear weapons issues and homeland security. As you know, this is our 30th anniversary and we have done somewhere north of 1,750 seminars.

And just to let you know, we have tomorrow Frank Rose who is going to be talking about missile defense and definitely EPAA issues. And then the following week we have Trent Franks, the member of the House Armed Services Committee from Arizona, who will be talking specifically about missile defense issues, about homeland security and EMP issues. And then the following week we have four breakfasts with Ken Myers, the head of DTRA; Mark Schneider and Tom Schieber talking about nuclear deterrence and missile defense issues; General Chambers from the Air Force on the 24th of May; and Larry Welch on the 25th of May.

I want to thank our corporate sponsors that are here today. I want to also thank the members of the U.S. military that are here and attending. And our friend from the embassy of Austria who also is attending, I want to thank you for being here.

We are honored today to have Lieutenant General James Kowalski. And just to make sure he’s going to stay on the straight and narrow, we have Terry Benedict, director of SSP, who is also here. I want to welcome you, Terry. Admiral, thank you for being here.

As many of you know, Lieutenant General Kowalski is commander of the Air Force Global Strike Command at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. He’s responsible for organizing, training, equipping and maintaining all U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear capable bomber forces. The command’s mission is to develop and provide combat ready forces for nuclear deterrence and global strike operations to support the president of the United States and combatant commanders. The command comprises more than 23,000 professionals operating at various locations around the globe. And the command’s six wings control the nation’s entire inventory of Minuteman III ICBMs, B-2 and B-52 bomber aircraft.

On behalf of our corporate and organizational sponsors, General, I want to thank you for coming here from Barksdale to join with us and share with us your thoughts. Would you all give a warm welcome to Lieutenant General James Kowalski?
(Applause).

GEN. JAMES KOWALSKI: Peter, thanks for the nice introduction. If you’re not done eating, please keep eating. It’s not going to bother me at all.

We’ve had this command at full operational capability for less than two years. And as a result, when I go around and talk to people I usually have to talk to some extent about the command just to remind them that we’re out there, what we do, those kinds of things. So if you’ll indulge me a little bit, I know some of you are very knowledgeable about Global Strike Command, the Air Force’s newest command, first all-new major command in 27 years for the Air Force, but I will talk a little bit about that. And I’ll try to keep these prepared remarks short so we have a little bit more time for questions.

So thanks, again, for inviting me. As you know, Global Strike Command was activated in response to some well-publicized breakdowns in nuclear discipline in the Air Force. And what we’ve tried to do is focus on restoring that culture of discipline and professionalism. And in our mind, that was essential to rebuilding the American people’s trust in the Air Force’s nuclear stewardship.

So I’ll talk to you about where we are in our nuclear deterrent mission, how we use that force every day. I’ll highlight our significant conventional capabilities. And I’ll discuss where we’re going longer term to ensure we can continue to deter across a range of military operations.

So first, let me talk about the nuclear mission. As the command that was charged with leading the reinvigoration of the nuclear enterprise a few years ago, we understand that stewardship of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal is a special trust and responsibility. Nuclear operations require the highest standards of execution, compliance and critical self-assessment, standards that demand discipline and professionalism at all levels. So we insist on uncompromising adherence to all directives, robust personnel reliability programs, strict security measures, tough inventory controls and demanding component certifications.

The command stands now at over 23,000 people across six wings responsible for nuclear deterrence and global strike operations. We have about 1,100 people deployed every day out to the missile fields in support of U.S. Strategic Command, while we also have about 1,100 airmen deployed every day in support of our regional combatant commanders. We’re the lead major command for ICBMs, B-2 and B-52 bombers, gravity nuclear weapons, nuclear cruise missiles and the UH-1 helicopter fleet.

Recently, we’ve continued the operational consolidation of our nuclear enterprise by completing the transfer of the munitions squadrons from Air Force Materiel Command to Global Strike Command. This realignment provides unity of effort, efficiencies and standardized processes to further strengthen the nuclear enterprise. The Air Force has also designated our headquarters’ director of communications as the lead architect for the Air Force nuclear command and control. That gives us greater leverage over our systems and provides a single Air Force voice to the Joint and OSD communities on nuclear command and control.
Now what do we do with that force? Well, there’s three national objectives that we perform every day. First is strategic stability. Second is the deterrence of nuclear regional adversaries. And the third is assuring allies.

