MR. BOB FEIDLER: Please continue eating, I’m just going to do a couple of very quick preliminary remarks. If there are any cell phones, please turn them off or on vibrate. My name is Bob Feidler. I’m the director of the strategic defense education at the Reserve Officers Association and our defense education forum.

We try to produce 50 or so programs a year, and it has really been our privilege to become associated with this outstanding multi-decade breakfast defense series that Peter Huessy has run so extraordinarily well. I will just in 20 seconds give you one punch line. You’re in the home headquarters of the Reserve Officers Association. We represent all the Reserve component officers of the United States military.

And I would welcome all of you to think about joining us on the defense studies voyage that we are going to be doing 19-23 August, Boston to Halifax. For this crowd, I’ll particularly highlight we have General Michael Hayden, former CIA and NSA director. He’s one of our keynote speakers. And also Lieutenant General Dunn, who is the president of the Air Force Association, among many, many other speakers. It should be a lot of fun and a great education.

And with that, again, it’s a privilege to introduce Peter Huessy, who’s the founder of this great series and a great friend of ROA.

(Applause).

MR. PETER HUESSY: I want to welcome you all to this the 21st in our series of 35 seminars on homeland security, missile defense and nuclear deterrence issues. I want to welcome, first, our guests from Great Britain, the Czech Republic, Austria and Russia. I also want to welcome and thank our corporate sponsors that are here today.

I also want to acknowledge two of our honored guests that are here today: one of our speakers in our series, the director of DTRA Ken Myers. Thank you for being here, Ken. And also we have General Crabtree, who is SSP-WMD. And I want to thank you, General, for being here today as well.

I want to also remind you for the schedule for next week we do have three seminars. We have Dave Tractenberg, Barry Blechman and Admiral Benedict. And if you haven’t already talked to Sarah, would you please let us know that you’re going to be here. I also have an honored guest here who has been associated with this series for more than two decades, Admiral Monroe, who knows more about
nuclear weapons on his little finger than we have all forgotten. Admiral, thank you for being here as well.

As you know, our speaker today is the commander of U.S. Strategic Command, Bob Kehler. I think I first met the general when he was attending this breakfast with General John Chain, who at that time was SAC Commander back in the 1980s, if I remember. General Kehler is responsible for the plans and operations of all U.S. forces conducting strategic deterrence and Department of Defense space and cyberspace operations.

He entered the Air Force in 1975 as a graduate of the Air Force ROTC program. He has commanded at the squadron, group, wing, and major command level, has a broad range of operational command tours and ICBM operations, space launch space operations, missile warning and space control. He has commanded the Minuteman ICBM operations squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, and the Air Force’s largest ICBM operations group at Malstrom Air Force Base in Montana.

He was deputy director of operations of the Air Force Space Command, commanded both the 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg and the 21st Space Wing at Peterson Air Force base in Colorado. As deputy commander of U.S. Strategic Command he provided the President and the Secretary of Defense with a broad range of strategic capabilities to help provide options for the joint warfighter through several diverse missions including space operations, integrated missile defense, computer network operations and global strike. He also commanded the Air Force Space Command and America’s ICBM force before its transition from Air Force Space Command to the Air Force Global Strike Command in December 2009.

So on behalf of the Reserve Officers Association of America, the Air Force Association and the National Defense Industrial Association, I want to welcome General Bob Kehler, the Commander of Strategic Command.

(Appause).

GEN. BOB KEHLER: Thanks, Peter. I appreciate that very, very gracious introduction. Good morning, everyone. It’s a good thing I wasn’t driving myself to the venue this morning because I would have been in the wrong place. I was prepared to go across to the other side of the Capitol here to the Capitol Hill Club. And when we pulled up out front I got my head out of my Blackberry and looked around and the first thing I thought was we’re in the wrong spot. And so I was about to launch into one of those General things when fortunately Peter walked up.

(Laughter).

And so I got out of the car and pretended like there was nothing wrong. It was great.

(Laughter).

It’s a beautiful venue, by the way. This is very good. And as I look around the room I see a lot of friends and colleagues. I didn’t have a chance to come over, Terry, and say hello – and the rest of the
And so I do, in fact, stand up this morning to talk in a room full of experts. And that’s where I would prefer to be because I think that we can have a good conversation. Hopefully we can have a good conversation at the end of my prepared remarks.

