

060713 Reserve Officers Association, Air Force Association and National Defense Industrial Association Capitol Hill Breakfast Forum with General Garrett Harencak, Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration, United States Air Force Headquarters, on “The Future of United States Air Force Nuclear Deterrent Forces.” (For additional information on NDIA/AFA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at phuessy@afa.org).

[This is a rush, unofficial transcript provided by National Security Reports.]

MR. PETER HUESSY: Welcome. My name is Peter Huessy. And on behalf of AFA, ROA and NDIA, I want to welcome you to this in our next in our series of seminars on nuclear deterrence, missile defense, space and homeland security.

Next week we have Senator Kyl on the 11th, General Kehler, the commander of Strat Command on the 12th, Ambassador Linton Brooks and John Harvey on the 13th, and General Larry Welch on the 14th. We’ve also got a new seminar on the 19th with Gil Klinger, who’s the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Space and Intelligence, and he’ll talk about critical space capabilities, buying power and 2.0 initiatives. Trent Franks is going to be speaking on July 18th, not June 18th. And we are going to try to also schedule Yvette Clarke.

A little sidelight here is that the first state in America, Maine, has now adopted grid protection against EMP, both nuclear and non-nuclear. It’s the first state in the nation to do so, in large part because of Trent Frank’s and Yvette Clarke’s work.

And then Senator Sessions is the 20th of June. That’s not going to be here. It’s going to be at the ROA building across the campus, across from the United States Senate. Following that we will have, from 9:40 to noon, a presentation from the Army War College, from Carlisle, on Army missile defense systems.

We are honored today to have Major General Garrett Harencak, who I first met in Minot where he participated in our May 3rd triad conference. He is assistant chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration in headquarters U.S. Air Force. He is responsible to the Secretary and the Chief of Staff for focus on nuclear deterrence operations. He advocates for and oversees and he is the steward for the Air Force nuclear weapons systems. He integrates the organizing, training and equipping of Air Force nuclear missions, and engages with joint and international partners for nuclear enterprise solutions.

I want to thank you, General, for coming here today and joining us. I want to thank our sponsors. I also want to thank our friends from the Russian embassy, from Austria and from Great Britain who have joined us today, as well as the members of the United States military

who are here today to take part in this series. Would you all please welcome General Harencaak?

(Applause).

GEN. GARRETT HARENCAK: Thank you, Peter. Wow, good morning, everybody. Listening to who is going to come speak to you, you guys really got screwed this morning.

(Laughter).

Wow. I guess you couldn't find anybody else for this morning. I feel inadequate a lot, and certainly when I heard who is going to be speaking here, it certainly has added to that general feeling of inadequacy. I'll tell you, though, this morning I got up early because normally I don't show up until about 9:30-10:00 o'clock at the Pentagon. And so I had to get up real early.

And the alarm went off and so I'm in the dark trying to put on my service dress and everything else. And my wife was like, where are you going? And I'm looking in the mirror, trying to make sure all the medals that I bought looked good. And I asked her, I said, how many great men do you think there are in the world? And she said, one less than you think.

(Laughter).

But today I'd like to spend just a little bit of time talking about what I do from an aspect of advocating and engaging for the continued relevance and the continued value of a strong strategic and nuclear deterrent. And also maybe at the end talk a little bit about one of the enduring qualities – the enduring value of our United States Air Force is the ability to project long-range precision strike that is persistent, that is accurate, and can penetrate. So I want to talk a little bit about the long-range bomber proposals that we're looking at.

But first off, thanks again, Peter, for doing this. I've got incredibly bright people. Some of them are here today, that work all the technical issues. I've worked with many of you at NNSA and on other things. And you guys take care of so much and you're so smart and you know how many gigawatts goes through the flux capacitor and you know how to fix it and all that other stuff.

I don't. I had a 2.0 GPA rounded up at the Air Force Academy. And so I try and stay out of that. So if any of the sort of questions that you want to ask include how many gigawatts are going through the flux capacitor, I'm sorry, I'll have to defer those questions.

What I see my real role, though, is to do that engagement and advocacy for what I believe to be the continued relevance of the triad and the continued relevance of strategic

nuclear deterrence. And I don't come to you as a Cold War zealot. I don't come to you as somebody that is going to spend a lot of time talking about numbers and all this stuff.

I come to you simply from the view that what the legs of the triad that the United States Air Force, in conjunction with the United States Navy provide, is as relevant today as it always has been, regardless of what the particular numbers are, regardless of treaties or whatever. The idea of deterrence, the idea that we need deterrence against our only existential threat to our nation (nuclear weapons), is relevant today. And it's as important today as it was in 1972 and in 1962 and in 1955.

