

072816 Air Force Association, Reserve Officers Association and National Defense Industrial Association Capitol Hill Forum with General Robin Rand, Commander of the United States Air Force Global Strike Command, on “The Land and Air Based Deterrent.” (For additional information on NDIA/AFA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at phuessy@afa.org).

MR. PETER HUESSY: Good morning, everybody. I’m Peter Huessy and on behalf of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies and General Deptula, who is here today, who is the Dean and my boss, I want to thank you, along with NDIA and ROA and AFA for being here at our next seminar on nuclear deterrence issues. We’re honored to have General Rand, who my boss will introduce.

Just to let you know, John Harvey is speaking tomorrow. As you know, John has been instrumental in the previous Schlesinger-Perry Commission report and is one of the top nuclear policy experts in the country. General Weinstein, who was meant to be with us today, but got called away late yesterday, is going to be speaking on the 4th of August. That will wrap up this summer’s nuclear deterrence seminar, but I have a number of other people who want to speak, which we’ll try to schedule during the fall.

I want to particularly say hello to our embassy friends as well as our Air Force cadets and interns that are here, both from AFA and from the Department of Defense. I want to also remind you that we have three triad events, one scheduled and two tentatively. The first one is September 22nd here, and then Crane, Indiana we’d like to go back in March of 2017, and we’d like to do one in the Knoxville, Tennessee area for NNSA-centric issues at Y-12. That would be in October of 2017.

With that, please let me know if you’re going to come tomorrow for breakfast or next week. Thank you for your support to our sponsors that are here today. General Rand, thank you for coming all the way from Global Strike to see us. With that, I’d like to introduce you to my boss and colleague and friend, General Deptula.

GEN. DAVID DEPTULA: Thanks, Peter, and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Let me add my welcome to Peter’s for being here this morning. I promise you I won’t take a lot of time away from the key person that you came here to hear speak, that being General Rand. But I did want to touch upon his background to reinforce to you just how privileged we are to have someone of his expertise and character in charge of Global Strike Command.

General Rand graduated from the Air Force Academy in 1979 and since then he has accumulated a mass of expertise as a squadron commander. He was a commander of Air Force Weapons School. He was a fighter wing commander. He was a numbered Air Force Commander. He was a major command commander before stepped over to assume the mantle of Commander of the preponderance of the United States’ nuclear deterrent capability as the head of Global Strike Command. So I think just hearing that, you’ll agree with me that there is no finer individual to fulfill this role.

With that, let me introduce my good friend and Commander of Global Strike Command, General Robin Rand.

(Applause).

GEN. ROBIN RAND: Thank you. I'm kind of a wanderer, so I'll talk loud. My wife has never accused me of not speaking loud enough.

Thank you, Peter, for the invitation. Thank you. General Deptula, thank you. To our guys and gals, our cadets and interns, it's nice to see you. I've got some friends: I see Scott Harmer (ph) over there. Good to see you, Todd.

Let me introduce, first, a couple of key folks that are with us. I'd like to introduce our public affairs officer Lieutenant Colonel John Sheets. He's been straight all the time. John, thanks for joining us today. My right hand man is Chief Master Sergeant Cal Williams. Cal, stand up so they can see you. He's the ranking senior NCO in the command of 32,000.

(Applause).

He's my traveling partner and wingman. Then, my aide-de-camp -- where'd you go Ashley Ann? Ashley represents just one of the 32,000 airmen that we have at Guard, Active duty and Reserve in the command. She's spectacular. She's a security forces defender by trade.

She came in as an enlisted person as a young 19 year-old out of high school. She's done five combat tours, four in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. I snatched her off the missile fields of Minot, North Dakota to come and be my aid-de-camp. I'm sure she's regretting that decision, okay, as she now has to work with me on a daily basis. But she really does represent, I think, the brilliance of the command. That's our strength, the airmen, so that's my traveling team.

(Applause).

I want to give time for questions. Is that good? So my remarks are going to be fairly brief and then I hope to hear from you.

