MR. PETER HUESSY: I want to welcome you to this, our 23rd in our series of seminars on missile defense, nuclear weapons and homeland security. We are honored today to have Rear Admiral Terry Benedict as our speaker today. I was going through his bio and a number of things struck me.

He was the assistant for arms control to the director of SSP. He was on assignment with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the START negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland; executive assistant to the commander of the Navy Sea Systems Command; technical director of SSP. His first flag assignment was program executive officer for integrated warfare systems in the office of the assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition. And then, of course, his current command, director of the Strategic Systems Program, appointed on 7 May 2010 as the 13th director.

I also want to pay particular thanks to April Cook Kelly and Kelly Sparrow (ph) of the SSP office for helping put this together. A couple of notes, Jim Miller is going to be speaking and concluding this series on September 21st. He’s moving from next week. Secretary of the Air Force Donley is our speaker next week on the 25th. And then Steve Henry on August 1st, and General Formica of SMDC on the 3rd of August. And then we’ll have a break until we hear from Johnny Foster on the 11th of September.

We are also going to be doing a seminar from eight in the morning until 11:30 on the 13th of September over at the Reserve Officers Association of America on the strategic nuclear triad and deterrence. We are going to hear from Senator Conrad, Senator Enzi, Senator Hoeven and a number of other members of the House and Senate, as well as Admiral Benedict, and I think I’ve also gotten General Chambers, will be on a panel together. And then we’ll hear from an outside U.S. government panel made up of a number of people. The keynote speaker will be Frank Miller. And please sign up for that, if you would.

I want to also thank our guests here from a number of embassies who have joined us today. I also want to remind you if you’re not signed up please let Sarah know that you’re going to be attending. I also wanted to make note that today is the 52nd anniversary of the message from the USS George Washington to President Eisenhower from SSBN-598. The message was, “Polaris, from out of the deep to target: perfect.” It was the first ballistic missile launch from a submarine for our strategic nuclear deterrent.

And I also wanted to make note that the meritorious unit commendation award, the Atlantic SSBN Fleet, is being awarded today. And that is a tribute to Terry Benedict and all of the people at SSP,
and I wanted to mention that. His remarks are on the record and if you’re going to be asking questions please ask questions and don’t give speeches, please. At the request of our speaker, it helps.

And so with nothing further I wanted to thank our corporate sponsors that are here today and also ROA and AFA and NDIA. And Admiral Benedict, on behalf of our sponsors I want to thank you for coming here today. Would you give a warm welcome to Admiral Terry Benedict?

(Appause).

ADM. TERRY BENEDICT: Thank you everyone and thanks for taking the time to join us. And it is indeed a pleasure for me to present the men and women of Strategic Systems Programs here this morning. And Peter, thank you for all that you do to put these seminars on. They’re great forums for this type of an interchange.

I want to start just a little bit out of the ordinary. As many of you who were here last week when General Kehler spoke know, there was a question he was asked that was re-directed to me. It was kind of a, who’s got the real answer here? And neither one of us had it.

So I took the action to go back and get it, so I just wanted to close that out today as a good military officer. And it was regarding the 2012 NDAA directive report on the Ohio replacement program. The final report and cost assessment of options for the Ohio replacement ballistic missile submarines is a classified report. And it was signed out to the Congressional defense committees less than a month ago on June 27th.

In general terms for this setting, it evaluated options for the Ohio replacement SSBN considering several factors, including the ability to meet nuclear employment planning guidance, to satisfy at-sea deployment requirements, to provide flexibility to meet changes in threats in the strategic environment, and overall affordability. From this assessment, only the program of record 12 SSBNs with 16 missile tubes each satisfies the strategic mission goals and objectives that we were required to support. And from the letter from Secretary Mavis and General Kehler to the committees, quote, “The changing strategic and fiscal environment demands a renewed emphasis on thoughtful risk management across the nuclear enterprise.” And I’d like to use that as the theme, because it is certainly the mindset within SSP as we maintain our current system and develop the future Navy strategic deterrent.