We need to talk about it. You know, we have a lot of recapitalization that we need to do in the Minuteman III and our bomber force. We have a lot of stuff we have to do, the Navy does too, about recapitalizing our strategic nuclear deterrent. Why? Because we took a procurement holiday for almost 30 years and now the bills are coming due.

But also – and one of the things I want to talk to you about today, is we also took an intellectual holiday on the idea of deterrence. We just didn't talk about it. We didn't talk to the American people about it. We didn't talk to members of Congress about it. We didn't talk about it on the Hill. We didn't talk about it inside of my own building.

We didn't do it for decades. Is it any wonder why we have senior leadership who don't understand the most fundamental precepts of deterrence and why it is still relevant, and then they're susceptible to other ideas out there? Well, whose fault is that? That's my fault. That's my fault. That's many of ours fault, because we have not talked about it. We have not got out and talked about the enduring qualities of it.

So what happened is a lot of myths have come about. A lot of myths have come about and they make bumper stickers on cars. And people spread these myths even though they are , absolutely false.

So one of the things I want to do this morning for just a few minutes is go after some of those myths and really talk about them. And as I go around and do my engagement and advocacy and evangelize for the continued relevance of a credible nuclear deterrent, I get these myths all the time. And I want to talk to you just a little bit about it.

Many of you who work in this business and who spend a lifetime trying to defend America against this grievous, existential threat (nuclear weapons), have probably heard them too. One of the first ones I always hear is, we never use those weapons.

How many times – has anybody ever heard that before? Oh yeah, and that's where you just want to go, come here, and you just want to smack them upside the head. Are you kidding me? We use those weapons every day. It's called deterrence.

Every day, we go to work in a missile field in 30 degrees below zero up in Malstrom or F.E. Warren or in Minot. We're using that weapon. Every day we practice loading weapons at Barksdale or Minot or Whiteman. We're using those weapons every day, every day.

Submariners do the great work they do. What are we doing? We're using those weapons. It's called deterrence. In fact, in the case of one leg of our triad, which is the Minuteman, it's being used every single day and has been for decades.

Now I've flown every bomber that we have: B-52s, B-1s, B-2s, and there were many times in my career where, for whatever reason, not one bomber turned a wheel anywhere in the world. I don't know, maybe it was Christmas in 1985, who knows? I mean, there were times where we stood down, where we didn't fly, throughout the history of these bombers.

All around the world, we didn't do it. So you could say on that day we weren't using those weapons systems. There are also times when, you know, ships are in dry dock or whatever.

The fact of the matter, though, is the Minuteman III has been in continual service every day. That is probably the one weapon that is the most active – because if you take all the days it has been working to defend America, I don't think there's another one that can beat it. And I don't want to talk about the cost involved, and I'll get to that in a second. I think not only, have we used that weapon every single day, but it's been a bargain, it's been a real bargain.

And that brings me to the second myth that we get, and that is that we can't afford it anyway. We can't afford it! Think about that. We can't afford to defend America against its only existential threat? Just saying that is insane. But let's really look at the facts, and I'll talk about just the two legs. Okay, fiscal year '13, total Air Force NDO budget, Nuclear Deterrent Ops budget, was a total of \$5.1 billion. Oh, that's a lot of money. Everybody goes, oh yeah, \$5.1 billion. In fiscal year '12 the United States Postal Service lost \$15.9 billion.

Now I say that, first of all, I love our postal service. I love my mailman. My dog even loves our mailman. That's not the point. This is not an attack on the greatest postal service in the history of the world.

What it is, is perspective. Two legs of our triad that defends America, that does all of those things that deterrence does, provides stability, the ability of bombers to control

escalation and show resolve, \$5.1 billion. Come on. Compared to what, another agency losing \$15.9 billion?

You know, Peter talked about the total when you add the Navy and everything else over a period of a year. Peter, was it about \$9 billion, as opposed to how much we spend as Americans going to movies, \$10 billion to \$11 billion? Yeah, yeah, more than it costs over the same period of time for all three legs of the triad.

The fact of the matter is, folks, come on now. Are you really saying we can't afford that? People constantly want to raid the nuclear deterrence ops budget, and I always say have you ever heard the story about Willie Sutton the famous bank robber?

And they asked him, why do you rob banks? And he says, because that's where the money is. Well I say there ain't no money in this, okay? There's not – we are very lean as a nuclear deterrent force.