One, I want to tell you I've got the best job in the Air Force. I really do pinch myself when I wake up in the morning and I know that I get to be at the helm of Air Force Global Strike Command, a command that now just turned seven years old. But we go way back, because our lineage and our roots are tied to Strategic Air Command (SAC).

In fact, when we re-stood up the command in 2009, for one hour we were SAC. We took the guide irons and we took the streamers from SAC. That is what sits in my

office, the streamers from Strategic Air Command.

In my office, if you visit -- and I'd love for many of you to -- is actually one of the desks that General Curtis LeMay had when he was the Commander of Strategic Air Command at Omaha. We pulled that out of a warehouse. It took about two weeks for it to air out. We put some linseed oil on it.

People have asked me, do you have any cigar burn marks on it? I haven't found any yet. But that is our connection and we're very proud of that. So while the command itself is only seven years old, we go way back to the very beginning of our country's nuclear deterrent posture, and that's the way it should be.

The mission today of Air Force Global Strike Command, I bet, is very, very similar to the mission that you would have looked at in 1949 when SAC was set up. That is simply this, airmen who provide nuclear deterrent, provide global strike and combat support anytime and anywhere. That's what we do and that's what we're doing today, right now.

We have airmen on 24/7 alert in our missile fields. We have airmen flying combat over the skies of Iraq and Syria. We have airmen deployed to every combatant command in our nation, serving and standing tall.

That's the simple mission statement. You can boil that down, because that's mouthful. I like our motto better: Deter, Assure -- and when that fails -- Strike. We don't put in "when that fails," it's just Deter, Assure, Strike. I added that for you.

We want to do the deter, assure first, but we're prepared and ready when called on to strike. So that's the motto. So what I thought I could do is maybe just share a little bit about where Air Force Global Strike is located, some of my priorities, and then I'll open it up to questions. Does that jibe with everyone?

Where are we located? Our headquarters is Barksdale, Shreveport, Louisiana. Who's been there? It's a lovely time of the year not to visit.

(Laughter).

You think you've got hot and humid here right now? I've got you beat a little bit. Last weekend I was in Cheyenne, Wyoming, God's country, and it was tough getting on an airplane and having to come out to the East Coast, going from 85 and blue skies with minus zero humidity to out here.

But that's where we're at, Barksdale. It's a lovely community, very supportive. One of the reasons that was probably picked was that is Bomber Command's location for 8th Air Force as well as the 2nd Bomb Wing. It's a very supportive community that has been in place for many, many years. The house I live in is a 1920 vintage historic home. They're very familiar with the United States Air Force and they're very familiar with the

mission of SAC/Air Force Global Strike Command.

We're scattered around the country to include Anderson Air Force Base at Guam, as well as B-52s right now flying combat out of Al-Udeid, Qatar. Some of the places we're located, our bombers are at Barksdale, as I said, Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. We've got a bomber wing up in Minot, North Dakota. We've got bomber wings at Ellsworth Rapid City, South Dakota, and Abilene, Texas at Dyess Air Force Base with our B-1. So we're spread out there.

We have our missile wings that are located at Minot, one missile wing there, as well as Malmstrom, Great Falls, Montana. I mentioned Cheyenne, Wyoming, F.E. Warren, which is I think if not the oldest the second oldest military installation in our country. You should see that place, it's just beautiful, if you've never been to Cheyenne. That's where we have one of our missile wings.

We also have airmen at Vandenberg in California. We have a wing which is called the 377th Air Base Wing in Kirtland, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Of note, the 377th is the largest underground storage munitions center complex that we have in the Air Force if not in the world. So that is a real, real important wing task. We just, by the way, took that wing in October, as well as the two B-1 wings that I mentioned at Ellsworth and at Dyess Air Force Base, so they came into the command in October. Those are some of the places.

We've got great partnership -- if I showed you the slide with all our lab partners, our DOE partners -- and certainly great relationships with our industry partners. So we're pretty scattered. I only mention that to you because I try to get out and visit some of these places, and it keeps you hopping to get to the different places from the north, south, east, west, pretty spread out, but it's spectacular.