So it’s been about one year since my last presentation in this forum. And while much has occurred over the last year, some may argue that too little has been accomplished, particularly here in Washington. These 12 months have been significant, though, for SSP.

We have enjoyed successful completion of major milestones in the Trident II D-5 missile life extension efforts, and we have also seen a significant increase in the important dialogue between the Navy and the Air Force as both services face major program decisions in the challenges to modernize our forces. And I am encouraged by these highlights, despite the uncertainty that swirls around as we try to figure out where we are in the election cycle and the fiscal challenges over the next several months. SSP continues to be fully engaged.
Today, we are ensuring that Trident II is supported on Ohio-class submarines through their operational service life and into the operation of the Ohio replacement program (loadouts ?), designing and conducting life extension efforts in all the functional subsystems of the strategic weapons system. We are supporting Admiral Johnson at PEO submarines in the development of the Ohio replacement SSBN, particularly as we continue on track with the common missile compartment in concert with the United Kingdom, despite the overall two-year shift to the Ohio replacement program. And we are implementing the entry into force of the New START Treaty.

SSP remains wholly focused on providing credible and affordable strategic solutions to the warfighter. We continue to meet the challenges of maintaining our aging strategic weapon system while developing the strategic deterrence platforms of the future.

Now each year in this forum there is specific interest in SSP’s unique perspective on the overarching topic of nuclear deterrence and arms control, particularly as it relates to the New START Treaty. As many of you know, the New START Treaty was signed on 8 April 2010. And following that, the treaty entered into force on 5 February 2011.

It establishes limits of 1,550 for warheads on deployed ICBMs and SLBMs and nuclear warheads counted for deployed heavy bombers. And the parties must achieve these limits no later than 5 February 2018. Based on current force structure plans, the Navy will make up approximately 70 percent of the authorized deployed warheads allowed under New START, an increase of roughly 20 percent over the original START Treaty.

There are particular operational benefits as a result of the New START Treaty. Under New START the number of Navy inspectable sites was reduced from nine to two: Strategic Weapons Facility Atlantic and Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific. Additionally, the inspectable areas in these sites have been significantly reduced. The treaty excludes buildings and structures not intended to contain an item of inspection, as a result of changes to the definition of inspection sites.

Another improvement to the New START Treaty is the increase in time from 24 hours to 32 hours for notice requirements for each country for intent to inspect the facility. This additional time allows for inspected facilities to better prepare and to minimize lost production time and impacts to fleet operational availability. Since becoming subject to short notice type one inspections in April of 2011 we have conducted two inspections at the Navy’s two inspectable sites SWF-lant (sp) and SWF-Pac. The inspections have gone well and we stand ready to continue to execute onsite inspections and comply with all the provisions of the New START Treaty.

Despite a year of fiscal uncertainties, our budget request provides the required funding in fiscal year ’13 for the Trident II D-5 strategic weapons system. To sustain this capability, I am focusing on four priorities: nuclear weapons security, the Trident II D-5 SWS life extension program, the Ohio replacement program and opportunities for future collaboration with the Air Force, as we both modernize our deterrent capabilities. Today, I would like to focus on my four priorities and why these priorities are keys to the sustainment of the Navy sea-based strategic deterrent and why they are key to the future viability of this nation’s strategic deterrent capability overall.
I’ve had the opportunity to share these priorities with many members of Congress, in the House and Senate Armed Services Committee during testimony earlier this year, and in various forums over the past several months. The first priority I would like to address, and arguably the most important priority, is the safety and the security of the Navy’s nuclear weapons. Navy leadership has clearly delegated and defined SSP’s role as the program manager and the technical authority for the Navy’s nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons security.

SSP’s efforts to sustain the safety and improve the security of these national assets continue at all levels of the organization. My command maintains a culture of self-assessment in order to sustain safety and security. We continue to focus on the custody and the accountability of nuclear assets that have been entrusted to us.