It’s about a year since I have spoken in front of this breakfast series, in fact almost exactly a year. And last year I talked about a number of issues that I thought were pending over the following year. I turns out that, as with many years that go by these days, I think I had it about half right about what we thought was going to come forward. And so an awful lot has gone on since I spoke last time at this great breakfast series.

In particular, of course, we’ve had some interesting times in the fiscal part of our business. And, of course, we have a new defense strategy. I could talk about a lot of different things this morning given StratCom’s broad range of mission responsibilities.

But I thought what I would really do, especially with this audience, is focus on deterrence and assurance and the nuclear enterprise. This is a talk that I’ve been giving in other venues as well. So let me spend my time talking about that, and then I’m happy to take some questions.

I think everybody in this room knows of all the important mission responsibilities assigned to Strategic Command by the president, none is more important than to deter strategic attack on the United States and our allies and our partners. I could stop my talk right there and many of you would walk out the door saying that you would have heard those same words from my predecessors going all the way back to Curtis LeMay. And you would be right.

But you would be wrong to think that we view this mission responsibility the same way today as they did back then. Deterrence and assurance have been part of the national lexicon for well over half a century. And for many of those decades, strategic deterrence really meant nuclear deterrence. That’s because strategic attack really meant nuclear attack on the U.S. or our allies.

In those days, our predecessors envisioned that a nuclear attack could be a sudden surprise or could arise in the course of a large conventional conflict. In either case, a nuclear attack would probably be massive. It was an era of, my words, one size fits all deterrence.

So I would argue that the one size fits all era passed with the end of the Cold War in 1992. Strategic deterrence and assurance remain relevant concepts today. But today we are shaping these concepts toward a broader array of individual actors, each with their own unique context shaping our deterrence approaches. Some would call this tailored deterrence, and we could argue for a long time today whether those are apt terms, but I think it’s a helpful way to think about it.

Tailored deterrence is not an easy task. It requires deeper and more comprehensive understanding of these actors and their decision processes. It requires a robust understanding of the
threats they pose. It requires more flexibility and speed in our strategy development and in our planning.

To be sure, 21st century strategic deterrence is still fundamentally about influencing an actor’s decisions. It’s based on a solid policy foundation. It’s about credible capabilities. It’s about what the U.S. and our allies as a whole can bring to bear in both a military and a non-military sense. Its practice encompasses a wider range of tools today, both nuclear and strong conventional offensive forces, non-kinetic capabilities, limited missile defenses, theater missile defenses, unfettered access and use of space and cyber-space; and in all cases, modern capabilities that are both resilient and sustained.

Deterrence planning and forces must fit today’s unique global security environment, an enormously complex and uncertain world that includes nuclear weapons and nuclear armed states, and where several of the nuclear armed states are modernizing both their weapons and their delivery systems. Today’s world also includes the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, a growing potential for disruption or destructive attack through cyber-space, and the danger of weapons of mass destruction in hands of violent extremists. This is the context for strategic deterrence in the 21st century.

In this context, our nuclear deterrent force continues to play a critically important but not an exclusive role in the nation’s deterrence posture and planning. Nevertheless, the nuclear deterrent force must remain safe, secure and effective. This force must be backed by a solid industrial base for both systems and weapons. And this force and the supporting industrial enterprise must continue to be staffed and led by highly qualified and experienced men and women with perfection as their standard.

The Nuclear Posture Review recognized the need to maintain such a capable force and modern infrastructure as long as nuclear weapons exist, even as counterproliferation and nuclear terrorism rightfully moved to the top of the policy agenda. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates summed it up when he said, and I’ll quote, “As long as nuclear weapons exist the United States must maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal to maintain strategic stability with other nuclear powers, deter potential adversaries and reassure our allies and partners of our commitment to them.” The new national defense strategy sounds a similar theme to the NPR, and here’s another quote from the national defense strategy. “We will field nuclear forces that can, under any circumstances, confront an adversary with the prospect of unacceptable damage, both to deter potential adversaries and assure U.S. allies and other security partners, that they can count on America’s security commitments.”