Day-to-day, our nuclear forces provide for strategic stability with the largest nuclear powers, Russia and China. This is a mature relationship with Russia, with negotiated force structure parity providing a framework for continued dialogue, military-to-military engagements and transparency between our nations. For example, during the first treaty year the U.S. hosted 18 Russian inspection teams. At Global Strike Command we had seven visits and every one of our wings was visited at least once.

Beyond the New START Treaty, we hosted a visit from the Russian air force chief of staff. We held discussions and demonstrations with the Russians on convoy security procedures.

Now our relationship with the Chinese military has been slow to develop. But the recent exchanges of high ranking defense leaders, to include the ongoing visit by Defense Minister Liang to the U.S. this week, is encouraging.

Our nuclear forces are also one element of our structure for deterring regional threats. This is increasingly important in a dynamic and uncertain security environment, an environment populated with both nuclear threats and proliferators of nuclear and missile technologies.

Finally, our nuclear forces extend deterrence to our friends and allies. This assurance mission serves our nation’s nonproliferation goals by showing that our allies’ security interests can be protected without them having to have their own nuclear arsenals. But extended deterrence is fragile and our will must be unimpeachable.

Against the backdrop of our national nuclear objectives the president has made it clear we will ensure our nuclear arsenal is safe, secure and effective. As we continue our drawdown to New START force levels, we must do so at a measured pace and recognize the important role of our intellectual and industrial infrastructure. That measured pace means meeting the challenges of funding and implementing the drawdown to New START limits within the required timelines. This includes the elimination of the remaining B-52Gs, and about 100 unused silos left over from the previous drawdowns of the ICBM force structure.

Now the B-52G elimination is straightforward and on track. And the environmental assessments required to develop the methods for eliminating the unused launch facilities are underway. And we expect that work to begin on those silos in the spring of next year.

We are working with Materiel Command on preparations to store non-deployed Minuteman III missiles, as we move to a limit of up to 420 boosters. But we will have to watch our maintenance workload closely as we’ll be simultaneously pulling boosters and executing the de-MIRV profile on the boosters that we retain out in the field. Finally, we also have our B-52H conversion proposal ready for the treaty compliance group, and that will be able to get us to a deployed force of up to 60.
To sustain a force that is safe, secure and effective, we must make needed investments. Our nation has enjoyed an extended procurement holiday as we’ve deferred vigorous modernization of our nuclear deterrent forces for almost 20 years. As we drew down our force from tens of thousands of warheads to the planned 1,550, we’ve lost some of the robustness and diversity that reduced our strategic and operational risk.

A smaller, less diverse force is more sensitive to technical surprise, disruptive technologies or rapid geopolitical shift. However, by keeping and modernizing our triad of SSBNs, ICBMs and bombers, we can reduce nuclear weapons to New START limits while also sustaining strategic stability and maintaining our risks. A triad of delivery systems complicates the offensive and defensive plans and resource decisions of potential adversaries, and gives our national leadership options for escalation control in a crisis.

We also can’t forget the critical role played by the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, the National Nuclear Security Agency laboratories and our industrial partners in ensuring a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal. They are an irreplaceable infrastructure of experience and scientific excellence needed not just for the support of our operational nuclear deterrent mission, but to ensure nuclear surety, nuclear safety and to enable our nonproliferation and counter-weapons of mass destruction efforts. Advancements from high performance computer modeling to air bags in cars to laser painting on commercial aircraft fan blades, were all born in our nation’s national laboratories. Those laboratories are a national treasure.

We also have to recognize that if we want to avoid nuclear confrontation, we must first have credible conventional forces that can deter and assure in the earliest stages of crisis. We’ve made huge strides in developing the conventional capabilities of our bomber forces with the addition of precision and smart munitions and targeting pods. We’ve woven the bomber force into the fabric of the joint force packages.

Since Operation Allied Force, bombers with precision munitions have executed strikes in every major military operation. Almost 11 years ago, B-2 from the 509th Bomb Wing, kick-started Operation Enduring Freedom. And just a year ago, B-1s and B-2s responded when our nation called in Operation Odyssey (Guide ?) against the Qaddafi regime.

In Afghanistan, we continue to rely on the payload and persistence bombers can provide when they are deployed forward. Just a few weeks ago, the B-1s reached a milestone, their 10,000th combat sortie. We provide bombers across a range of military operations, from information operations to close air support to offensive counter-air to strategic attack.