At its most basic level, this priority is the physical security of one of our nation’s most valuable assets. Our Marines in the Navy master at arms provide an effective and integrated elite security force at our two strategic weapons facilities in Kings Bay, Georgia and Bangor, Washington. The United States Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Units have been commissioned at both facilities to protect our submarines as they transit to and from their dive points. These Coast Guards men and the vessels they man provide an additional security umbrella for our Ohio-class SSBNs.

This maritime team of dedicated security personnel is a constant visible deterrent to those who may consider making attempts to disrupt our mission. And we test these capabilities often. During a recent exercise conducted by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency at SWF-lant at Kings Bay, Georgia, the team proved their worth.

The DTRA evaluated force-on-force exercise tests the ability of our security personnel to deny access to nuclear weapons in all environments: operational, storage and transit. During the exercise event, our team was unrelenting in their pursuit of the aggressors and were noted as being unmatched in their capabilities by the evaluators. Throughout the evaluation, our security personnel not only exceeded all previous teams tested by this exercise event, they maintained the highest level of real world security as well. The Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard teams form the foundation of our nuclear weapons security program.

The next priority I would like to discuss is SSP’s life extension efforts to ensure the future effective, reliable sea-based deterrent. We are executing the Trident II D-5 life extension program in cooperation with the United Kingdom under the auspices of the Polaris sales agreement. And I am pleased to report that our long-standing partnership with the UK is stronger than ever.

The Trident II D-5 SWS continues to be a demonstrated, credible deterrent and exceeds the operational requirements established for the system over 30 years ago. As I mentioned earlier, our system reliability remains at an all-time high, as evidenced by 142 successful flight tests and our performance reliability numbers, provided annually to commander StratCom.

Our allies and any potential rivals are assured the United States maintains a ready, credible and effective strategic deterrent. However, we simply cannot rest on our past successes. The Trident II D-5
SWS has been deployed on our Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines for over 20 years and is planned for a service life of more than 50 years. This is well beyond its original design life of 25 years and more than double the historical service life of any previous sea-based deterrent system.

As a result, significant efforts will be required to sustain a credible and viable SLBM force from now until the end of the current Ohio-class SSBNs in the 2040s, as well as the entry into the service life for the Ohio replacement SSBNs and then on to 2080. The Navy is proactively taking steps to address aging and technology obsolescence, and this is being accomplished through an update to all the Trident II D-5 SWS sub systems: launcher, fire control, navigation, guidance, missile and re-entry. Our flight hardware, missile and guidance life extension efforts are designed to meet the same form, fit and function as the original system in order to keep the deployed systems as one homogenous population and to control costs.

We will also remain in continuous production of energetic components, such as solid rocket motors. These efforts will provide the Navy and the missiles and guidance systems we need to meet operational requirements.

SSP recently achieved a significant programmatic milestone in our life extension program. The first end-to-end operational test of the Trident II D-5 life extended guidance system was successfully conducted in February from the USS Tennessee. We embarked on a major modernization effort more than a decade ago to extend the life of the guidance system to match the hull life of the Ohio-class SSBNs. This represented the most significant guidance engineering effort since the development of the original Mark VI guidance over 30 years ago.

While SSP has been able to maintain solid rocket motor production to meet the needs of life extension, this remains an area of significant concern for me. As the requirement from NASA and the Air Force for solid rocket motors declined, or was discontinued, we found ourselves facing a significant increase in cost in order to meet the Navy’s SLBM requirements. Our industry partners, ATK and Lockheed Martin, made it a priority to work with us over the last year, finding efficiencies and controlling costs, that maintained production affordability within solid rocket motor manufacturing. I am grateful for their efforts and for the support in Congress to ensure the necessary funding was achieved to meet the near-term Navy requirements.

During the last several months, in remarks and in testimony on the Hill, I have spoken extensively about my continued concern in this area. While the effects of our industry partners and others who share my concerns have resulted in short-term relief, the long-term support of the solid rocket motor industrial base remains an issue that really and truly must be a national concern.