Nuclear deterrence continues to play an important role in the NATO alliance as well. In both the deterrence and posture review, and at the recent summit, NATO affirmed that nuclear weapons remain a core component of NATO’s overall capabilities for deterrence and defense, alongside conventional and missile defense forces.

Now to be sure, each of the milestones I just mentioned, the United States, and in turn the NATO alliance, committed to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. And all three of those examples that I cited raise the prospect for further reductions to nuclear arsenals beyond the New START ceilings. But the enduring message has remained clear. As long as these weapons exist the
United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent force. And, of course, that is the United States Strategic Command’s charge and it’s our top priority.

So for my remaining couple of minutes, let me offer some perspectives on the nuclear deterrent force and where we’re headed. First, while nuclear weapons represent a unique, relevant and powerful deterrent capability, this is not your father’s nuclear force. We’ve witnessed an impressive 67 year period with neither nuclear use nor major power war.

During that time, we regularly adjusted our nuclear capabilities to match the global environment. Since the end of the Cold War, we’ve significantly reduced our nuclear force structure and revised our nuclear force posture. We continue to review our force structure and posture to make sure we’re meeting the president’s needs.

At the height of the nuclear buildup, the United States had more than 30,000 nuclear weapons of all kinds. We believe, and in post-Cold War statements the Russians have confirmed, that the Soviet Union had similar numbers. Since the end of the Cold War in 1992 we have reduced the total number of ballistic missile submarines, converted four Ohio-class submarines to carry cruise missiles, removed the B-1 bombers from the nuclear role, removed all dual-capable heavy bombers and supporting tankers from nuclear day-to-day alert, eliminated the Peacekeeper ICBM, cut the Minuteman ICBM force in half and are de-MIRVing those that remain, and removed our command and control aircraft from continuous airborne patrol. This is not your father’s nuclear force.

We also withdrew numerous nuclear weapons from abroad. We deactivated whole classes of weapons, like the ground- and sea-launched cruise missiles that were nuclear capable, and the Pershing II ballistic missile. And we dramatically reduced the overall nuclear stockpile.

In total, the stockpile is down over 75 percent from the day the Berlin Wall fell. These are significant, and I would argue, very positive changes. At each decision point along the way, the United States carefully accounted for potential impacts on deterrent capability and strategic stability. The end result is a substantially smaller force, but one we’re confident can deter adversaries, assure allies, and of equal importance, maintain strategic stability in some future crisis.

And that leads me to today’s force. The triad of ballistic missile submarines, ICBMs and nuclear capable heavy bombers with their associated tankers continues to serve us well. It does so by providing unique and enduring attributes.

Now the obvious attributes are the ones we always cite: survivability, promptness and flexibility; because those attributes taken together create insurmountable problems for any would-be attacker, as well as providing for crisis stability. But just as importantly, the triad continues to provide the president with the flexibility to meet our deterrence needs and to respond to emerging threats, crises, surprise or conflict. The triad also forms the foundation of our strategy to hedge against technical failures or geopolitical change.
To sustain a strong nuclear deterrent force, I fully support the continued modernization and sustainment of the delivery systems, weapon life extension programs, stockpile surveillance activities, nuclear complex infrastructure recapitalization, naval reactor design activities and upgrades to our nuclear command, control and communications systems. That’s a tall order at any time, no question. It’s even a taller order when we are facing declining budgets.

However, even following the reductions associated with the Budget Control Act, the fiscal year ‘13 budget still continues to sustain the essential investment to keep the nuclear deterrent force ready and able to do its job. There is some increased risk, to be sure, but the essentials are all there. I need to mention, though, if further reductions occur I’m sure we’re going to have to go back and completely review the entire program, assess what impacts there might be, and then make the appropriate recommendations to the Chairman and the Secretary of Defense.

So as I testified earlier this year, I remain concerned about the way ahead for the nuclear weapons complex itself. Our weapons are aging and we face issues in the physical industrial plant and the possibility of erosion of our intellectual capital. We must protect the important investments for stockpile certification, warhead life extension and infrastructure recapitalization. To that end, STRATCOM is working with the office of the Secretary of Defense and others to finalize plans for fiscal year ‘14 and beyond.

