Statement of Hon. Michael Vickers,
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict, and Interdependent Capabilities
before
The House Armed Services Committee
Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

February 27, 2008

Opening Remarks

Chairwoman Tauscher, Congressman Everett, and Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

I welcome the opportunity to describe our progress in transforming the nation's strategic capabilities to meet 21st century security challenges. I know that you understand the importance of this effort, and I want to thank the members of the subcommittee for your support. Successful transformation of our strategic capabilities will require a sustained partnership between the Department of Defense and the Congress.

Implementing the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)

As you know, the NPR determined that the Cold War Triad of nuclear strike systems is not adequate to address the range of potential challenges in the new security environment. Accordingly, the NPR established a New Triad possessing broader capabilities, including offensive strike systems (nuclear, non-nuclear, and non-kinetic); defenses (active and passive); and a revitalized defense infrastructure, supported by enhanced Command and Control, Intelligence, and adaptive planning capabilities. Though not explicitly addressed in the NPR,

capabilities in the areas of space and Information Operations are clearly among those needed to meet current and future security challenges.

We have had mixed progress to date in fielding these capabilities. We have had significant success in achieving an initial capability to defend the United States against the emerging long-range ballistic missile threat from North Korea and the Middle East, and in fielding defenses to protect U.S. deployed forces and those of our coalition partners. Much more challenging has been the effort to sustain nuclear force capabilities and revitalize the nuclear infrastructure, and to develop a prompt, non-nuclear global strike capability.

Nuclear Forces and a Responsive Infrastructure

We continue to draw down the number of operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads, as well as our supporting stockpile of non-deployed warheads, to the lowest level consistent with our national security requirements and commitment to allies. That said, nuclear forces remain the ultimate deterrent capability that supports U.S. national security. Even as they decline in numbers, nuclear weapons are an essential and enduring element of the New Triad, and they underpin these New Triad capabilities in a fundamental way.

The extended nuclear deterrence commitment the United States provides is key to assuring allies and friends of the credibility of U.S. security commitments. U.S. nuclear weapons deter potential adversaries from the threat or use of weapons of mass destruction against the United States, its deployed forces, and its allies and friends. In the absence of this “nuclear umbrella,” some

non-nuclear allies of the United States might perceive a need to develop and deploy their own nuclear capability.

At present, the United States is the only recognized nuclear weapons state that does not have the ability to produce new nuclear weapons in quantity. Accordingly, the lives of existing warhead types are being extended through refurbishment. Successive programs to extend the service life of the current inventory of warheads, however, can decrease our confidence in their performance as these warheads deviate from their baseline designs validated using nuclear test data.

Our long-term goal is to rely more on a revived infrastructure and less on the non-deployed warhead stockpile to respond to unforeseen events. We seek replacement of existing warheads with Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRW) of comparable capability to our current weapons that would be less sensitive to manufacturing tolerances or to aging of materials. They would be certifiable without nuclear testing, and have advanced safety and security features that can not be built into our current weapons.

Safety and security take on enhanced importance in the post-9/11 world. While our current systems are safe and secure, RRW will incorporate improved, state-of-the-art safety and security features that will reduce still further any chance of unauthorized use.

The desired size of a responsive nuclear infrastructure, measured in terms of the number of warheads it could produce or refurbish per year, would depend on a number of key variables; but once RRWs are deployed in significant

numbers, many of the warheads now retained in the stockpile as a hedge against reliability problems could be retired. Until a truly responsive nuclear infrastructure is operational, however, the United States will need to retain an appropriate inventory of non-deployed warheads to manage geopolitical, technical and operational risks. The Department will soon provide a white paper, *National Security and Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*, discussing the considerations behind U.S. requirements for nuclear weapons in greater detail. This paper will help inform the Nuclear Posture Review to take place next year.

Non-Nuclear Prompt Global Strike

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review highlighted an important gap in prompt, long-range conventional (non-nuclear) strike capabilities. Land-based conventional forces, such as fighter and bomber aircraft, could take hours to days to deploy and strike a target. Prompt Global Strike capabilities may be needed for time-sensitive operations such as interdicting the transfer of WMD to terrorists, or preventing a rogue state from launching a ballistic missile armed with a WMD payload. Today, nuclear-armed ballistic missiles are the only means the United States possesses for engaging distant, fleeting targets promptly (within about an hour from the time of an execution decision).

Last year, in response to our request for funding for the Conventional Trident Modification (CTM) program, the Congress appropriated funds for research and development of technologies that could be applied to a wider range of concepts that might provide a prompt, non-nuclear, global strike capability. I

want to thank the Members of this Subcommittee for your support of Prompt Global Strike. DoD accordingly will continue to develop and propose options to expand the range of our strategic capabilities in this area.