We're a total force command, and by that I mean we have an active duty wing. We also have an Air Force Reserve Command wing that's located right there at Barksdale with us, and we have an Air National Guard wing that's at Whiteman. So we truly are, when we talk total force, we require every person that is in Global Strike -- Active duty, Guard and Reserve -- to get the job done.

I'm very proud of that. I consider our total force to be a benchmark for the Air Force. I think we really broke the code on how to do that, if you're interested.

Three sub-sets, my priorities: mission, that's not unique to any commander; the people who perform the mission, our airmen, is the second priority; and those who support the airman, our families. Those are very important priorities: mission, airmen and families. If you believe that, there has to be a foundation to build upon.

I talk about a house. You build your house on a solid foundation, not on sand, but a solid foundation for that. Those are our core values and we emphasize that as much as we possibly can.

Core values for the Air Force are integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. I stress the excellence in all we do because (it is ?) unachievable, but it's an attitude. We strive for excellence. We don't come to work today going, "I think I want to be average today." We want to be great, and when we're not we want to reflect on why, and what do we have to do to improve. So core values are a big part of what we do. It's the profession of arms.

The last one that I talk about as a priority is our heritage. I briefly mentioned it to you. I shared the heritage of Strategic Air Command and a little bit about Curtis LeMay's death.

But heritage is important to us because I believe heritage, and understanding of your heritage, can help inspire our airmen to do the right thing because of the people that went before them. The difference between history and heritage, history will make you smarter. Understanding your heritage can make you prouder. We want to capture that. We want to reflect on the men and women who went before us, who have done great things - ordinary people, by the way, who have done extraordinary things -- and we want to capture that and we want to tie that to our profession of arms.

Those are the five priorities. I've got to put some meat on those, those are pretty generic. Mission readiness, that's the part that we have to talk about. Are we ready to do the global strategic deterrent and global strike and provide that necessary combat support? That's what we're always doing.

Let's talk about the mission part a little bit. There's three phases to it. I'll start with our ICBM piece.

We are responsible for two of the three legs of the triad, as General Deptula mentioned. The first leg that I'll talk about is our ICBM leg, our Minuteman IIIs. I've got 450 dispersed, hardened silos in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Montana and North Dakota. Those men and women are on 24/7 alert, 365 days a year. There's 90 young officers right now in our missile fields being supported by hundreds of security force defenders, our maintainers, our cooks, our chefs, our facility managers that are out there, every day of the year. That never stops.

I told you the places where we're located. That's one part of the -- a very responsive part of the triad because it is 24/7. So that's the option for the president, that he knows he has, that responsive part of the triad that's available.

It's a huge AOR. We talked about areas of responsibility. You should see the coverage. Some of our men and women, when they go to their workplace, go onto their base, get a mission brief, and when it's time to get to work they get in a vehicle and they drive up to three hours, on a good day. If it's bad weather it will be a little longer to get where they go.

Some of our launch control centers are as far as 135 to 140 miles away from the base they're assigned to. They'll do their job for 24 hours and they'll get replaced and get back in and drive home. So you can tell, it's a pretty long shift that they're pulling when they do this. They're very responsible. We're very proud of them. I'll talk about part of the readiness piece.

The next part of the leg that we have is the bomber leg. As I talked to you, we have the B-52s, the B-2s and the B-1s. The B-52s and the B-2s are dual-capable, conventional and nuclear. The B-1 is conventional only. That is the long-range strike.

For the nuclear piece, that is the very flexible part of the triad that we own. We can generate those airplanes, send a very resounding type of signal to the world if we need to. We can launch those airplanes and we can delay and call them back if we need to. So the president has a very flexible option with that part of the triad.

But the most important part of the bomber, and this is what I like to say, we can hold -- and with the ICBMs for that matter -- we can hold at-risk any target on the planet, not in days, weeks or months, but in a manner of hours. And that's what long-range strike does that's unique to some of the other parts of the Air Force. Now we need some help to do that with our bombers. They can't fly continuously without support, so we need our air refueling leg to support them.

But once again, [they can] take off, generate, take off, go a long way away, deliver weapons and fly all the way back. That's a very unique capability that we possess. And we can do that in an ever-increasing A2AD environment, anti-access area denial environment, which is a great feature.