So let me make three more quick points before I close, and then I’ll take questions. First, as I said earlier, the NPR elevated the prevention of nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism to the top of the policy agenda. We have unique responsibilities for combating weapons of mass destruction at STRATCOM. We’re working hard with all the combatant commands and others to ensure that our sense of urgency and pace of preparation matched the potential impact of this threat.

Second, we’re working with the office of the Secretary of Defense, the joint staff and the services to finalize and synchronize New START implementation decisions. We have more work to do to eliminate the excess – or what we call the phantom launchers and the bombers – that are still counted under the treaty’s provisions. We also have more work to do to finalize the force mixture we intend to retain under the central limits of the treaty. But all indications are that the treaty provisions are being met and we are on track to meet the treaty limits by February of 2018.

And third and finally, we have been working with OSD and the Joint Staff on the analysis of future deterrence requirements called for in the NPR. The results of that effort are still pending. STRATCOM has been a full participant in this analysis and we remain engaged, providing additional inputs and military operational advice as requested.

So let me close with a couple of final thoughts. The threat of a sudden nuclear war involving the U.S. and Russia has receded by almost every measure. Certainly, it’s at the lowest level that I have seen in my 37 years in the United States Air Force and military.
Nuclear weapons in the U.S. and Russian arsenals have declined dramatically, and those reductions have occurred deliberately and in a stable way. We do not view Russia or China as our enemies. And deployed U.S. nuclear weapons are not targeted on any country.

But those of us in Strategic Command are mindful that the capability still exists in the world to inflict enormous damage on the United States and our allies. In an extreme scenario, the capability still exists to virtually destroy this country over the course of the next two hours. As long as those capabilities exist, it’s STRATCOM’s job to offer the President a safe, secure, effective nuclear deterrent force as a vital component of the multifaceted strategic deterrent the country needs to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Thanks again for inviting me and I look forward to your questions.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: Before we continue I do want to acknowledge a guest that I thought was coming, and then I thought wasn’t coming. But Admiral Benedict, the head of SSP and our speaker next week, I want to thank you for all the work that you do in this area, which is extraordinary. And General, you can just choose people as you see fit.

The general does have to leave to go across the street around 9 o’clock, so we are going to cut this off right at 9. But General, thank you for those remarks. And if you would, as you wish, just pick people from the audience.

GEN. KEHLER: Sure. Well, thanks. I don’t see any questions, so I appreciate this.

(Laughter).

Yes, sir, your hand was up first.

MR. CARL OSGOOD: General, I’m Carl Osgood. I write for Executive Intelligence Review. As you are probably aware, General Makarov, the Russian chief of staff, is in town today for discussions with General Dempsey. I’m wondering from your perspective, how do you see U.S.-Russian military cooperation in your area of responsibility, and what do you expect or hope to see coming out of these discussions?

GEN. KEHLER: Yeah, that’s a great question. Of course, we are seeking more and deeper military-to-military relationships with Russia. And I will tell you my predecessor and his predecessor were both fortunate in having some high-level conversations with their Russian counterparts. We are trying to see how we can do that as well during my tenure in Strategic Command.

We have invited Russian senior officials to come and participate in our annual deterrence symposium. They typically come, and so we look forward to that. And so in the areas that I have responsibility for, I think there’s good dialogue. We don’t always agree, but I think there’s good dialogue. And certainly the State Department, I believe, has very detailed dialogue ongoing with their
Russian counterparts. And that’s been going on for quite some time. And I see the meeting between the two Chiefs of Defense, military defense for the two countries, as very positive. So we welcome any meaningful opportunity for contact with our Russian counterparts.

MS. ANNE PENKETH: Thank you. I’m with the British American Security Information Council. General, STRATCOM is supposed to be submitting a report to the defense committees on the options for the Ohio replacement. And could you give us any indication of when this might happen and what the conclusions might be?

GEN. KEHLER: I’m going to have to ask Terry, what report? Do we have a report pending? I thought, oh-oh, my homework is late. I’m not aware that we’ve got a report pending. Let me tell you what I do know and then if that’s not it I’ll defer to Admiral Benedict for next week.

(Laughter).

That’s how that works, four of these (stars), two of those. That’s how this works.