Life extension efforts are not unique to the missile. Another major step to ensure continued sustainment of our SWS is the SSP shipboard integration efforts, using open architecture and commercial off-the-shelf hardware and software for shipboard systems. This effort is a refresh and an upgrade of shipboard electronics, hardware and software. It addresses technical obsolescence and it provides greater maintainability and affordability for the SWS.
Installation of the SSP shipboard integration increment one continues to move forward through the fleet and the training facilities. To date, we have completed the technical refresh on seven U.S. SSBNs, in addition to all four UK SSBNs, as well as three of the training facilities, including the facilities that support our UK partners. We are on track and on cost to complete the remaining U.S. boats and training facilities by next year.

In-service warhead reliability remains a key focus, and SSP continues to be involved in various warhead life extension efforts. We are extending the life of the 76 re-entry system through a refurbishment program known as the 76-1. This program is being executed in partnership with NNSA. The 76-1 refurbishment maintains the military capability of the original 76 for approximately an additional 30 years.

In addition to the 76-1, the Navy is also in the initial stages of refurbishing the W-88 re-entry systems. The Navy is collaborating with the Air Force to reduce cost through shared technology. The SSP-led Mark V alteration management team continues to proceed with the development of a new arming, fusing and firing system to refurb the 30 year old W-88 Mark V system. The Air Force will adapt the Navy AF&F for the Air Force Mark 12-A and Mark 21 re-entry systems. This project remains fully funded within the budget plan and on schedule for a December 2018 FPU.

We also remain involved with the W-78/88-1 LEP initiative led by the Air Force. These studies and future initiatives will continue to look at the possibility of using the resultant warhead on multiple platforms in order to reduce the number of warhead types. Each of these proactive efforts will provide the Navy with the weapons we need to meet operational requirements through the Ohio service life and the planned follow-on platform.

One of the highest Navy priorities is the Ohio replacement program. The continued assurance of our sea-based strategic deterrent requires a credible SWS as well as development of the next class of ballistic missile submarine. The Navy team is taking aggressive steps to ensure that the Ohio replacement SSBN is designed, built and delivered on time, with the right capabilities, at an affordable cost.

The Ohio replacement program will replace the existing Ohio-class submarines. To lower development costs and leverage the proven reliability of the Trident II SWS, the Ohio replacement SSBN will enter service with the Trident II D-5 and D-5 missiles onboard. Maintaining one SWS during transition to the Ohio-class replacement is beneficial from a cost, performance and risk reduction standpoint.

A critical component of the Ohio replacement program is the development of a common missile compartment to support the Trident II D-5 deployment on both submarines, as well as the UK Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarine. The United States and the United Kingdom have maintained a shared commitment to nuclear deterrence through the Polaris sales agreement since April 1963. And the United States will continue to maintain its strong strategic relationship with the United Kingdom for our respective follow-on platforms.
Consistent with the defense strategy guidance, the Navy is delaying the Ohio replacement program by two years. While the overall program is being delayed, we are maintaining the original program of record for the design of the common missile compartment and for the SWS deliverables in order to meet our obligations to the United Kingdom. The United States and the United Kingdom are working jointly to prioritize risks and to develop mitigation plans.

And finally, collaboration initiatives have long been a part of the SSP model. Our relationship with the United Kingdom and our shared stewardship of the Polaris sales agreement are a prime example of this collaborative history. Closer to home, we maintain a culture of collaboration through our joint warhead efforts as we work with NNSA and the Air Force to manage limited assets.

As you well know, the Navy is not the only one faced with a requirement to update aging systems and to prepare for the future of our nation’s strategic defense. As we move through the last few years of fiscal constraints, those of us who support the strategic defense of our nation, whether it is part of SSP providing the Navy’s Trident II D-5 missile, or as part of the Air Force strategic bombers and ICBMs, all of us have been required to look at how we do business and what should we look like in the future. To that end, we have aggressively pursued with the Air Force collaborative efforts as both services work to ensure the success of our programs for the security of our nation.