And the myth, the myth that there's a lot of money to be (saved ?) by continuing to reduce numbers– now again, I'm not going to talk numbers or anything. If you want to go down in numbers there's a host of reasons, pro and con, why you might want to do that. That's fine. There are policy people who can talk to that.

But you'd better not go into that game believing that there's a lot of money to be saved there, because there just isn't, there just isn't. The fact of the matter is that's a myth that we can't afford it. Of course we can afford it (nuclear deterrence).

And I submit to you it's a bargain. It's an incredible bargain what this nation gets for the amount of deterrence – there was a time at the height of the Cold War where almost 22 percent of our budget went to this. It's two percent now, less than two percent, less than two percent.

The total TOA for the Air Force is about 4.5 percent that is used on nuclear deterrent ops. I submit to you that the idea that we can't afford a nuclear deterrent is a myth that absolutely is completely and absolutely wrong. We're not spending a lot of money on it, and what we are is certainly a bargain.

And then, of course, the next myth that we get a lot as we go around to engage and advocate, is that of course you're going to stand up there, General, and say this because you're caught in the Cold War. You hear that – you get that a lot from people in the press that say we have a Cold War attitude.

Really? Really? Pop quiz – how many weapons did we have at the height of the '60s in the United States? Lots, lots. At the peak, about 36,000 and I guess it depends on the year. Okay, an enormous amount.

You all know how that glide slope has gone down. When you look at what we used to have, the numbers of bomber wings, we in no way, in no way, have anywhere near the structure or even the mindset that we had in the Cold War.

You know, I used to command at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. And if you ever get a chance to go there you'll see the worlds' largest laminated wood structure ever built. It's the EMP trestle there, if you've ever seen that.

That was a \$60 million project started in 1970 and ended up costing about \$200 million. There really was no debate about it. It was just done.

We, as a nation, built the spur of a railroad to bring specially designed railroad cars that we had designed and built. We took essentially a small area of a forest in Washington state and declared it a national security site so we could get these laminated wood structures. The reason I used to bring visitors there I to show them this is what we used to do.

To even insinuate that at some point, when you look at how much, on the civilian side, how much the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Department of Energy, has come down over the decades, it is a complete red herring argument to say, you're doing the same thing. It flies in the face of facts. We, of course, not just intellectually but in a host of areas, in a host of ways, have fundamentally changed from the Cold War.

I just fundamentally disagree with that myth out there. And I think we all need to get involved and just get that out of the conversation space, because it's not helpful and it's not true. History has shown that what we're doing now is not at all related to what we did 40 years ago, but the enduring principles of deterrence strategy is just absolutely enduring and doesn't change.

Another myth we hear is that we could do it all with subs. And why do we need ICBMs? Why do we need bombers?

Of course my take is because the triad is not redundant. I'll repeat, the triad is not redundant. It is complementary. It works together.

A key aspect of the triad is the incredible survivability of our submarine-based SLBMs, which complement the stabilizing attributes of a land-based ICBM system, and of course bombers that allow us to show resolve and control escalation. Ladies and gentlemen, it's not

either/or. It all works together. It has worked together and has been an absolutely vital part of our defense for decades and it will continue.

Going back to the other myth that we can't afford it and can save all this money by divesting ourselves of key attributes of the strategic deterrent that has served us so well, is false. Without all three legs of the tridada, deterrence as we know it would not exist. And it is no better shown than what happened recently with North Korea where we flew B-52s and then B-2s, the B-2 from CONUS, over the Korean Peninsula.

And somebody – I won't mention his name, it was somebody on the Hill – we actually were talking about a long-range strike aircraft. And the person asked why do we need it? It just so happens it was the day that we announced that two B-52s had flown over. And I said, I think we just explained the answer to your question why we need it.

And the person was trying to be kind of funny and said, did you fly over South or North Korea? And I said the good news is we can do either.

(Laughter).

The fact of the matter is nothing more proved the enduring value of what we're doing. When it was reported, how was it reported by the major press? You probably saw the pictures. We had two F-16s when the B-2 flew over. What did they all talk about? What did they say?

Did they say, some Air Force airplanes flew over Korea? No, they said nuclear capable bombers flew over. Think about that for a moment. That's how it was reported. Why? Because people do understand it.

So how could you say there's no relevancy in that? Why didn't they talk about the stealthy B-2? Why didn't they talk about a host of other things: how nice it was painted? Why didn't they talk about what hometowns the crews were from?