As we pivot to the Pacific and refocus on power projection, the role of our bombers will remain central to bringing the threat of mass precision and persistence to support the regional combatant commanders. But in both conventional and nuclear missions, we’re challenged with an aging force and the associated problems of corrosion, declining industrial base, vanishing vendors, overseas components and rising depot costs. Taken together, these serve to complicate the long-term challenge of balancing sustainment with modernization during a period of budget austerity.
Our Minuteman III came online in 1970 with an expected lifespan of 10 years, but still maintains an alert rate of over 99 percent. The Minuteman III is now planned to be in service until 2030, a full 50 years past its design life. So far we’ve had good success with a number of sustainment programs, to include replacing the boosters, upgrading environmental controls, modernizing security and support equipment and procuring new special purpose vehicles. In our fiscal year ’13 proposal, we fully funded the fuse replacement initiative in partnership with the Navy, fully funded a new transporter-erector and started the next solid rocket motor program.

To counter the deferral of the replacement helicopter for the 40 year-old UH-1N, we transferred three helicopters from the Marine Corps and are reviewing affordable force structure mission and safety upgrades to the current UH-1 fleet. However, these are stopgap measures and they don’t negate the need for a replacement helicopter. The UH-1 remains deficient in payload, speed and range, unable to meet national nuclear security or continuity of government and continuity of operation mission requirements. It’s not a matter of if we get a replacement helicopter, it’s really an issue of when we can afford to replace the UH-1.

Our current force of B-52s is at the half century mark and will remain viable through 2040. We continue to keep the aircraft relevant with upgrades to include better software for the advanced targeting pods, and a weapons bay modernization program to allow full carriage of smart weapons. That upgrade increases the smart weapon payload by 66 percent. Affordability and performance issues have caused us to restructure the Combat Network Communications Technology upgrade, or CNCT, and we’re in a review now to determine the best way forward to address the need for a digital backbone for the B-52. Finally, we’ve also had to defer two other B-52 upgrade programs, the strategic radar and the advanced satellite communications upgrade.

For our B-2s, they remain funded for the defensive systems upgrades and a weapons computer upgrade. We’ve terminated the second part of a B-52 advanced satellite communication program in favor of a more affordable VLF/LF solution to ensure survivable nuclear communications. On the weapons side, the B-61 tail kit, needed to integrate with the life extension of the warhead, is fully funded, as is the life extension of the air-launched cruise missile, through 2020. And it is partially funded through 2030.

These upgrade and life extension efforts alone won’t ensure our nation retains a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent force. At the heart of our modernization efforts is a long-range strike family of systems: a new penetrating bomber; a new standoff nuclear cruise missile; a conventional prompt global strike capability; and a replacement for the Minuteman III. As Secretary Rusk once warned, “We must not expose them to intolerable temptation through our own weakness. We must maintain a strong, capable national force.”

Preserving the peace requires we give our national leaders a broad range of options to manage a crisis. Should competition become confrontation, our nation’s resolve and military strength will prove decisive to deter and assure, and preclude that confrontation from becoming a conflict.

So thanks for your attention, your time, and I’ll open it up for questions.
(Applause).

I’m the brilliant communicator, and there aren’t any questions?

MS. ALLISON FORTIER: I’ll ask a question. General Kowalski, Allison Fortier. We were talking a little bit about this, but on the new bomber, how will the Air Force view the trades between a manned and unmanned bomber? What are some of the priorities and considerations?

GEN. KOWALSKI: Right now we’re going through that process of determining those trades. The chief, chief Schwartz, has been very clear that his number one key performance parameter on this right now is price. And I think what we will discover is that that may, in fact, be what drives us in terms of the trade space on manned and unmanned.

We’re talking about a half a billion dollar airplane and it’s going to be operating in contested airspace. And I think that’s probably going to make it difficult to afford an unmanned solution at the front, but we’ll see. We’ll see how this evolves. But I think that would be a real challenge for industry to make sure that we can execute.

MR. JIM SERESO (ph): Good morning, General, Jim Sereso with Inside Defense. Sir, another question on the new bomber. The Air Force has said publicly that it’s not sure it wants it to be nuclear certified at IOC. Congress is sort of wishing that it be certified at that point. What are your thoughts on the importance of having the new bomber nuclear certified at the initial operational capability?