The recent move of maintenance and production efforts for our primary SWS navigations subsystem is a great example of what is being done to support the mission of today and prepare to meet the missions of tomorrow. With our industry partners at Boeing, we consolidated Navy SLBM navigation efforts to their Air Force Heath, Ohio facility. This facility has a long history of navigation work for ICBM and strategic bombers. The workforce there has a unique skill set. But the Air Force and the Navy, along with the leadership at Boeing, recognize this. And we all recognize that we can consolidate to the Heath facility, thereby reducing costs, maintaining the workforce with the skills for our systems, and creating opportunities to grow the future workforce for this important effort.

This kind of collaboration will be key as we look to the future of our strategic defense. The trade space is wide open. The Navy and the Air Force and our industry partners are at a unique point in time where we can look at our options now for maintaining the ballistic missile capabilities for the long term. And we can find the right places to collaborate.

There are multiple areas where Navy and Air Force collaboration would have great potential as we move forward with our respective modernization developments: potentials for opportunities in research, in development and in production, particularly as we look at areas in industry where skills sustainment is of significant importance. Now is also the time to look at resource and component commonality where it makes sense. Together, we are beginning to define the way ahead for these efforts.

The Navy was invited to participate in the Air Force AOA as they begin the process to determine what ICBMs will look like after Minuteman. I was also honored to be invited to address General Kowalski’s staff at the Global Strike Command in the fall, and I look forward to expanding our dialogue in
that setting. I also recently hosted Brigadier General Hauck, the Air Force program executive officer for strategic systems, to discuss further opportunities.

And just last week, my technical director was at a meeting with the Air Force counterpart, the ICBM systems division director at Hill Air Force Base. They discussed specific areas to consider for exploring alternate technologies, with the potential to benefit both services. They also discussed a way ahead to define what a collaborative structure between the Navy and the Air Force would look like. This structure will provide a single framework for our efforts to ensure we share the same language, maximize limited resources and break down any unintended barriers that may be caused by unique service cultures and structures. I am very excited to see where our work continues to converge.

So we will continue to maintain a safe and secure, effective strategic deterrence capability, but we must always maintain our focus on the custody and the accountability of the nuclear weapons entrusted to the United States Navy. We must also continue to be vigilant of unforeseen age-related issues to ensure the high reliability required of our SWS. In order to do so, SSP must maintain the engineering support and the critical skills of our industry and our government teams. We are committed to exploring every opportunity for collaboration to meet these requirements. With that, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to address you and I look forward to taking any questions.

(Applause).

MR. GREG THIELMANN: I’m Greg Thielmann from the Arms Control Association. Thank you very much, admiral, for your informed presentation. The Ohio submarine, as is the case with all U.S. nuclear powered submarines, operates on weapons grade uranium. In light of the fact that this is not a helpful example in our pursuit of the nonproliferation objectives that General Kehler mentioned last week as an increasingly important part of our strategic objectives, has the Navy factored into its thinking about Ohio replacement a naval reactor that uses a lower enrichment level similar to the French for example, who have a much lower enriched uranium reactor?

ADM. BENEDICT: I’m really not in a position to respond to that. That would be an area that I would defer you to Admiral Donald in naval reactors. There is, for good reasons, a differential between what we do in weapons and what Admiral Donald does in the reactor. And so I’m not prepared, nor quite frankly am I authorized, to address that area for Admiral Donald. I apologize.

MR. PHILLIP HUGHES: Phillip Hughes with the White House Writers Group. In referring to your initial list of – (off mic) – Navy operations for New START, the reduction of inspection sites from nine to two etcetera. Within the limits of what you can say here, can you give us a sense for how really bothersome or disruptive inspections have been at the sites previous to New START? Was this really a serious problem and if you had suspicions that those inspections have been used in some way to disrupt the operational rhythm of the force? On the flip side, there’s been a reduction of our inspections on the other side.