The challenge with the bomber is much like with the ICBM. The youngest airplane is 25 years old, that's our B-2. The B-1s are using '70s technology. Our unbelievable B-52s -- that I'm going to go fly next week -- is a chipper 55 years old right now. There are 1961 tail models there at Barksdale/Dyess and they first flew over 55 years ago. So they're no spring chicken, but they've got good bones, and we can talk about the things we're doing to keep those airplanes viable for not months but decades longer.

The third part of the mission that we have that I'm very proud of, a very difficult part, is the NC3, nuclear command, control and communications. This has now been designated by the United States Air Force as a weapons system for us to maintain. We had never done that before.

Let me give you an idea of, what is NC3? You've all heard of the National Airborne Center, the E-4 that is a 747, the same airplane as the president, that's airborne, if you need it, that's part of NC3. The ability to communicate from the base to the launch control centers, that would be NC3. Mobile command and control sites, NC3. Everything it takes to be able to communicate at the highest level to give the president the option, on our nation's potentially worst day, to be able to communicate with his

combatant commanders, with international leaders and with potential adversaries, that is all part of NC3.

Again, it's 109 sub-sets that make up this system, so it's hard to wrap your head around it. The Air Force is responsible for over 65 of those sub-systems, and they're responsible for a big chunk of the change that goes with maintaining that. Last year they designated Air Force Global Strike Command as the lead command for NC3.

General Deptula mentioned that I was doing another job before this. I didn't know what NC3 stood for, frankly, a year ago. Today, I dream about it.

It's a big part of what we do because, candidly, over 25 or 30 years the system atrophied, to some degree. We've realized that we now need to make sure it's sustainable and where needed we need to modernize it. We have to first understand what is obsolete, what needs to be sustained, and what needs to be replaced, and we're working feverishly to do that. That has high priority, certainly in the Department of Defense, to do that. So those are kind of the three parts, if you will, to the mission.

While we're doing that we're supporting, though, just about every combatant commander that I can think of. We obviously provide 24/7 support to Admiral Haney and Strategic Command. We're providing right now 24/7 support to PACOM, Pacific Command, with our bombers that are at Guam, power projection missions to make sure that there's a viable presence to not only potential adversaries but to our partners and our allies in that part of the world.

I told you we're providing combat support, actual combat missions, right now in the Middle East. We also do a lot of bomber and assurance/deterrence missions that we fly through different areas of the world, whether it's European Command or additional missions in the Pacific Command. We support, when we can, Southern Command, right here in our backyard. We're certainly providing some type of surveillance and reconnaissance for the drug trafficking that keeps flowing into our country. We're gainfully employed in that aspect.

I told you of the 24/7 alert that we have. Our airmen are not exempt from supporting other areas wherever there are hotspots that we need to provide those support airmen. Whether they're security forces, civil engineers or medics, we get our fair taskings to get out there.

There's the bomber I told you of, there's the ICBM and the NC3. What's the biggest challenges? Maintaining readiness. Like today, we work at that.

The other one, though, is we have to modernize. We have to modernize, and that is a big challenge that I will deal with until the day I leave, and then my replacement will deal with it and his or her replacement will deal with it. As I told you, our Minuteman III was first fielded in 1970. I hate math in public, but once again, that's close to 50 years. Before we try and replace that with the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, it will be a 60

year old weapons system.

The ALCM that the B-52 uses was intended to be a 10 year missile, the Airborne Launched Cruise Missile. It was a 10 year missile. It's in its 30th year of service and needs to be replaced.

We have UH-1Ns that are on our missile fields to help with security and assuredness. It's a 1970 Vietnam-era platform. We need to replace the UH-1Ns.

I've talked to you of some of our challenges with NC3. As much as we love our bombers, and they are doing great things, we do need a new bomber and we are well on our way to doing that with the B-21. Particularly important is this ever-increasing A2AD.

So those are the big things, maintaining our readiness, as well as preparing forward. Let me just simply tell you this, there's two areas that I brief to all the time in this business. One is our systems need to be reliable. When you can no longer assure reliability, you need to do what? Replace.