GEN. KOWALSKI: I clearly support the Air Force position on this, which is if you look back at the history of our bombers and what we did, none of them came off and were certified in both nuclear and conventional at IOC. That is one, an expensive way to do it. And it stresses your test capability and your test assets and is, frankly, just not a smart way to do concurrent testing for two different capabilities.

So what we have done in the past, because all of our bombers came off production lines and were declared IOC during the Cold War -- as the priority mission at the time was the Cold War -- you know, to make them nuclear capable as quickly as possible. So those bombers came off and were nuclear certified fairly rapidly, and then they developed conventional capability afterwards. I was in the initial cadre of the B-1 and I know how painful that was to get the conventional. And that is not nearly as detailed and managed and controlled as the nuclear, for all the reasons that we well understand.

So I don’t think it’s unreasonable to say well, if we’re going to have it come off the line and be certified in one or the other first, what is probably the most pressing? I look at the range of military operations that the combatant commanders want and I say probably conventional is the most pressing. So from that perspective, it probably makes sense in my mind that it come off and be conventionally certified first and then gain the nuclear certification.

Clearly, we are paired very closely with Air Combat Command who has the lead in developing the requirement for the bomber. We’re very closely tied to the offices at the Pentagon and the air staff that develop and are working with this. And we bring the nuclear experience, expertise, the links, as the service component, the strategic command, for it into the Air Force corporate structure.
So we are very engaged. We’re making sure that this airplane is designed to be nuclear capable from the beginning, and that it will be able to be nuclear certified later. It’s just a matter of, you know, whether that’s the affordable way to do it and whether it makes strategic sense. And right now I think the plan is pretty good, but we’ll see how this plays out.

MS. ELAINE GROSSMAN: Sir, Elaine Grossman with the National Journal Group. I wanted to ask about the conventional strike missile. Can you clarify for us what Global Strike Command’s relationship to that program, that effort, is -- or its responsibilities in that program -- and whether the Air Force, and your command in particular, are looking at possible alternative ways ahead given the recent last two flight test failures?

GEN. KOWALSKI: We track it very closely. We stay engaged with OSD/AT&L. We have no funding for this and there is no program. So there is no formal responsibility at this point, but we see it as a natural evolution of where we want to go.

We agree that there is a requirement here. We’re not sure we fully understand it yet and we’re not sure we have a good scope on the cost. But we think it’s important that we continue the development. I think we’re on track and I think we need to continue to press with the DARPA program and see where we go with this.

MS. GROSSMAN: Can I just clarify, you’re saying there is no program under any command, and so –

GEN. KOWALSKI: I don’t have – I have no money and I have no program within Global Strike Command right now. So I don’t have any formal responsibilities or taskings other than, you know, it clearly falls within what we see as our mission set. And so we stay engaged in conversations with OSD. And we’ve been to visit DARPA and we’ve been out to see the weapons, etcetera.

MS. GROSSMAN: So if there were a program office it would be under your command?

GEN. KOWALSKI: That would be my expectation. Thanks.

MR. AL PETROLI (ph): General, Al Petroli from CNN. I was wondering if you could talk to us a little bit about where the LRSO, the Long Range Standoff Option stands and what’s your assessment of how it’s going and well as how you see it developing operationally, which platforms you would expect it to operate from?

GEN. KOWALSKI: Right now, I think it is – I’m trying to remember off hand – I constantly get it confused with our ground based strategic deterrent because both of those are – I think ground based strategic deterrent is in pre-ICD now, it’s about to go forward. And I think our LRSO is in the analysis of alternatives phase right now, so both of those are moving along. Now as you know, in ’13 we’ve sort of deferred that a little bit just on the timeline and pushed it to the right to free up some money in the budget. I expect it to be on all of the nuclear capable platforms, up to and including LRSV.
MR. HUESSY: General, I have one question and then a follow-up. But the one is, many people claim that modernization is inconsistent with our counter- and non-proliferation aims, that we should – I’m not talking about building up weapons, but modernizing the force structure and NNSA is somehow to be seen as inconsistent with our goals of not only stopping further proliferation, but ending that proliferation that’s going on outside the NPT and within the NPT. Could you address that issue?

GEN. KOWALSKI: Yes, there’s a concept out there, I think, that the fact that our nation is signed up to the NonProliferation Treaty and that treaty envisions a world without nuclear weapons, that that path is somehow incompatible with modernizing the force. And I think that is absolutely wrong. I think modernizing the force is fundamental to staying on a track where we can get the rest of the world on the same page of pursuing a planet without nuclear weapons.