ADM. BENEDICT: So one of the good things about being in SSP is you get to stay basically your entire career. I’ve been in SSP now for 24 years. I joined it in 1988. So I had the opportunity, the
privilege, of being the START coordinator when we stood up the original START Treaty back in the 1990-’91 timeframe and certified all the facilities.

I think in terms of disruption we try in our Strategic Weapons Facility Atlantic and Strategic Weapons Facility Pacific, are designated as factories in the field. So they are an extension of the industrial base basically where we transfer all the material and do the final assembly, test, check-out and then out-load to the force. We found anything that disrupts production to be something that we were concerned about. And certainly the short notice aspect of the original START Treaty – a little better now in terms of time – but still we schedule production pretty much five to seven days a week all through the year.

So were they disruptive? Yes. Were they something that over the last 20 years we have learned how to deal with? Yes. We have fewer today than we did under the original START Treaty, but they’re longer. So we’re still learning how to deal with the New START Treaty interruptions that it causes in the production line at SWF-lant and SWF-Pac. In a perfect world we’d like to live inside our walls and control our own destiny. We understand that’s not policy as it relates to arms control. So over the years I would say we’ve learned to adapt to it.

Have we ever seen or had any evidence that says they did it on purpose to disrupt production? Nothing that was so blatant as we would make that statement.

MR. : Admiral – (off mic) – of the Heritage Foundation. In General Cartwright’s Global Zero report we see recommendations for de-alerting ICBMs, also the subs (and bombers ?). I’m wondering if you could speak about the challenges of de-alerting the sub force, a little bit about that, and some of your thoughts on that? They recommend that, but it’s not clear how.

ADM. BENEDICT: Right. So, two aspects on that right up front. One is that’s a combination of both policy as well as operational aspects. I’ll speak to the technical aspects of what we deliver to the force.

And from a technical standpoint, the system is designed for the flexibility. Whether it’s de-alerted from a policy standpoint or the impacts to the operational forces as it relates through the CTFs and into StratCom, I really can’t comment on how that would affect General Kehler’s ability to perform his mission. But from a systems standpoint, the system can be moved between its various stages of execution capability quite easily, I guess is how I’d answer that question.

MR. RICH KOENIG (ph): Admiral, I’m Rich Koenig from CNN. I was wondering if you could maybe give us a sense of where the longer range conventional strike options as they relate to the submarine force are?

ADM. BENEDICT: Right. I’ve been involved with that for a long time too, all the way back to conventional Trident modification. Again, I think there are still questions to be addressed with regards to ambiguity. I know that there are individuals in both policy and acquisition who have engaged the leadership on the Hill to try and address those issues.
I continue to believe that the submarine does offer a strong capability potential in conventional prompt global strike. We have a constant presence at sea. And certainly as it relates to the G-ins (ph) and to the capacity with the submarine, there are opportunities there.

Having said that, we have taken clear direction from the Hill with regards to our role in the development. I think we’re getting to the point with arms control and with technology development where decisions will be made with regards to Army, Air Force, Navy involvement. And we stand ready to support as those decisions are made.

MR. TODD JACOBSON: Todd Jacobson of Nuclear Weapons and Materials Monitor. NNSA, as you well know, has slowed the production or plans to slow the production of the W-76 during FY ’13. What kind of challenges is that going to mean from your standpoint in the Navy on the W-76 program. And also, what role did the Navy have in that decision?

GEN. BENEDICT: That decision was part of a larger series of decisions on the 76, that decision. I will tell you that within the Navy we had our opportunities to express concerns, pros and cons, for the various options that we looked at. And we were, in the end, comfortable with the decisions that were made, and fully understood and ensured the leadership fully understood the ramifications of that slowdown. And so I felt that the system worked in a transparent manner to ensure that everyone who was involved and everyone who was about to make that decision fully understood the ramifications.