No, how was it reported? It was reported as nuclear-capable bombers because it sends a message. And more importantly, it showed the enduring value of a strategic nuclear deterrent. That, ladies and gentlemen, again is this mythology that exists out there. We have to challenge that mythology.

And then the last one is, nuclear weapons are going away anyway. I mean, that's the thing. Why even bother when they're all going away anyway?

Listen, here's how I approach that. First of all, it's not relevant because our President told us in Prague that as long as nuclear weapons exist we will maintain a safe, secure and effective deterrent for ourselves and our allies. So my point is, that myth is irrelevant anyway.

I can't predict the future. I don't know what's going to happen. I'm giving you my best military advise. I'm wrong all the time.

That's fine. Something could happen. The good thing about me being always wrong is I don't tire of being wrong. I mean, it just doesn't bother me. I just continue on.

So I don't know – I don't know how long nuclear weapons will exist. It's just not relevant. Now personally, if you asked me, I think it's going to be a long time before we as a world community all get together in a nice room like this, have eggs and sausages and potatoes and say you know what, I've got a better idea to resolve our differences. Why don't we just talk them out? And at the end, we give each other a good hug.

I hope that day comes. I hope that day comes soon. And when it does, I want to invite you all over to my house for a party. Seriously, because I think that'd be cool.

I like to give parties. I want you all to come over. Because when that happens, when we can get rid of these weapons, soon, we'll have a big party at my house. I think it would kind of be cool, you know, as a nuclear guy and everything else, to have a big party. I'd just add, don't feed any hors d'oeuvres to my unicorn, because he makes a mess in my yard.

(Laughter).

The fact of the matter is, ladies and gentlemen, it doesn't matter. As long as nuclear weapons exist we will maintain a safe, secure and effective stockpile. And that's what many of us in this room are committed to doing just that. That's what it's about.

And that's going to require some investment, some investment in the B61. It's going to require investment in a next generation of submarines. And it's going to require an investment in modernizing and continuing to upgrade our bombers until we get a replacement long-range strike.

And I want to talk really quickly about that before we open it up for any questions you might have. I also see some mythology about the need for a long-range precision strike, and I've got to talk to you a little bit about that. I'm not going to talk about capabilities.

Everybody wants to dive right into, what are the capabilities? What's it going to look like, all this other stuff? I don't even know. That doesn't matter.

What I'm talking about is, once again, we have an enduring requirement for something, and that is for the ability for the United States Air Force to continue to do in the mid-'20s what we've always been able to do, and that's hold at risk any target in the world. One of the fundamental reasons the United States Air Force exists is so nobody ever has to walk into the

Oval Office and say Mr. President or Madam President, I'm very sorry we cannot neutralize that threat to us. We cannot destroy that particular target.

As long as the United States Air Force has been able to exist no one has ever had to do that. And that's what this is about. That's what the whole idea of a long-range strike aircraft is about. It's about somebody never having to say that.

But there are myths about that, so people always say, you know, why do you need a platform that might have to penetrate? Everything can be done from standoff. Well, I'm going to tell you, best military advice, this is just like the triad, ladies and gentlemen. Standoff is complementary. It's not either/or in this business. Obviously we're going to need an array of systems that allow us to take down – to kick down the door, if you will. But, it can't be done – will not be able to be done strictly with that. We're going to need complementary capabilities to penetrate.

And then people say, the other myth is why are you spending all that money, all that time and everything else because you're never going to be able to penetrate anyway. Because, why? Because we've done the models. We've looked at it. I own "12 O'Clock High," the director's edition at home. I know everything about air power

And guess what, you're not going to be able to penetrate. Why, because of defenses. Do you know what some potential adversaries out there have for defenses? You're never going to be able to penetrate that, so it's a waste of money.

And that is so incredibly wrong. How do I know that, because it has been wrong every other time in history. Let me give you a few quick examples.

In 1972, Linebacker II, the decision is made B-52s will bomb. Analysts, ours and outside, everybody came to the massive conclusion, oh my god, one out of three B-52s will not make it. Why? Well, you have no idea what the defenses are.

Thirty-three percent attrition, that's given. That's what is going to happen. And so much so, the then commander of Strategic Air Command ordered a real look at the SIOP, Single Integrated Operating Plan, because he said, oh my god I'm going to lose so many B-52s. How am I going to be able to do SIOP with that?

Well, guess what, it was wrong. The United States Air Force did what it always does, and that was through innovation, through technology, through practice, through professional blah, blah, all that other stuff, everything. Guess what, how many aircraft did we lose? Pop quiz folks. Seven hundred and twenty-nine sorties, how many aircraft?