The budget that is before Congress right now for fiscal year ’13 does, in fact, continue to support at I believe a very good research and development and technology development effort, the Ohio replacement. And I am very encouraged. I think certainly as far as I can see in my strategic eye, this country is going to require a sea-based component of our nuclear deterrent.

From what we know from our colleagues in the U.S. Navy is the current class of submarines will in fact reach the end of their life-time. The plans that are in place, they take the Ohio-class well beyond where we have had nuclear-powered submarines in the past. We don’t think that that’s an extraordinary risk. There’s going to have to be some management things that get done.

But there will come a day when the new replacement must be at sea. We think that’s in the late 2020s. So it is important that we get going today. This is a very complicated weapons system that we are talking about. And so when you consider all of the components that must go into this, it’s very important that we get going today and that we do so with a mind toward having some date certain out there that we must have the replacement in place.

I’m convinced that the plan that we have today, that the budget that’s on the Hill today, supports that. We had to make some tough choices across the budget between fiscal ’12 and fiscal ’13, as I mentioned earlier. And some of these programs did, in fact, move to the right slightly. Ohio was one of those.

So I am absolutely convinced that we remain committed to having a sea-based leg of the deterrent as far as we can see. And I am comfortable today that that program is on track. Terry, I would just defer to you if I missed something or said something –

ADM. TERRY BENEDICT: No, sir, that’s absolutely correct.
GEN. KEHLER: Okay. Did that help? And I’m not aware – I’ll tell you what, if you know that we owe a report to somebody tell me afterwards.

MR. RICHARD WEITZ: I’m Richard Weitz, Hudson Institute. Following on to the two previous questions, first, how do you dialogue on nuclear issues – we’ve had a long-standing dialogue with the Russians, (but what about the Chinese ?)? And then second, has there been any indication of when the rest of the guidance will come out about (what strategic forces the president wants to seek in the future ?)?

GEN. KEHLER: Yeah, I’ll take that one first, and the answer is I don’t know when he’ll make that decision. I don’t know. On the first one, again, I’ll speak from a Strategic Command perspective.

We would like to see increased dialogue with our Chinese counterparts. There is dialogue that goes on in many places throughout our government at various levels. I think it has been a goal – certainly I’ve heard our Chairman say this more than once – he would like to see greater dialogue with the Chinese military at many levels for the obvious reasons. We would like more transparency in that relationship.

I certainly believe that’s true from a strategic standpoint as well. I would like to have more of a dialogue with my counterpart. And again, my predecessor had some of that dialogue.

We have some wheels turning. These things sometimes take some time. We have also invited Chinese senior leaders to come to our Deterrence Symposium. And the year before last they had some representative there. We’d like to see additional representation there. We think that’s a good opportunity. It’s really not a classic military-to-military activity, it’s an open opportunity for us to have a dialogue. So we welcome any increased dialogue with our Chinese counterparts. We think that that contributes to transparency, and that in turn contributes to stability.

MS. ELAINE GROSSMAN: Thank you, General, Elaine Grossman from National Journal Group. If Iran ultimately develops a nuclear weapon, is it fair to understand that our deterrence policy would provide a nuclear umbrella to our friends and allies in the Gulf area, to include states like Saudi Arabia and UAE?

GEN. KEHLER: I think you have to look at strategic deterrence vis-à-vis Iran in the context that I mentioned in my prepared remarks. There is not one dimension to it. Strategic deterrence vis-à-vis any country, Iran for example, would involve a number of different aspects, to include partnerships with friends and allies in the region, the presence of our strong conventional capabilities in the region, the positioning that we are doing for missile defense assets. And then ultimately, the president always has available the strategic nuclear deterrent to provide both a deterrent from an attack on the United States standpoint, but also an attack on our allies and partners as well.

MR. TODD JACOBSON: Todd Jacobson, Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor. You talked about your concern about the weapons complex modernization. You testified before Congress about that, specifically about some of the plutonium facilities being built at Los Alamos. Over the past few
months, have you seen anything in terms of a plan from NNSA that offers you any reassurance as to the path forward for the plutonium capability for the nation?

And then as kind of a secondary question on that, the House has proposed moving management of the large facility at Los Alamos, as well as the uranium processing facility, under the control of the Pentagon. Would you support that kind of proposal?