MR. ROD KEEFER: Rod Keefer, Northrop Grumman. You mentioned Admiral Rayburn’s name and you being the 13th director. Could you share with us what you view as the strengths of your organization and program organization (personnel)? And a second question is related, you mentioned various stages of a subs performance, thinking that boats in the patrol box are probably fully mission capable. Are other subs, steaming to or from the patrol box, considered fully mission capable? If you could help us understand from the patrol box back to port?

ADM. BENEDICT: Sure. So the first part of the question was what is one of the strengths of this program? I think the fundamental strength of this program is the way that we recruit, train and sustain the workforce. And when I say that, to me that’s the military, the civilians and our industrial partners.

As a military person, primarily staffed by engineering duty officers of which I am one, a very specific pyramid. We try and bring junior officer in at the O2, O3 level and then keep them throughout their entire career within this claimancy called Strategic Systems Programs. I’m in my ninth job in SSP. So what that allows us to do is when you reach the top leadership positions, understand the entire system as you make decisions.

Same goes for our civilians. We give out pins at 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years of service. We currently have 19 individuals that I’ve had the privilege of awarding a 50 year pin to. That’s pretty unique within the system. And it goes for both civilians and our industry partners. So I think that is a true strength to this program, the longevity of knowledge, but also the longevity of understanding the issues associated with the system.
In terms of the boats, a boat once it departs either SWF-Ian or SWF-Pac is in a various number of stages of alert. It can be out doing normal engineering workups. It can be on mod alert or it can be on full alert. And that is the operational forces determination in order to meet their requirements in support of StratCom. So boats go through various phases of operational status once they leave the SWF.

MS. ELAINE GROSSMAN: Elaine Grossman of National Journal Group. Going back to the question about conventional prompt global strike, are you and SSP involved in the planning and deliberations right now about the Virginia-class conventional payload module? And if so, how many missiles per tube are you kind of aiming to get on that?

ADM. BENEDICT: So the Virginia payload module right now is a conventional capability. The requirement today as it stands is a replacement for the SSGN Tomahawk shooters. So the discussions that we are in with Admiral Johnson in PEO submarines, as they look at the architecture for that module, is as technical consultants to ensure that they don’t preclude any future capability if leadership were to desire to do so. We are not in a design phase today with Admiral Johnson designing a CPGS fire control sub-system for that module.

MS. GROSSMAN: May I ask, what about the larger module that has been discussed for behind the mast?

ADM. BENEDICT: That’s what I was addressing.

MS. GROSSMAN: Oh, okay.

MR. DAVID CULP: David Culp with the Friends Committee for National Legislation. Some members of Congress still are unhappy with the New START Treaty and are calling for a U.S. withdrawal. We had a big debate last night on the floor of the House. What would be the impact of leaving – if the U.S. withdrew?

ADM. BENEDICT: If we were to withdraw from the New START Treaty?

MR. KULP: Give six months notice.

ADM. BENEDICT: Well it kind of goes back to the original question, I think I took, which is today we have at certain points when they do short notice inspections, we are impacted in production. As I stated, though, I think we over the last 20 years have adjusted to understanding that’s part of our business. I’d say we wouldn’t have to deal with that, as an obvious term.

We also have some telemetry protocol requirements for data transfer based on our flight tests. Those are significantly reduced from the original START Treaty and we wouldn’t have to provide that data either. So I think those would be the two major things that we would not have to do, should leadership decide to take that action.
MR. HUESSY: Admiral, could you expand a little bit on the commonality work that you foresee with the Air Force and the technical challenges, as well of the benefits, that could accrue from that program?

ADM. BENEDICT: So the question is, in terms of commonality, what are the technical challenges? What are the benefits? And boy, we could talk for a whole lot longer than I’m going to be allocated here, Peter, on that.

The benefits are quite obvious, and they run from a spectrum. They run a spectrum of commonality at constituents. You can think about a propellant that used the same constituents – material constituents – but formulated in a manner that would support the lift requirements, the payload throw-weight requirements, for an ICBM and an SLBM. So we would get bulk buys at chemicals and constituents.