Everything has its life span, to include us. Reliability, we get a vote in that. You and I get to vote on that.

The next piece that I brief to is survivability of the weapons system. We need to make sure that I can guarantee the combatant commanders and the president of the United States, when called on, that the weapons we deliver will hit its intended target with a high degree of probability. It will survive everything between it and the target. Guess who gets a vote on that? The enemy. So we're working that piece.

So when I can't assure reliability and survivability, my job as a force provider is to tell people what our requirements are and what the consequences will be when we can't achieve those two things. That's the simple part.

The third part is the will to use the weapon. Those are beyond my level. That's the policy decision-makers responsibility.

So those are some of the challenges that we have with readiness and modernization. I call them challenges. We're working. Right now I report every day. We're performing splendidly achieving the missions, but there is going to be a time when we have some tough decisions that we're going to have to make today and into the new decade as we get ready for the 2020s.

We've talked about airmen. I'm not going to go into those priorities. I could talk all day about the priorities we have for our airmen and our families. I will just simply tell you it is the chief and my belief that we recruit airmen, we retain families. Happy airmen are productive airmen. Unhappy airmen will bring their unhappiness to the workplace and that can degrade mission effectiveness.

One of the things that can make airmen unhappy is when their families are having challenges. So we care about where our airmen live, where their children go to school, what kind of medical care they receive, and what is their overall quality of life. Those are the four areas that chief Williams and I and the commanders in this command try to concentrate and do our best to make sure those four areas are high on our list.

I talked about the profession of arms and adherence to our core values. What we're really trying to do is inject and inspire our airmen to do the right thing. So those are the priorities.

With that, I think this is a great segue, Peter, to maybe taking some questions. I'll open the floor to you. I could go on and on, but I'd just as soon answer questions. Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: General Rand, could you repeat the question, as we're taping this?

GEN. RAND: Sure.

MR. PAT HOST: I'm Pat Host with Defense Daily. How much closer are we to having a solicitation document release for the UH-1N replacement?

GEN. RAND: Again, I'm the force provider. I'm not the acquirer, so I'm not the right person to answer that question but I have an opinion. I just want to make it clear, if you really want that answer you need to go to our acquisition folks in OSD.

We have given the requirements that are consolidated requirements shared by Air Force Global Strike Command, Air Mobility Command, Air Education and Training Command and Pacific Command, because they're the ones who all own the UH-1Ns. We have given our requirements to the SAF-AQ, the Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition. They have the requirements. There's a consensus on what we need. A decision has been made that we're going to go to open competition. What the next step will be is to release a request for proposals that we then share with industry and we start the competition. I'm hoping that we're talking weeks, not months before that gets released, but I don't have the control on when that will be done.

MR. HOST: What are some of the important requirements you want out of it?

GEN. RAND: What our requirements are is to meet Strategic Command's requirements, and that has to do with range, suitable range. We have two requirements on our missile fields. We escort the convoys when we're moving the nuclear warheads from the launch facility to the base or back. There's a very elaborate detailed ground convoy that I'm not going to go into the details on, as well as an airborne piece of that,

that provides the security that goes with that. We have a lot of movements, more movements than you would probably want to know about, as we maintain and perform the maintenance that's required on these systems. That's requirement one, to do convoy.

The other requirement we have is to be able to provide an alert requirement to get people out. We've had to do some mitigation because of some of the limitations on range, some of the limitations on payload to meet Strategic Command requirements. So the requirements we turned in are to make sure that this new platform can perform those stated requirements without the mitigations that we've had to employ. The mitigations are safe, that we've taken, and they're secure, but they're not as efficient as we'd like them to be, because we could free up some manpower if we had a better helicopter.

I want to foot stomp that. Our missile fields are safe and secure. The job being performed by the UH-1N crews is nothing short of extraordinary. Do you understand that? But it is time to replace that airplane with one that can go faster, that can fly farther, that can have a larger payload on it, so that I can get out of some of the work-arounds that we've had to do. So that's what our requirements will spell out and have spelled out.

MR. HANS KRISTENSEN: Hans Kristensen, I have a question about the transition from the B-52 to the B-21. Could you talk about the long-range force levels for nuclear, up to 60 bombers that are allowable under New START, and when will you reach that transition?