GEN. KEHLER: I’ll take that second one first. That’s really not in my lane -- I don’t – how we go about managing the complex. I’m on sort of the customer end of this in terms of I put a demand signal on the complex to give us modern, safe, effective, secure weapons when we need them. And so that’s my interest in this.

So from that perspective, what I have said before and what I’ve testified to is, of all the parts of the budget that one concerns me the most because there are some parts of the nuclear enterprise, some industrial parts that must be taken care of. What the ’13 budget does, because of the budget pressures -- and nothing was immune from the budget pressures. The nuclear force, the nuclear enterprise is not immune.

What it does is it sequences. It puts the uranium processing facility that is not going to sustain us for the long term, ahead of the plutonium processing facility. And really, the facility that we’re talking about here for plutonium is really a laboratory facility. It’s not a production facility, actually.

So I agreed with that sequencing. I did so because, again, we are under budget pressures and nothing was immune. I believed that we could do that with some increased risk, but acceptable risk. I believe we can manage that risk. So that’s kind of how I see it as we sit here today.

What is still pending is what happens beyond ’13? And both the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Energy have written a letter to the Congressional committees that describe that we do not yet have a plan in place for ’14 and beyond for the weapons complex and that that is a work in progress. And we will close that work here as we reach the end of the summer and we’ll be prepared then to talk about ’14 and beyond as we come in next cycle.

MR. ROD KEEFER: Rod Keefer, Northrop-Grumman. General Kehler, you talked about when we had over 30,000 weapons. Now we’re down to somewhere around 5,000 or whatever it is weapons. In that whole process the U.S. has elected to maintain a triad for good reasons. I would like to hear your reasons for that. And would that be the case if we go to lower than 1,550 weapons?

Another part I would like to add to the question is, General Welch, when he spoke at the Capitol Hill Club talked about what ICBMs do for stability and about their low cost. Could we in this tight budget environment we’re in – could you address both of those?

GEN. KEHLER: Sure, let me start with the triad. I’ve said this before publicly, the triad is not a theological argument for me. It is for some, but it is not for me.
I believe that a triad continues to serve us now because it’s the best arrangement that we have today to meet our deterrence needs. It may not always be so, but for now I believe that the triad is exactly where we need to be. And I believe it for a lot of reasons.

Number one is for the attributes that I mentioned earlier. When you look at the range of attributes that are presented by the triad: survivability, prompt response, flexibility components are represented across that force. There has always been concern about whether or not the ICBM component of that force is actually more stable or less stable. And what the ICBM force gives to the president is the ability to respond promptly. I think that’s still a valuable component of the range of alternatives that we could offer to the president.

Ultimately, we review those attributes and we will meet his needs. If, in fact, those needs change, then it’s up to us to meet his needs. But for today, I think there’s a big difference between a force that you can use promptly and one that you must use promptly. And I no longer see us in a scenario where we must use the ICBMs promptly.

This gets to the argument of use or lose. That is Cold War thinking. We are not in that scenario today.

The only threat to the U.S. ICBM force is from the highest quality end of the Russian strategic arsenal. There’s no other arsenal out there that threatens the ICBM force. And any adversary that would choose to attack us must deal with that force. They must.

And so as we sit here today, as we have de-MIRV’ed the ICBMs to reduce their individual value, it costs an attacker more than they will get in return. Those weapons remain dispersed and in instant communications and under positive control. And I believe that it continues to serve us well.

Again, we look at this arrangement all the time. And if our needs change, then we will change our force posture and I will stand up and say it’s time to change our force posture.

The other argument that you hear is whether or not we can afford to re-capitalize all three legs of the triad. That’s a great question, and we’re going to have to confront that question. But that question is not on the table now.

We do not have to make an investment decision in the ICBM force yet. There are analyses of alternatives going on to help inform that decision. And we will get to that bridge when we get to that bridge.

The final thing is the concern that people have about hair-triggers. U.S. nuclear weapons are under the positive control of the President of the United States. We are not on a hair-trigger.

So I hear the arguments. I am familiar with the arguments. Again, my view today is that the triad continues to serve us well.
It may not be true in the future, but it continues to serve us well because I think it’s the best arrangement that we have to meet our deterrence needs today. As those needs change, if those needs change, if the needs of ultimately the Commander-in-Chief change, then we will make the adjustments that are necessary.