MR. : Zero.

GEN. HARENCAK: No, 15 – 15. And I always say it sucks to be those 15, okay. But the fact of the matter is the attrition was two percent.

The next example is the Israelis in the Bekka Valley in 1982. Most models predicted – everybody predicted – 20 percent attrition. People said, oh my gosh, you can't go there.

Forget about what happened in North Vietnam. I mean, oh my gosh, now we've got all these incredible array of weapons systems, (Surface to Air Missiles) and you're never going to be able to do it. One thousand, one hundred sorties. What was the attrition rate? How many aircraft did they lose?

Zero, zero percent attrition rate. Why? Same reason we didn't lose one out of every three B-52s.

Desert Storm is another one. We, ourselves, predicted we were going to lose 70 aircraft in the first four days. That's what all the models said. That's what all the attrition said.

Why, because the days of being able to penetrate are gone. Oh my gosh, forget about what happened in Vietnam. Forget about what happened in Bekka. These guys really are 10 feet tall. You're never going to make it – never going to make it.

Zero point four percent attrition. Seven thousand sorties, 27 fixed wing aircraft lost. The fact of the matter is, ladies and gentlemen, that the myth that we won't be able to penetrate is absolutely wrong. When people say why do you need it (LRS-B), well we need it to do our job. We need it to do our job, which will be just as relevant in the mid-'20s as it is today. And of course when you add the fact that it will be the mainstay of the nuclear deterrent force, that's why, ladies and gentlemen, we need it.

And the other myth out there is that stealth is dead. Oh yeah, people can see you all the time. That's absolutely incorrect. Our systems continually get better. No one, no one is sitting on the laurels of what we did in stealth 20-25 years ago.

So those are just three of the many myths that people will begin to start trotting out, all the usual suspects, for whatever their reasons, that decide that this next weapon, whatever it may be, is a boondoggle and oh by the way, we don't need and won't work. Ladies and Gentlemen, it was false decades ago. It was false for every weapons system that we tried to bring online specifically. It's false for this.

So I ask you to help me, if you're like-minded or at least be open-minded if you're not like-minded, to accept the fact that some of the myths that are being propagated about the strategic nuclear deterrent and the value and the relevancy of a deterrent today, are perhaps not well thought out, wrong or maybe in need of a re-look. And that same thought process

applies to the myths surrounding the need for a long-range strike bomber and other systems out there as we continually try to modernize and continue to keep our nuclear deterrent credible: credible and effective so we can do what it was designed to do, protect our nation, our way of life, our children, our families from the gravest threat that faces us; until that very happy day – that very happy day when we don't have to worry about nuclear weapons.

So that's my take. I'm almost on time, Peter. Thanks for the opportunity to come and yammer at you for a while this early in the morning. I'm sorry, I'm from New Jersey and we talk really loud, even in the morning, sorry.

(Applause).

So, we have time for questions. I'm ready. I've been studying state capitols.

MR. BOB UNDERWOOD: Bob Underwood. What is the Air Force doing or planning to do in response to General Welch's report to the Defense Science Board last April about operations and maintenance within the missile force problems?

GEN. HARENCAK: Well, you know, I wouldn't term them as problems; I'd term them as

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MR. UNDERWOOD: Shortcomings?

GEN. HARENCAK: Well, more of it is life experience. I don't particularly agree that we have any compelling problems. Do we always want to continuously improve there? Yes. Are there challenges on sustainment? Are there challenges on other issues? But the overall health of our missile force, and morale of our crews out there – I've been out there – is exceedingly, exceedingly good.

That doesn't mean we don't continue to look into it. Specifically about the DSB report, we have a series of recommendations and we're working to address each one of those findings and recommendations, most of which I agree with wholeheartedly and we're hard at work. One example is our personnel reliability program, specifically in the Air Force, has become overly bureaucratic. It has become – has strayed as things sometimes do, from its original intent, and it has just made it very resource dependent.

So the report gave us some very good recommendations to slim down some of the bureaucracy and make it even more effective than it is. That's one example. So we've taken that on and we're going to bring a plan to our leadership in the Air Force here in a couple of weeks, based on those recommendations, a way that we could reduce some of the administrative burden.

And some of the other recommendations on supply chain and things like that, yes we realize that's been a concern and we're using that to try and inform some of our budgeteers to help us. Most of these issues are resource-based, that they need now. In the case of PRP (Personnel Reliability Program), it's a bureaucracy that has grown.