GEN. RAND: He asked about the transition. It's very premature to talk about the order of what we'll transition when we bring the B-21 onboard. We're looking to field our first B-21s in or around about the mid-2020s. That's kind of the marker. You realize, we don't have a single one built yet. I say that very, very conservatively.

The transition hasn't been decided yet. So don't make the assumption the B-21 is going to replace the B-52s right off the bat. That would be an erroneous assumption on anyone's part at this time.

MR. : I'm with Air Force Magazine, before you took your command there was a lot of problems with -- concerns about the missiles, the morale and all that. The Air Force took a lot of steps to try to improve that. How would you appraise the status of morale of your missile force?

GEN. RAND: He asked how I would appraise the moral of the missile crews that are in Air Force Global Strike Command. I'm sensitive to be the one that would make that judgment. I'd tell you, I spend a lot of time -- I've been to every base now in Air Force Global Strike Command. I've been to several of them more than once.

I've been out to the missile fields. I've spent time in the launch control centers. I've been out to launch facilities. I've been on the flight lines. I've had commander calls. I've had breakfasts. This is first and foremost.

Let me tell you how I judge morale. I judge morale by mission effectiveness, in large measure. Our airmen are performing spectacularly. Those that I talk to are proud of the job they do, and they want to be a part of something bigger and better than themselves. They want to know that what they do is making a difference, that they make a difference. Our job is to make sure we are explaining to them that they do make a difference and our job is to organize them appropriately. Our job is to resource them appropriately. If we do the organize, resourcing, training and equipping piece properly, they'll be motivated. Do you understand that?

So what I am concentrating on is making sure we've organized training and are equipping our men and women. I don't care if they're missileers, bombers, chefs, flipping out towels at the fitness center, I need to make sure they're organized, trained and equipped properly. And where ever they are, the morale is great.

Does that make sense? And when we're taking care of the airmen and we're teaching them about the profession of arms and indoctrinating them into our core values, and we're trying to motivate them with our rich heritage, and we're taking care of their quality of life and their families, we've got very motivated airmen. So it's not the airmen's job to be motivated, it's my job and the leaders in this command, to ensure that we're doing our part. So we're working hard at that. I'll let someone else judge that when I've completed as the Air Force Global Strike Commander.

MR. : (Off mic) -- development of boost hypersonic weapons -- (off mic)?

GEN. RAND: Where do we see hypersonic weapons? I got a 2.4 GPA in college and I can't spell hypersonic. What I know about is it's great technology, that's an emerging technology, and I think we should spend due time and interest in it. At the fringes that I've been exposed to it I think it has great potential to be something that we want to pursue, as our potential adversaries are pursuing. We'll leave it at that for now. This would not be a forum to talk about hypersonic technology.

MR. HUESSY: Two options have been proposed on the triad. One is, we get rid of Minuteman and the second is we get rid of the long-range strike option for the bomber. Would you address from the point of view of requirements and delivering your mission, what the impact would be of doing either of those or both of them?

GEN. RAND: The question was, what's the impact if we postponed or cancelled -- and in essence you'd be talking about postponing or canceling at least two-thirds of the two legs of the triad? For our B-52s, the only nuclear capability you have is the ALCM, the Air-Launched Cruise Missile. And for the Minuteman III, if you cancel that you're canceling the ICBM. Those are policy decisions that would have to be made above my level.

What I would tell you is that the lifespan of the Minuteman III is coming to an end. If the decision is made that we need to keep that as one of the legs of the triad, we

need to modernize it, because of reliability and survivability. I've been very vocal and clear about that. So GBSB, to me, is critical if we're going to continue to maintain, sustain and employ a land-based nuclear capability.

If we are going to employ an air-breathing capability, nuclear capability, I cannot imagine why we would not want to have an air-launched cruise missile capability. For survivability, for the places it can go, for the reliability, for all the benefits of why we've had an air-launched cruise missile capability for the last 50 years, I could not imagine why we'd want to walk away from that. It gives the president tremendous flexibility and options. Plus, that is the capability in this ever-increasing A2AD environment, that I think increases the likelihood that the weapon will get where it's intended to go. I've got a lot of combat experience, folks, flying over the top of a target in a high threat environment. It's not fun. If you can avoid that, you would want to do that every time.