MR. STEVEN YOUNG: Steven Young with the Union of Concerned Scientists. About the demands put on the weapons complex, I believe the requirement is to be able to produce 50 to 80 pits on an annual basis. Can you walk through, to the extent you can, how that figure was arrived at? I think it was developed during the era when we were going to develop the RRW (develop the ?) new pits for those new warheads. Can you tell us how you (came to that number of pits ?) for warheads?

GEN. KEHLER: Yeah, I don’t want to get into a chart-by-chart analysis of the requirement here, but let me say this. The Nuclear Posture Review I think did a pretty good job in describing that what we want to do here is that we want to transition from maintaining weapons in a stockpile as a hedge against technical or geopolitical issues – we want to transition to a responsive infrastructure in order to do that. And then when you do that – and I believe this is true – I believe that we can manage the stockpile, the existing stockpile, a different way, perhaps with fewer weapons.

So where does a requirement to manufacture new pits come from and at what level is that requirement? The answer is, if you were to decide to produce a new weapon – or a replacement weapon which RRW was to be – that’s one demand signal. But, it’s not the only one. There are other demand signals that we could put on the pit production capability if we experienced pit failure. Then, there are production issues. And so those requirements come from not just one place but a multiple of different sources. And ultimately those requirements are under review.

I demand easier questions.

MR. TITUS LEDBETTER (Space News) : How about this one? I was wondering if you could provide an update on your efforts to establish space situational sharing arrangements with other nations, other countries, and also consideration of a possible combined space operational center?

GEN. KEHLER: Yes, well, we are on – we believe that there are a couple of important things here as we go to the future. One, because of the changing dynamic, on-orbit, with more and more objects there, more debris – obviously, more man-made debris as well as more active objects – that it is important for us to do better in terms of our situational awareness for space. A couple of ways that we can do that.

One is we can share data more with entities. And to date, I think the number is around 30 agreements that we have already established with commercial entities of various kinds that allow us to share space situational awareness information with them. In return, they agree to give us some information about their own platforms, etcetera, etcetera. It’s a very, very helpful relationship, and much of that is managed through a public web site.
I said public web site – through a web site. I don’t know how public it really is and I’m not a web site kind of a guy so I can’t exactly tell you. But it is managed through a web site.

STRATCOM has been given the authority to engage with our governmental and military counterparts in other parts of the world. And we probably have a half dozen or so right now that are pending in terms of the same basic type of situational awareness sharing that would allow us to increase both our awareness – contribute to safety of flight, which is a big concern I think for everyone – and gradually I think move in a direction where in general terms I think we’re all far more familiar with what’s happening on-orbit than what we are today.

We also see value as we go forward in bringing some form of coalition of combined operations to the space business. We’ve seen the value of that in land operations. We’ve seen the value of that in sea operations, in air operations. We conduct coalition or combined operations with other militaries around the world all the time.

We would like to do that for space as well. We think there’s value in that. And so we’ve entered what we call a period of discovery with some other nations and we’re looking at whether or not that could be effective; how we would do it.

And I’m not sure that if it all goes the way we would like to see it -- where we actually decide to do something together – I’m not sure that a combined center of some kind, a physical center, is going to be necessary. Maybe we can do this virtually. So it’s all about increasing our sharing and our partnerships. Those are objectives in our national space policy and this is how the military is trying to operationalize those objectives.

MR. TOM COLLINA: Thank you. Tom Collina, Arms Control Association. A follow-up on the Ohio-class question issue. You mentioned the challenging economic environment and – (off mic). So my question is, your plan right now is for 12 Ohio class replacement subs. Can we afford those in this economic environment – (off mic) – looming even as far into the future – (off mic).

GEN. KEHLER: As we sit here today I think the answer is yes and yes. And again, I think our crystal balls are probably about the same. I don’t know what’s going to happen in the future.