Two, common components in terms of packages. Now you start to get into the technical tradeoffs, common motor sets. Eventually on this spectrum, given all the boundary conditions that affect both the ICBMs and the SLBMs and arms control numbers, you could eventually move over to a point on that spectrum that says that the numbers are small enough that in the future we could go to – I mean we should potentially explore a joint strategic ballistic missile program, one that is truly purple.

So there’s an entire spectrum. Now with all those benefits come risks. If we were to single up on a common guidance system, a common motor, a common missile, right, then you run the risk of how you would, from a systems engineering standpoint, ensure that a failure that today is normally isolated to a sub-population in the SLBM or a sub-population in the ICBM, now affecting the entire United States strategic nuclear deterrent.

So a lot of work to be done. I think what myself, Bill Chambers, and other flags in the Air Force are trying to do is break down the service organizational boundaries or hurdles that sometimes exist so that we can have the true worthwhile discussions technically before we were to offer up any programmatic options. And I think we’re making great progress along those lines.

MR. CRAIG JENKINS (ph): Criag Jenkins, IDA. The two treaties, START and New START both cover delivery vehicles. And all indications point that at some time in the future a future treaty between us and the Russians will deal with non-deployed weapons at the warhead level. So if the counting changes to warheads for inspections, what impacts does that have?

ADM. BENEDICT: That’s sort of a hypothetical question. But the farther we go in terms of the lower the level of item of accountability, then the potential exists for greater intrusive impacts to the facility. We’ve always been a part of arms control negotiations. I was in 1990.

We supported the negotiations for the New START Treaty. And I would envision that any future arms control agreements, both the Navy and the Air Force, as well as all others affected, would be able to illustrate to leadership the pros and cons of any potential policy decision. But I would say that the
smaller the item that we’re looking to track, the greater the intrusiveness into the facility production capability.

MR. CARL OSGOOD: Admiral, I’m Carl Osgood with Executive Intelligence Review. Could you talk a little bit more about the relationship you have with the UK, because it seems to me from my understanding of the history of the U.S.-U.K. nuclear cooperation going back to 1958, that the British wouldn’t even have a nuclear deterrent without that arrangement. So one thing I’m interested to know is what are you providing them that they might not have otherwise? And otherwise, how important is the cooperation to you?

ADM. BENEDICT: So, two major channels by which we talk to the United Kingdom. One is the Polaris sales agreement as it relates to the strategic weapons system, and the other is the ‘58 MDA as it relates to reactors and the actual materials. I think the relationship is extremely important to both sides.

We have today a program that I think few truly understand how tightly coupled we are. The UK does not buy D-5 missiles. They buy the rights to a missile. And so what we have is what we term a comingled population. A missile can be built. It can sit on a UK submarine for a number of years, come back to the SWF, be dis-assembled, certified in its individual pieces, go into inventory, and when those pieces are required they’re built up into the next missile.

So what that has forced the two programs to do is, from a technical standpoint, ensure that the environments that that missile sees in a submarine are identical: vibration, thermal, because it could be in that tube for a number of years. So what that has allowed us to do is create a program that is really very transparent between the United Kingdom and the U.S. We get the benefits of having another independent sovereign state with their technical expertise be a counterbalance to some of the discussions and decisions that we have.

And we do, we have some really good open debates because we’re both working with the same material, to the same environments, trying to meet the same mission. So I think that from the standpoint of collaboration, it is the model on how to be tightly integrated in collaboration, not just at the technical standpoint, but certainly at the programmatic and more importantly, in the philosophy standpoint. So I’m a huge proponent of our relationship with the United Kingdom.

MR. HUESSY: Admiral Benedict, thank you so much.

(Applause).

Thank you all for coming. We will see you next week with Secretary of the Air Force Donley on the 25th. I want to thank our sponsors again, and thank you again.