(Laughter).

Does that make sense? General Deptula, would you concur?

(Laughter).

You can say you did it once and you got your adrenaline good, but I don't think anyone, no matter how brave or bold they are, think that dodging surface to air missiles is sport. It's a deadly serious business. So, did I remotely answer your question?

MR. HUESSY: Yes.

GEN. RAND: So I think the question -- sometimes we get the cart in front of the horse. The issue is, do we need a long-range standoff capability for our airborne, air-breathing Air Force in the nuclear arena? If the answer is yes to that, then we need to replace the ALCM and we need an LRSO. It's simple. If the question is, do we need a land-based nuclear part of the triad, and the answer is yes, then it's simple to me that we've got to replace and modernize what we currently have.

MR. HUESSY: Do you think the answer should be yes?

GEN. RAND: The answer to both those questions is that, as a requirements person, the force provider, I'm having an increasing difficulty maintaining the reliability and survivability of employing those two weapons systems.

MR. COLIN CLARKE: Good morning, General, Colin Clarke of Breaking Defense.

GEN. RAND: Hi, Colin, nice to see you again.

MR. CLARKE: Likewise. The B-21, there have been some questions about numbers. Where are we?

GEN. RAND: Sure, in an unclassified I can tell you right now we have 156 bombers in our inventory. Ninety-six are combat coded. Don't get hung up about the 96 because if the stuff hit the fan we'll bring out all stops, okay? I told you the ages of them. I have been clear in my remarks, when asked to give my best military advise, that we draw the line at a minimum of 100 B-21s, not a single one below that. Where I haven't been clear is where the ceiling is on that, because we're working our way through that.

But I've been very clear about where the floor should be. Other people might see that differently, but that's where the Air Force Global Strike Commander and his advice and his opinion and everything that I know, is I've been very clear about we need a minimum of 100, and we are working through what should that ceiling be. There will be some composition of that with the current existing bombers that we have. But I can't imagine how I can do the combatant commander's missions -- and I have more than Admiral Haney's to do -- I cannot imagine how we can do it with fewer bombers than we currently have in today's inventory.

I don't see -- and I look in the crystal ball like you do -- and I don't see the world looking a lot differently 30 years from now in requirements where we would want to have that long-range strike capability. That's my opinion.

MR. CORTNEY ALBON: Courtney Albon with Inside the Air Force. Admiral Benedict recently said that one of the cultural challenges to commonality between the SLBM and GBSD is that both services are really good at doing what they do. I wonder if you could talk about what the challenges are you see with commonality?

GEN. RAND: I don't want to get into the commonality debate. We're stating our requirements. We provide those requirements to the acquisition community and they come up with the form of competition that's going to be chosen. So you can talk to Admiral Benedict more, you can talk to the Air Force acquirers. I state the requirements. That's what this team at Air Force Global Strike does.

MR. PHIL SWARTS: Phil Swarts with the Air Force Times. To follow up on the personnel side, what's the status of, I think it was a three year temporary duty rotation for some of the missile airmen?

GEN. RAND: Very good, what's the status of the missile career field duty? This is a great question. They're called 13Ns, for our officers, that are missile crew members. I don't want to give you a long history lesson on this but historically we over-assessed our 13Ns, our missileers.

We brought more in than we needed to sustain that throughout their career of 15 to 20 years. Let's pick 20 years. So many of them would come in and perform three years on a missile field and then not career broaden but cross flow and leave the community never to return. A way, way larger number than anything that I've seen in my 37 years in the Air Force.

It took me all of one week to realize that that's not the right way to do business. This is tied to the question of good morale, finding yourself, feeling that you have a mission that's important. I want to normalize the 13N and instead of cross flowing we'll assess fewer, but those that we bring in will stay in the career field.