But as we look at the strategic situation that we find ourselves in, as we look to the future and see the continued value of having a survivable component of our strategic deterrent, that the advantages that the SSBNs give to us today we believe will remain valuable as far out as we can see. And, of course, the number one assumption is we will still have nuclear weapons, which goes back to my fundamental point here, which is the objective is a world without nuclear weapons. It’s the right objective. But our position is as long as those weapons exist, as long as we have a need for them, then in fact we’ll have them and they’ll be safe, secure and effective. Given those parameters, we see that there will be a need for an at-sea ballistic missile submarine force.
The number of submarines is really driven by a couple of factors. One of those is the availability to put them at sea. And so the fewer number you have, the fewer you have available to put to sea, because there will be a maintenance cycle. There is always some kind of a maintenance cycle.

So today as we sit here looking at this, 12 submarines looks like the right number to us. That number can be adjusted – certainly upwards, as we go forward. And it’s hard to predict ultimately where we will be. But as we see it today, 12 gives us the right operational capabilities. It gives us the right number of – the right capacity, we think, for warheads that we would want to have survivable on a day-to-day basis that we could surge in a crisis. And we believe that while there are budget pressures, this is about priorities. We see that as a priority.

LTC TERRY QUIST: Sir, Terry Quist. Turning to the non-kinetic category of strategic capabilities, could you speak please to the evolving relationship with US Cyber Command and how the possible designation of CYBERCOM as a combatant command might alter this relationship?

GEN. KEHLER: Yeah, first of all, Cyber Command remains a sub-unified command under Strategic Command, similar to U.S. Forces Korea and Pacific Command. It fits within a global strategic context that STRATCOM certainly has as well. There are conversations underway – there have been conversations underway – by the way, I’m cheating a little bit. I was the Deputy Commander at Strategic Command when we stood up something called The Functional Component for Network Warfare. Then we changed that into a sub-unified command.

And now the conversation all along has been what do we do next? Is there a next step? And that’s under review right now.

I don’t see the relationship changing much between Strategic Command and Cyber Command. Cyber Command today operates with a great deal of autonomy. By the way, so does our Functional Component for Space. Omaha is not a speed bump for either of those major activities.

In fact, I don’t think -- Ken, you would have to say it’s not. But never mind, I won’t ask it.

(Laughter).

Am I a speed bump for you, Ken? There’s a pretty obvious answer to that question

(Laughter).

But operationally, organizationally, we’ve got this set up today so that General Alexander operates with a great deal of autonomy today. And he must, just similar to the way General Thurman does with Korea. But there are relationships here that are going to have to remain regardless of what the command lines show between me and General Alexander, between General Alexander and the Secretary, and how that would all work. In any case, we will retain, I believe, a very, very close relationship.
I think that for many things, Cyber Command will be a supporting command to Strategic Command. So I’m not uncomfortable. You know, we get wrapped around the axle over organizational boxes, sometimes. To me it’s about getting the mission done and I believe there are many, many ways we can get the mission done here.

MR. BAKER SPRING: Baker Spring of the Heritage Foundation, and a question about alternative futures. The nonproliferation goals notwithstanding, because there is no apparent success there, is what is Strategic Command’s view as it looks down into the future on how we’ll establish and maintain relationships with new nuclear armed allies in terms of what that relationship would be and the coalition dynamic that may go along with it?

GEN. KEHLER: Yeah, I’m not sure what new nuclear armed adversaries – you’re talking about sort of the eventuality that –

MR. SPRING: Of allies, allies. If any of our foreign friends and allies do come to the point where they believe that they need their own independent nuclear force, contrary to U.S. counterproliferation policy (I acknowledge ?), what does Strategic Command do in terms of those relationships?

GEN. KEHLER: Yeah, you know I really can’t speculate. I will tell you what our view is on proliferation, of course, and that is that we are working as hard as we can to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. I think that’s certainly our view. How we would address some future environment with other allies that have nuclear weapons, I think remains to be seen.

MR. HUESSY: General Kehler, extraordinary. Thank you, sir.

(Appause).

I want to thank General Kehler. And particularly, I want to thank Admiral Benedict, Ken Myers and General Crabtree for attending today. Thank you, sir, for a very good speech and an extraordinary Q&A session. We will see you next week for Dave Trachtenberg, Barry Blechman and Terry Benedict. Please sign up if you have not already. And I want to thank again my sponsors, our special guests, and particularly to you, General Kehler, thank you very much.

GEN. KEHLER: You’re welcome.

(Appause).