Missile Defense Capabilities

Missile defense remains a top priority for the Administration. Missile defenses constitute an essential element of our overall national security strategy to dissuade and deter states of concern from acquiring or using ballistic missiles, and to protect our citizens from the threat of missile attack should deterrence fail. We greatly appreciate the strong support this subcommittee has provided toward developing and procuring this critical capability.

We continue to make good progress in providing an initial capability to protect our population and territory against the emerging long-range ballistic missile threat from North Korea and the Middle East. At the same time, through deployment of Aegis SM-3 and PAC-3 systems, and continued development of THAAD and the airborne laser, we are ensuring we can protect our forward deployed forces and those of our coalition partners against shorter-range missile threats.

We have already seen the benefits of the initial defense against long-range missiles when we activated the system during the North Korean ballistic missile tests in July of 2006. The capability to engage a missile launched in the direction of the United States allowed U.S. leaders to consider a wider range of options than would have otherwise been available. This capability also serves to

devalue any future North Korean attempt to use its missiles to threaten or coerce the United States.

International Missile Defense Cooperation

The United States is committed to working with allies and friends to strengthen our collective capabilities to deal with the dangers of WMD and ballistic missiles. Our largest missile defense cooperation partner is Japan. Facing a direct threat from North Korean missiles, Japan is acquiring both Aegis SM-3 interceptors and PAC-3 batteries. Japan achieved a major milestone in December 2007, when its destroyer KONGO successfully intercepted a ballistic missile target with an SM-3 interceptor – a first for an allied naval vessel. In March 2007, Japan deployed its first PAC-3 firing unit, which together with the KONGO affords the Japanese a layered capability to defend against ballistic missiles. With Japan, the United States is co-developing the SM-3 Block IIA interceptor, a more capable version of the current sea-based interceptor, and we are developing operational plans to share information and to integrate our systems more effectively.

Another important area of missile defense cooperation is our work with Israel. We continue to cooperate on the Arrow missile defense system and have begun to explore with Israel options for addressing ballistic missile threats that exceed the Arrow's defensive capability. An important component of our missile defense cooperation is an ambitious bilateral exercise program over the next two

years that will realistically test our joint capability to address ballistic missile threats.

European Missile Defense Sites

In January 2007, the President directed us to proceed with negotiations on basing U.S. missile defense elements in Poland and the Czech Republic. These defenses are intended to counter the emerging threat both to the United States and to friends and allies in Europe posed by Iranian development of longer-range ballistic missiles. We have had several rounds of negotiations with Poland on a draft agreement to base ground-based missile defense interceptors on its territory. These sessions have been productive, and we have made good progress on a draft text. While the new Polish government has emphasized its position that the agreement should result in a net benefit to Poland's security, it recognizes the growing ballistic missile threat to Europe and the contribution these missile defense assets can make to NATO security.

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In parallel, we have had a number of rounds of negotiations with the Czech Republic on an agreement to base a missile defense tracking radar on its territory. These talks have also made great progress and we are in the process of addressing a small number of issues that, once resolved, will allow us to finalize the draft text. Czech officials have shared our commitment to concluding these agreements, while at the same time ensuring that U.S. missile defense assets in Europe will be interoperable with, and complementary, to ongoing NATO missile defense efforts.

Missile Defense at NATO

In addition to pursuing bilateral cooperation programs in missile defense, we are working within NATO on the Alliance's response to the growing ballistic missile threat. We are pleased with the progress being made in the NATO Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense (ALTBMD) program, which will provide the Alliance's deployed forces a defense against short- and medium-range missiles.

To protect the indivisibility of Allied security, it is important for the rest of the Alliance to be protected against ballistic missile attack. NATO Heads of State and Government recognized the technical feasibility of missile defense at the 2006 Riga Summit, and NATO continues to make progress in this area. While the planned U.S. sites in Poland and the Czech Republic will be important contributions to Allied security, these elements will not protect Allies in southeastern Europe from shorter-range ballistic missile threats. It is our hope that at the Bucharest summit in April, the Alliance will be in a position to recognize the growing missile threat; support territorial defense as a means of addressing that threat; and welcome the contribution that European-based U.S. missile defense assets will make in protecting most Allies against long-range ballistic missiles. NATO also continues to cooperate with Russia in the NATO-Russia Council on Theater Missile Defense, and we have expressed our willingness to work with Russia on broader Missile Defense in the NATO context.

Missile Defense Cooperation with Russia

Because we are building a new security relationship with Russia whose foundation does not rest on the prospect of mutual annihilation, and because we believe that Russia also faces an emerging ballistic missile threat from states such as Iran, we have invited Russia to join us in a cooperative effort to pursue missile defense.