People want to do well. So we've added layers and layers. People want to pass inspections. They want to do a great job. So they've added so many layers of oversight and everything else that it has made it quite a burden on our wings and our units. And that doesn't really require any resources to fix.

Most of the other stuff, of course, does. And so we're going to use those as we go fight internal budget battles. And as everything General Welch has done, this will enhance our deterrent.

And I'll tell you, we all have to deal with a lot of boards and everything else. The Defense Science Board, specifically General Welch's stuff has always brought us not just problems but solutions. And we've been very good, I think, in the Air Force about implementing his solutions, and I think we're going to be able to do that again.

MR. : On NATO issues for DCA. I'm not good at numbers, either. Could you comment on the fourth leg of the triad? I don't know, to some extent the Air Force supports the NATO extended deterrent. I don't know if that comes under you. But I heard most of those six or seven myths expressed, including this week in newspapers, concerning our support to NATO. Do you have any views –

GEN. HARENCAK: You're probably talking about an article in the Los Angeles Times yesterday about how we don't need the B61. First of all, we need the B61 because America's Air Force needs the B61. We use the B61. The B61 needs a life extension program.

So the fact of the matter is we need that weapon for the air delivered weapon for our deterrent. However, we've always been committed to the DCA mission in Europe. We remain so.

Again, I'm a military guy. I'll give you my best military advice. The article insinuated that we don't need it. That's not my decision.

I mean, my gosh, talk about a complicated political decision that will take years to come to. In the meantime, guess what I have to do? I have to make sure those weapons are safe, secure and effective. And that's what it's about.

The ability to accomplish the DCA mission in Europe, the ability to do deterrence, the extended deterrence and assurance of our allies, it's linked with what we have in Europe. And

a number of our NATO allies are very much our partners in the nuclear arena there, specifically when it comes to DCA. So I guess I'd answer your question in one of two ways.

First of all, no one, no one has gone anywhere near saying we're going to make any changes to the DCA mission in Europe. Therefore we have to proceed with programs that make sure the weapons we do have there and how we store them and everything else, remains modern, safe, secure and effective. And that's where we are.

Beyond that, it's a political decision. But at the end of the day, it's also very cost-effective. I mean, the weapon LEP is expensive. I agree. But the system overall, holistically looking at it all is another clear example of how we've changed from the Cold War. I mean, the DCA mission out there is very lean, it's very focused, and we remain very committed to it.

DR. WILL CURTIS (Professor, U.S. Naval Academy): My question has to do with that intellectual holiday -- (off mic). We seem to be transitioning from a (bipolar) environment where the emphasis from my perspective should be (looking to cope with regional contingencies like Iran ?). Are you satisfied -- (off mic) -- with what I call a strategic multi-polar regional adversary -- (off mic).

GEN. HARENCAK: Well, I believe we're making great strides to recover from that intellectual holiday, if you will. And I think a number of reasons why that happened: we had some problems in the Air Force a few years back that focused us on that intellectual gap; we had also the procurement holiday; that we took. I think the best way to answer that is I don't think you could ever be truly satisfied.

One of my central premises is that deterrence -- that myth that we're stuck in the Cold War is so incorrect because real deterrence, when you look at deterrence, it's not focused on any one particular threat. It's focused on an array of them. Now what's focused on a particular threat would be, how do we counter a SIOP or numbers of weapons or numbers of subs or numbers of bombers, all that other stuff to do that?

But again, nowhere, like I said in my talk, are we talking about numbers. We're talking about the idea of deterrence. And deterrence works, I believe, because it isn't focused just on one adversary. The central tenets of it is that whoever has the capability, the capability to do you harm, we have to deter against.

So I guess the answer to the question is I don't think we should ever be truly satisfied that we've got all regional things -- kind of like it's going to be changing all the time anyway. And I always use the analogy of -- if any of you have kids, do you ever go to that crazy place Chucky Cheese? What's the worst game in that place? Wack-a-Mole why, because it never ends.

Your kids go, let's play Wack-a-Mole. So your beer is getting warm and your pizza is getting cold and you're wacking this thing. And you go, haven't I scored enough points? When does it end? It never ends.

It never ends. Well, that's what our business is. It never ends. Things are going to change all the time. I mean, the idea that I don't have to worry about country X because I studied that – some think tank helped me or RAND studied that and we're good, let's move on. No, no, no, this is a process.

General Welch likes to talk about intent and capability. And what deterrence is about, in my view – and what he basically says is people always mess up the two. And they say, you've got all this capability, but the people you have capability against, they don't have any intent to harm you now.