Other nations will see us and how committed we are to this path, and if we are not committed, if we don’t demonstrate the will necessary to maintain a robust nuclear deterrent, and to ensure the parity, to continue to assure allies, then what I don’t think is I don’t think these other nation-states will necessarily be motivated to follow us down that road. So I think they are linked.

I think Dr. Kissinger wrote a very interesting article a few weeks ago. And Dr. Kissinger was one of the four horsemen who wrote the letter with Senator Nunn back in 2007, and again, brings some heft and credibility to the discussion. And fundamentally, this is about preserving strategic stability. We’ve had 65 years of peace between major powers. I don’t think we need to put that at risk. And we need to proceed down this path towards zero at a measured pace that also sustains our forces and sustains our credibility.

MR. HUESSY: That was my second question. We had talked about the editorial that General Scowcroft and Dr. Kissinger had written. Could you explain a little bit more how you see ICBMs and SLBMs and the bombers contributing to each other in terms of how critical stability is in a world where a crisis could get out of hand?

GEN. KOWALSKI: Right. It’s pretty well explained in the Nuclear Posture Review. Our submarine force provides us that survivable force that is fundamental to ensuring strategic stability.

Part of this goes to what do we mean by “strategic stability.” And as I have gone around and had various discussions, that’s one I toss out there. What does strategic stability mean?

And the kind of answers I get are fairly narrow. It generally falls into the range of neither state fears a first strike and neither state has an incentive to execute a first strike. And then recently, I got a comment that it also has to do with the information requirements.

So basically, neither state sees itself being blinded and losing that visibility, their transparency into the capabilities or intent of another state, which becomes much more complicated once we start talking about space and cyber and the impact and the relationship of that as we’ve executed some war games and things – so, you know, the traditional relationship. So the SSBNs provide us that fundamental survivable force that ensures that strategic stability.
Our ICBMS, they provide that strategic stability because within the framework of the treaty –
and you've got 450 launch facilities, you have 45 launch control centers – that’s 500 targets. They’re
hardened targets, so that’s two weapons a target. So within the construct of a strategically stable force,
that is not a force that is easily susceptible to a first strike. So again, the United States has this ability to
be comfortable with the size of its force and comfortable with the strategic relationship because it
knows that its land-based force is not really susceptible to that first strike. And as we drive that force
toward single warheads, it doesn’t really give us any incentive, so then an adversary doesn’t see it as a
potential first strike force in and of itself.

And then, of course, the bombers. The bombers are the only part of the triad that really allow
us to demonstrate resolve, to show different force levels as we generate bombers, as we disperse
bomber, as we move bombers forward. And as a result, it gives national leadership a broader range of
options in trying to control and execute on de-escalating a confrontation.

Other questions?

MS. : (Off mic) – Heritage Foundation. Thinking about strategic stability, we know according to
the New START data declaration that the Russians are building up their strategic forces and they’re
MIRVing. Plus they have thousands of tactical nuclear weapons, but their use would be strategic. How
does the command think about these weapons?

GEN. KOWALSKI: One of the things that we are all familiar with about nuclear weapons, but
oftentimes require a little bit of explanation, is that these are national-political weapons. They’re really
not like 2000 pound bombs. They have directly to do with the relationships between decision leaders of
states.

Within the framework of New START, there’s nothing that the Russians are doing that we’re
aware of that is not within that framework. And that framework was agreed to, signed by the
administration, and ratified by the Senate. And the Russians are not violating that agreement.

Is there room for discussion on tactical nuclear weapons? I think so. I think that’s part of what
the administration is trying to work forward next as they think about what’s the next stage in pursuing
the goals of the NonProliferation Treaty.

But in the near-term, we have a stable relationship. We have a treaty framework that allows us
that transparency, those mil-to-mil engagements, and now that sort of looks to the next step. And that,
I think, is where we get into discussions about how do we get to the tactical weapon problem.

We see it as a problem. But we don’t have the kind of neighborhood the Russians have. They
don’t really see it as a problem.