Now that doesn't mean that they'll do 12 years at Minot, Malmstrom and FE Warren. They will become like all lieutenants and captains are, expected to get really good at their job. This is much more complicated than what anyone thinks. If anyone thinks all they do is sit there and their only job is to be a robot when someone calls them and they turn a switch, you're sadly mistaken.

The complexity of what it takes to be a 13N. It is a very, very challenging, stressful job and we want them to get really good at that. We want them to go from deputies to mission crew commanders to flight commanders to instructors, all the normal progression that we expect of our other operators in the Air Force. At a certain point, after they've done that, we will career broaden them to other areas in the Air Force where we can tap into their nuclear expertise, and we'll have them do that.

And then what we would like to do is bring them back to our missile wings at the 12 to 15 year point so we can have them become the leaders of those organizations. And then they will do what all the other operators would do, have opportunities as majors or lieutenant colonels, to be commanders of the organizations, to lead the men and women that are charged with the day-to-day duties. And then after that, they will continue to career broaden much like I did in my career. The best of those will rise through the ranks and they will become our operations group commanders, our wing commanders, and truly the best -- presumably the best -- will be selected for general officer in the major command positions.

That's what we envision for our 13Ns. They deserve that. Frankly, that has never been a path afforded them. Candidly, we're fixing that, but it is not a light switch. I can't flush it overnight, so this is going to take us on a path that's going to take a few years to get to. A very long answer to your question, but we're committed to that and we're going to get there.

What we're going to do is we won't assess as many initially into the career field, but the beauty of it is what we're going to see between a squadron commander and that lieutenant, we're going to have a nice blend of experience up and down throughout the squadron. In recent years past, you would have young lieutenants and not much between them and their boss. That is not how the Air Force organizes. That is not how we train and that is not how we equip in other career fields, and we're going to fix that.

Did I answer your question?

MR. SWARTS: Thank you.

GEN. RAND: I want to circle back on the commonality. I didn't mean to be short with it. I believe it makes sense where appropriate for us to strive, of course, where it makes sense to strive for commonality. But it is an acquisition challenge. I'm the requirements person. I'm the requirement guy.

MS. CAROLINE JOHNSON (ph): Hi, Caroline Johnson -- (off mic) -- a totally different question. What would you imply from -- (off mic) -- upcoming civilian and service members as the top priority so that we can best carry on this mission -- (off mic).

GEN. RAND: What's the top priority?

MS. JOHNSON: Yes.

GEN. RAND: One, I just can pick one?

(Laughter).

Again, I'm not dodging the question. I guess maybe I didn't do very good here the last 30 minutes because our priorities are the mission, airmen, families, our core values and our heritage. Within the airmen or the mission piece -- and by the way, all those priorities are linked. You can't separate mission and airmen, can you? You can't. We can't separate families from that. You can't separate the profession of arms from doing the mission.

But I think the top -- within those priorities -- are readiness and that we need to make sure that the nuclear enterprise and our long-range strike, nuclear and conventional, is capable to be reliable and survivable as we go into what I believe is an ever-increasing A2AD environment. So that's the priority that I think that I have to advocate for the most in my tenure as this commander.

The systems like all -- how many of you drive 55 year old cars, other than maybe on a Saturday and you're one of the classics out there? Who does that? Who drives a 30 year old car, typically? So I'm not pooh-poohing these systems.

And by the way -- last thing, Peter, I know I'm getting hooked -- our guys and gals have done a good job and we're not out of the woods. Just because something is old doesn't mean it can't be reliable and survivable. But there's monies and dollars that have to be spent to do that as well, and we're doing that and we're doing that where we can. But some of these systems simply need to be replaced. Some of them still we can sustain and maintain. Some of them need to be replaced.

Questions on that? Over to you. Thank you for the opportunity brag about our men and women in the Air Force Global Strike Command.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: Thank you to our sponsors, to our embassy guests. Thank you for our Air Force cadets that are here. Thank you for our military service officers, a couple of Navy people, that are here.

Again, thank you, General Rand, very much for your very impressive remarks. General Deptula, thank you also for being here and introducing. All of you, I'll see you tomorrow with John Harvey. On August 4th we will be here with General Weinstein.

Thank you all very much.