And his point is, people who wear the uniform, people who work in this business, can't be worried about that. Because, you see, intent changes in an hour, in a day, in a month. Capability is what we have to have. So I think the fundamental answer to your question is we can never take our eye off that ball. I mean, yes we have to invest some intellectual capital in making sure that everybody understands the overall strength of deterrence and everything else. But then we have to apply that to all the constantly changing regional adversaries out there and see how we could all work that.

You know, one of the things I get – you know, another myth – is you've got this capability against people that are trading partners. Trading partners would never threaten you because they're trading partners. My gosh, take a history course! The next person who says that, sign them up at NOVA for a history course.

You've got to be kidding me. Who were the two largest trading partners on August 31, 1939? Britain and Germany. The next day they started massacring each other for five and a half years. Don't tell me we don't need a capability against somebody because we trade with them. Read a history book.

I mean, that's the type of intellectual holiday we've taken. But you're right, sir, it's not just about focusing on one. We have to constantly be on the lookout – the value of a deterrent, though, is it really doesn't matter who the particular adversary is. The enduring value of deterrence is that it is always present regardless of the adversary.

MS. : (Off mic) – North Korea shows just how essential nuclear weapons are – (off mic).

GEN, HARENCAK: Well, I guess you have to look at it from the fundamental perspective of – the logic of that is then I believe you would fall into the camp of if we disarm everybody else would disarm.

MS. : (Off mic).

GEN. HARENCAK: Well, I guess the logical thing is how – and I think it goes to the professor's response. How do you deal with a particular threat? That idea that we would try to entice people to move away from their own pursuit of a particular course by not demonstrating ours, might work for a particular adversary. I think the calculus was that hasn't worked in the past with that particular country, and you're going to have to deal with each potential adversary there differently and one size doesn't fit all. The B-52/B-2 over flights were also a message of assurance to our allies in the region.

And I think the calculus was done. I wasn't in the big deliberations there. But I believe that the deliberations on this particular issue revolved around the point that that path hasn't worked in the past and would not work... to just say you don't need to go down that road because we're going to demonstrate that we're backing away from it.

I guess that's how I'd answer that. And I'm sure that's a discussion think tanks and academics could discuss forever. At the end of the day, I'm in the camp that I believe that having a strong credible deterrent, and the capabilities to deter other people, is far more effective than unilaterally just backing away and saying you don't have to do it.

But I see your point. I just – I think in this particular – with that particular scenario, I think it was very effective. Perhaps in other ways it wouldn't be.

MR. : General, there's been a lot of discussion – (off mic) – can't enact a budget – (off mic) – long-range strike – (off mic)?

GEN. HARENCAK: I guess I just couldn't – first of all, the Air Force (needs more in its piggy bank ?). Let's be clear about that. I mean, that's just a fact.

And I don't want to get into sequestration and all the other stuff now. But I guess, sir, I'd have to defer that question. I just don't know enough about it to make an informed judgment on that. I'm sorry, I don't.

But I will make a judgment that, you know, I don't think we could afford – certainly as a nation or an Air Force – to continue to reduce our force. I mean, we've just got too much stuff to do. We have too much modernization out there.

We've got too much recapitalization we have to do. And we're involved all over the world. So the bottom line is I'm here to tell you there is no more our Air Force budget could give up. In fact, we're going to need a heck of a lot more.

MR. HUESSY: General, let me try the question a different way.

GEN. HARENCAK: Okay.

MR. HUESSY: People argue that if you take these things out of the services because they're crown jewels and you put them in OSD and all of a sudden you'll protect them there, when you won't protect them when they're in the services. So you take all the nuclear, the subs, the bombers, the ICBMs, and you put them all under a national account so the services don't pay for it and OSD magically comes up with the money.

GEN. HARENCAK: Bad idea.

(Laughter).

MR. HUESSY: Thank you.

GEN. HARENCAK: Next question. That's what it's about? Oh, I don't like that.

MS. : (Off mic) – Air Force's plan to build a new ALCM, which is being labeled as a new nuclear weapon –

GEN. HARENCAK: Which it is not.

MS. : Could you please comment on that?

GEN. HARENCAK: Well, the ALCM has been a mainstay of our air-launched deterrent for decades. As I said, a stand-off weapon and the ability to penetrate are complementary. We can't have one without the other. That's just a fact of life. That's the way the military is.

Obviously, there is never a weapon that we want to develop in our United States military that someone won't call a boondoggle. I have the slides that I show – we can't show slides here – but I do, and I say here's something that's been written about how useless this particular weapon that we're going to do is. And then I go oh, I'm sorry, that was written about the B-52 in 1955 by Time Magazine.