U.S. and Russian missile defense experts have met a number of times over the last year to share intelligence assessments of the Iranian ballistic missile program; discuss transparency and confidence building measures that could address Russia's concerns about our planned missile defenses in Europe; and seek ways in which we could work jointly with Russia to address ballistic missile threats. We have proposed cooperation in such areas as modeling and simulation; sharing of early-warning data; building a joint regional missile defense architecture; and conducting joint exercises and wargames. Missile defense also featured prominently in last October's "2+2" meeting in Moscow, where Secretaries Gates and Rice discussed a number of strategic issues with their Russian counterparts. We remain committed to showing through our continued discussions, and through our concrete proposals, our sincere desire to work with Russia to address an emerging threat that affects us all while demonstrating that our missile defense program poses no threat to Russia.

Space Capabilities

We rely on services provided by space capabilities in all facets of our daily lives, and these capabilities are vital to our national security and the global economy. At the same time, potential adversaries continue to seek means to counter the advantages we obtain from space and to use space capabilities against us. Our space capabilities face a wide range of threats such as radio frequency jamming, laser blinding, and anti-satellite systems, including the anti-satellite capability demonstrated by China last year. In this regard, we are working to assess the strategic implications of such counter-space capabilities for our vital interests in space, and are carefully factoring the results of our assessments into our architecture planning efforts and investment priorities.

U.S. National Space Policy is based on a number of long-standing principles. The U.S. rejects claims of sovereignty by any nation over space; rejects limitations on the fundamental right to operate in or acquire data from space; and retains the right of free passage through and operations in space without interference. Consistent with these principles, the U.S. views purposeful interference with its space systems as an infringement on its rights and will take those actions necessary to preserve its freedom of action in space.

U.S. National Space Policy directs the Secretary of Defense to develop capabilities, plans, and options to ensure freedom of action in space, and if directed, to deny such freedom of action to adversaries. The Department's investment strategy for space and space-related activities seeks to balance a number of requirements. We need to: modernize space situational awareness

capabilities to ensure ample warning of hostile acts; improve protection plans to ensure required capabilities are available in a contested space environment; develop architectural solutions, including Operationally Responsive Space concepts, to ensure capabilities are available when needed; establish an operations posture, to include appropriate planning and exercises, to respond to attacks on U.S. space interests; and ensure the ability to deny adversaries the use of space capabilities to harm our forces or our homeland.

The Department of Defense further implements our National Space Policy by supporting efforts to promote safe and responsible use of space. We seek mutually beneficial international cooperation on space activities, and support commercial and foreign space surveillance needs to ensure safe space operations. DoD seeks to promote compliance with existing legal regimes, acceptance of international debris mitigation guidelines, and development of additional voluntary guidelines for safe and responsible space operations. We also do our best to protect mutual security interests related to dual-use space technology and services.

Information Operations and Cyberspace

Providing our Combatant Commanders the capability to integrate into their planning the various elements of Information Operations – computer network operations, electronic warfare, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security – has become even more important in the information age. Our potential adversaries, both nation-states and non-state actors, continue to

seek ways and means to counter the advantages we obtain from our use of information, and to turn those same advantages against us in both conventional and an unconventional ways. We are assessing the strategic implications of our potential adversaries' capabilities in this regard, and factoring those results into our planning and investment priorities for information operations.

We are continuing to develop deterrence strategies to address potential adversaries' attempts to counter our information advantages. We are working closely with our interagency partners, to define this domain in terms that will allow us to scope the missions that we will be asked to conduct. This domain crosses the physical boundaries within which we operate -- space, air, land, and sea -- as well as the organizational boundaries – military, civil and commercial -- making this a complex problem. It is imperative that we understand our roles, both active and supporting, so as to provide the best possible options for the nation.

The ability to operate freely within cyberspace is critical to military operations and U.S. national security, but the threats to our computer networks are real and growing. Numerous organizations, such as the Joint Task Force-Global Network Operations, the Defense Information Systems Agency, U.S. Strategic Command, and the National Security Agency's Information Assurance Directorate are working together to defend our Global Information Grid. But while these significant resources and effort are devoted to defending our computer networks against attempted intrusions on a daily basis, technology changes, and

so do the threats. We recognize that this will be a long-term effort, and while much remains to be done in this area, we are making progress.

Conclusion

Transformation of our nation's strategic capabilities to meet the uncertainties and challenges ahead depends critically on a sustained partnership between the Department of Defense and the Congress. We need to continue the progress on missile defense; sustain our nuclear capabilities through the RRW program and revitalization of the nuclear infrastructure; develop and deploy a conventional, prompt Global Strike capability; ensure continuity of service of our space systems as we recapitalize and modernize these capabilities; and protect our ability to operate freely within the information environment while preventing adversary use of information against our interests. I look forward to working with you to achieve these goals.