ADM. TERRY BENEDICT: Sir, you and I have had a number of discussions on opportunities for
commonality as well as our interactions in our jobs of maintaining and modernizing the force. And I
think we’ve taken some great strides working together, on things like the common AF&F between the
Air Force and the Navy. Just two weeks ago I had the opportunity to cut the blue ribbon at an Air Force
Boeing facility in Ohio we’ve moved some of our maintenance work into. Would you care to expand on your thoughts from the Air Force side of where we can, Navy-Air Force, continue this effort?

GEN. KOWALSKI: Terry brings up a great point. It’s something that’s sort of invisible. It’s not like we’ve been hiding it or anything, but we really have worked together on a number of different things. And one of the things he mentioned was the arming and firing fuse, where we’re going to have – it won’t be the exact same fuse, but it’s going to share joint components. And that in turn is hopefully going to save us money.

One of the points that is made by the anti-nuclear crowd, and this is not meant to be disparaging, but there’s often talk about how much this costs. And there’s broad disagreement about how much the nuclear enterprise costs. Now I can point to Global Strike Command and I can tell you that Air Force Global Strike Command has an annual budget of about $4.8 billion. That seems like a lot, but when you get the ICBMS, you get that strategic stability, and you get dual-capable bombers for $4.8 billion a year, and that’s less than one percent of the Department of Defense budget. It’s actually less than the Post Office lost last year, but I don’t want to disparage the Post Office either.

(Laughter).

I encourage everybody to buy stamps, because if the Post Office breaks even, I’m free, is how I (see it?). But we are sensitive to the cost. And that raises a good point because a lot of the concern is less about what it costs to operate the forces today, but we have to. But it’s a recognition that we have taken a procurement holiday and we have big bills that we’ve deferred and they’re coming due. And if we don’t pay those bills we will end up unilaterally disarming ourselves because we’ll have weapons that will not be safe, secure and effective, and we will have to retire them.

So part of what we’re trying to work out here with the Navy is -- and I have to think that not a great deal of detailed thought has gone into this – what has been done at a number of levels is historical costs of programs have been laid in based on timelines that the Air Force and Navy and OSD have talked about individually for replacing components. So what we see is this large bow-wave of bills coming due in the mid-2020s and beyond that when you look at it you go, wow. When you add all this together, when you add a replacement submarine, when you add the next generation Navy missile, when you add the LRSV, when you add in the department of Energy life enhancement programs for these different warheads, when you add in new missile guidance, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, you end up with this huge cost of everything coming due at the same time.

So we have a responsibility to look at this in a little more detail and say, okay, do we need to all be buying different boosters? Do we need to all be buying missile guidance sets? And missile guidance set is a great example of where we need to go next, which is I need to replace the missile guidance set on the Minuteman III.

I think Terry’s going to need a new missile guidance set. I know that the follow-on to the Minuteman III, the ground-based strategic deterrent, is going to need a new missile guidance set. Does the nation need to go out and buy three different missile guidance sets, or is there some way we can
work this where we buy one missile guidance set, or at least have the common components so that we’re not paying the same bill three times over?

So those are the kinds of things where we’re trying to work together, trying to bring that bill down. And then maybe move it, maybe separate it out a little bit, are there things in that that we can move to the left? Are there things in that that we can push off to the right to try to make this a little bit more affordable to the nation?

Because we need to do this. I don’t see us being at global zero in 2020, unfortunately. And as a result, that means we have to commit the time, resources and thought to having a reasonable, executable plan out there, which drives the Air Force and the Navy to work much closer together than I think we have in the past.

Thank, Terry, that’s a great question.

MR. : In spite of what you just said about the need to recapitalize all three legs of the triad at the same time while we’re entering a period of budget austerity, do you see any pressure to go to a dyad?

GEN. KOWALSKI: There’s been a lot of discussion about going to a dyad. But there is a significant amount of risk when you do that. And we have to be very careful about why we have the forces that we have. If we have them for strategic stability, if we have them and we want them to hedge failures, hedge against technical surprise, hedge against geopolitical surprise, then which one of those legs to you get rid of?

I’ve heard people say we don’t need the bomber leg. Well you’re going to have the bombers anyway, because you have this conventional requirement for long-range strike. So having he weapon is not that significant a cost. You’re still going to be paying for the airframe and the aircrews and the training and all the rest of that.

So then it’s like, well, you’re going to get rid of the submarines. Well we’re not going to get rid of the submarines. That’s our survivable leg. That’s our bottom line, red line, this is what will endure and that’s what an adversary would have to always be calculating against.