Well here's one, I'm sorry we got that confused, and it talks about a boondoggle. And oh, I'm sorry, that's 1970 the AWACs that the New York Times assured each of us could never fly. I mean, that big radar, the plane is going to take off and – you can't fly with that thing.

(Laughter).

I mean, folks have been wrong all the time. Now that being said, I realize that's what people do. They determine it's a boondoggle and you don't need it and blah, blah, blah.

But it's all based on mythology. It's all based on ideology. It's not based on real military requirements or capabilities.

And the fact of the matter is the ALCM is an old weapon. I mean, these things time out. Things get old. And they are old and we probably as a nation should have recapitalized these things.

What was the life expectancy of the B61? When were we supposed to get rid of that? In the '80s, okay?

In 1968 I was starting in, I think it was September of 1968 – my second year of fourth grade – the decision was made on here's how we're going to recapitalize how we're going to replace the B61 and all this other stuff. Here we are, I'm an old man, and what am I doing? I'm standing in front of you telling you it's time now to recapitalize the B61. That's what I mean.

First off, let's be very, very clear. It is not new weapon. What we're doing is we're taking an old weapon that should have been replaced a long time ago and we're making sure it remains safe, secure and effective. That's all we're doing. That's all we're doing.

And so, it's the same thing with the B61. People say, alright, I understand, but it's new. It is not. It is not.

And I use this analogy, because the B61 really came on in any real numbers in 1964. So if you were lucky enough and you had an old uncle who gave you a 1964 Corvette, and you say I want to make it more safe, secure and effective so my wife and I can drive around the city with it how cool would that be? Nice Corvette. So you go, okay, I want to make it a little more effective.

How do you do that? Well, I'm going to go to Costco and I'm going to buy a new stereo for 70 bucks or 80 bucks and put it on. Well, you could say it's a little more effective now.

And then you say, I want to replace the brakes because that's a safety thing. Okay, so you put new brakes on. And then you want to make it more secure so you look at it and you go, well I really can't afford to put one of those expensive alarm systems on so I'll use The Club on it.

And USAA insurance company calls, and says I understand you've got a new Corvette. What are you talking about? No, I'm paying insurance on a classic car – 1964.

I hear you put The Club on it. You put a new stereo in it, and you put new brakes. That's a new car.

You'd go, screw you. Would you not? Would anybody? So how can you say when I'm making a 1960s weapon more safe, secure and effective, you're making a new weapon? Come on. Come on.

If you want to debate it, let's debate it for real. And that's the same thing. I mean, without even knowing what this particular weapons system's capabilities are or what it's going to do and everything, people are calling it a boondoggle.

Do some research. At some of the major media outlets out there, how many times have they associated boondoggle with a weapons system? You can do the word search and all this other stuff. I can't do it, but people who are smart can do it.

And what you'll find is thousands of times, thousands of times, boondoggle: JSTARS, boondoggle; AWACS, boondoggle; B-1, boondoggle. You know all those weapons systems that we depend on each and every day to defend our nation and our allies and our friends, really, they were all boondoggles? Come on. So it's more of the same. It's more of the same.

But nobody knows what the long-range strike is going to be. Nobody knows it. I don't know it yet. We're still studying it, so how in the hell can it be a boondoggle?

(Laughter).

Does that fit in ~~with the~~with the long-range strike bomber? How the hell do we know it's a boondoggle? Come on. I mean, that's what I'm saying folks. Come on, a little bit of intellectual honesty here.

If you're against it for ideological reasons, fine. Then let's go. Let's debate the enduring value of deterrence. Let's debate whether we need a penetrating bomber. Let's debate whether we need a stand-off weapon.

That's the debate we should have. Let's not confuse it with all the other stuff that is not relevant. That's all I'm pleading with you here, okay?

I don't have all the answers. But I do know, our nation deserves a real debate, a real debate about what is needed, how much of it is needed, and where we need to go, free from all the mythology, all the ideology, all the same trotted out arguments that have been wrong in the past, and that bring nothing to the real debate that we should be having about a strategic nuclear deterrent, about future weapons systems. That's all – that's all I'm asking. Let's have that real debate.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: That should wake you up this morning.

(Laughter).

General, thank you. I used to say to Senator Wallop in writing speeches for him, that as Senator you're one of the few people who speak in declarative sentences. You sir certainly speak in declarative sentences. Thank you, sir, very much.

(Applause).