So then it’s do you get rid of the ICBMs? Well if you get rid of the ICBMs you go back to that problem of where’s your strategic stability? If you didn’t have 500 targets out there within the framework of a New START Treaty, you would have how many targets, five, six? Not very many. And now all of a sudden if you have a crisis that’s turning into a confrontation, how stable is that relationship going to be with that potential adversary? Is the U.S. going to be afraid of a first strike because we no longer have that land-based force?

I would also have to say we need to think about what a different force mix and what a different force size does to our personnel experience that we need across the department of Defense and across the department of Energy. We need people who have the tactical level experience in these systems, both Air Force and Navy systems, that populate the Joint Staff, Strategic Command, my headquarters,
Terry’s headquarters, Defense Threat Reduction Agency, OSD AT&L, I mean the list goes on, of the guidance and oversight that we have for the nation’s nuclear enterprise. Now unless somebody is going to say we’re not going to participate in this anymore, then we’re going to continue to have a requirement for people that we’ve got to get from somewhere.

And if you get a force that’s too small, then you can’t fill those oversight requirements, which means how do you know that you have a safe, secure and effective force? If your force becomes too small, how do you sustain the laboratories? How do you sustain the National Nuclear Security Agency, Los Alamos, Livermore, etcetera, etcetera, Sandia?

Those are things that we have to be able to sustain. What force makes sure that we continue to access bright scientists and engineers into Los Alamos? I don’t know what that force level is, but we need to think about it.

And the last one is the industrial base. At what point do the major defense corporations say that’s not enough business for us to deal with? We need to make sure that the scientific expertise, the industrial expertise, the engineering expertise, is available to us to cooperate with government as we work downstream on missile guidance sets and fuses and all those other pieces and parts to make sure, again, safe, secure and effective.

President Obama, in the speech that he gave at Prague, said as long as these weapons exist our nation will have a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal. That phrase, safe, secure and effective, is right in the middle of my command’s mission statement. I’ve got two lines, and then I have the phrase safe, secure and effective, and then I’ve got two more lines. But that’s the heart of the envelope for us, and that’s what we continue to drive as a culture within our command; and what we need to think about at the higher level, as all of you participate in the strategic level decision-making.

MR.: If I could follow-up, sir? I actually advocate for a triad. I believe everything you said is absolutely correct. There’s a lot of good reasons for the stability, the (technical failure of layers to protect ?). My worry is as we enter this period of fiscal austerity, if I have to keep salami slicing down the size of the ICBM, bomber and submarine force, where do I get to the point where I can’t sustain the industrial base?

GEN. KOWALSKI: I don’t know. I am not part of any of the groups that have been looking at different force sizes, so I really can’t comment on any of that. But when the article came out that these were being looked at, there was clearly a lot of excitement in my headquarters about where it’s going. And what I told them was, this is good. A lot of the discussions that are happening about nuclear forces are happening without any kind of objective discussion going on about all the other pieces that are important here, about strategic stability, about ensuring that they’re safe, secure and effective.

So I don’t know if 300 is the right number or not. I can give you my gut reaction on it. But there is some math we can do about what would that look like and how would it be sustainable and would we have the right personnel and would we have the right base that we need for the department of Energy?
Would we have the right base that we need for industry? And maybe a number that would conceivably be sufficient for deterrence, assuming that would be, would not be sufficient to ensure that the enterprise is safe, secure and effective. So those are things we have to keep in balance here.

And that’s why I think as we proceed down the path – if we have, no kidding, said that we want a world without nuclear weapons – then we have to have these discussions at some point. So let’s go ahead and have them and start clarifying what some of the issues are out there. But again, what we don’t want to do is lose sight of our larger strategic goals as we move forward, because that’s why we have the weapons and that’s why we have the delivery systems and why we bother to have the treaties and everything else, is to extend this 65 years of peace between major world powers and do it in a manner that’s strategically stable.

So again, I’m sort of on the outside looking in on a lot of that. Mine is to make sure that within Air Force Global Strike Command we have that discipline, professionalism in the execution of what the nation decides to do. These are national-political weapons and the decisions about the force structure will be made at that level.

MR. HUESSY: General, thank you so much.

(Appause).

Thank you all. For those of you who remembered, tomorrow Frank Rose from the State Department on ballistic missile defense. We’ll see you then. That was an extraordinary set of remarks, but then to spend 30 minutes in Q&A, thank you. That was very awesome. Thank you, General.