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SAC 20th Reunion Anniversary
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES M. KOWALSKI
2 JUNE 2012

Thank you, Robb (*Lt Col, retired, Robb Hoover, SAC Veterans and Symposium Chairman*), for that introduction. It's a great honor to be in the midst of so many distinguished former Strategic Air Command members.

I first became a member of the order of the mailed fist in 1981 when I went through B-52D model training....I wore that patch proudly, and while I may have envied the exotic, and warmer, postings of our brothers in Tactical Air Command, I had no doubt the most important mission of our nation's military was being executed by Airmen posted to the Northern Tier—at bases like Minot, Kincheloe, K.I. Sawyer, Grand Forks, and Wurtsmith.

We are all familiar with the tumultuous and exhilarating history of the end of the Cold War. In June of 1987, in a speech at the Brandenburg Gate, President Ronald Reagan challenged Mikhail Gorbachev, then the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, with these words:



We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!

By November of 1989, the gates were opened, and the wall—figuratively and literally, came down.

Following the aborted coup against Soviet President Gorbachev in August 1991, President Bush, in a speech to the nation on September 27th, ordered the destruction of all American ground-based tactical nuclear weapons and withdrawal of sea-based tactical nukes. He also directed all Air Force strategic bombers and 450 Minuteman II missiles taken off alert. Mobile U.S. ICBM programs were halted—as was the AGM-131 nuclear short-range attack missile.



Within two weeks, Gorbachev responded in kind...and on Christmas Day 1991, the Soviet Union was officially dissolved. The Cold War was over.

There was another historic arc being played out at the same time. An arc that was less understood but even more visible since it was seen on millions of televisions across the world. Americans watched as stealth aircraft dropped precision weapons, and saw their screens fill with the exact aimpoint calculated thousands of miles away. The experience of Operation DESERT STORM and the rapidly evolving applications of technology—optics, materials, smaller and faster computer processing, pointed to an exponential increase in the capability of conventional forces. DESERT STORM's display of stealth, precision, and information technology soon got its own name—the Revolution in Military Affairs

These two forces—the end of the Cold War and the Revolution in Military Affairs, converged and led to a deep restructuring of Nuclear forces...and the once pre-eminent nuclear deterrent mission was forced to compete with more compelling, and more likely, conventional missions. With each operation—PROVIDE COMFORT, SOUTHERN



WATCH, ALLIED FORCE, DESERT STRIKE—we get better at using conventional forces, and the role of our nuclear deterrent force seemed increasingly irrelevant in this new unipolar world. And as the traditional conflicts to topple regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq became irregular warfare, the migration of attention and resources away from nuclear deterrence to more pressing needs accelerated. The normal attrition of personnel steeped in the culture of SAC, combined with chronic under-resourcing, high operations tempo, and demands to train to emerging missions had eroded the expertise, professionalism, and discipline of our nuclear and dual-capable forces. Case in point: the 2007 unauthorized weapons transfer from Minot to Barksdale, followed less than a year later by the discovery of the 2006 mis-shipment of Mk-21 warhead fuzes to Taiwan. Admiral Donald's report stated those two incidents were: "indicative of an overall decline in Air Force nuclear weapons stewardship, a problem that has been identified but not effectively addressed for over a decade. Both the Minot-Barksdale nuclear weapons transfer incident and the Taiwan mis-shipment, while different in specifics, have a common origin: the gradual erosion of



nuclear standards and a lack of effective oversight by Air Force leadership.”

Against the backdrop of our own organizational struggles, the world was catching up. The uni-polar dominance of the US in the 1990’s gave way to talk of a multi-polar world as China’s economy passed Japan as the world’s second largest GDP, and Russia, flush with energy money, was restructuring and restoring her nuclear and conventional forces.

Recognizing the need to restore accountability and authority, and the value of nuclear deterrence, in October 2008, Secretary Donley announced the stand-up of Air Force Global Strike Command. The first all-new Air Force Major Command in 27 years was activated in August 2009, and declared fully operational in September 2010.

The command now stands at 23,000 people across 6 wings and 2 numbered air forces responsible for nuclear deterrence and global strike ops...1100 Airmen are deployed to missile fields in support of USSTRATCOM; another 1300 Airmen are deployed worldwide in support of geographic COCOMs.



Our command proudly activated with the lineage of SAC, and more importantly seeks to restore a culture where every Airman embraces the special trust and responsibility of nuclear weapons. That culture is different because the nuclear mission is different—the most powerful weapons in our arsenal, they are weapons of strategy and statecraft and underpin our national power—military and diplomatic. Majors and Master Sergeants talk about 2,000 pound bombs; Senators and Secretaries of Defense talk about nuclear weapons. This mission demands perfection.

SHOW COMMAND VIDEO

Over the last two years our focus on restoring this culture meant increased leadership attention—establishing metrics, governance structures, battle rhythms...training staff, inspectors, commanders and senior NCOs. We are also focused on advocating for resources, and prioritizing the people and dollars we have. We've made a measurable difference: Status of Training and Resources System (SORTS) rates improved 24 percent since initial operating capability (IOC); we reduced security deviations 23 percent; we even won the AF level award for the



Major Command with best maintenance and logistics metrics—the Gen Wilbur Creech Maintenance Award. We established programs to deliberately develop nuclear-career officers, enlisted, and civilians and worked with Air Education and Training Command and the Air Force Institute of Technology to create advanced nuclear courses and graduate certificate programs. Recently, we’ve continued operational consolidation with the transfer of munitions squadrons from Air Force Material Command, a realignment that provides unity of effort, efficiencies, and standardized processes.

And we’ve restored competition with our annual Global Strike Challenge, similar to the “bomb comps” and “missile comps” many of you remember.

While we’ve made progress in restoring a culture where every airman embraces the special trust and responsibility of nuclear weapons, we can’t turn our backs on the significant strides we’ve made in our bomber conventional mission, and in the readiness of our force while supporting regional joint commanders in a wide range of missions. Since DESERT STORM, our bomber forces have grown exponentially more capable as a



result of the advances made in stealth, precision, smart munitions, targeting pods, and the application of information technologies.

Since Operation ALLIED FORCE, bombers with precision munitions have executed strikes in every major military operation. Almost 11 years ago, B-2s from the 509th Bomb Wing kick-started Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. For the next decade B-1s and B-52s have been continuously deployed to support regional COCOMs in conventional operations. And just last year, B-1s and B-2s responded when our nation called against the Gadhafi regime in Operation ODYSSEY DAWN, striking 45 hardened shelters in Libya while executing the first global strike combat action for USSTRATCOM.

In Afghanistan we continue to rely on the payload and persistence bombers provide when they're deploying forward. Just a few weeks ago the B-1s reached a milestone -- their 10,000th combat sortie. We use bombers across a range of military operations from information operations to close air support to offensive counter-air to strategic attack. As we pivot to the Pacific and refocus on power projection, the role of our bombers will remain central to bringing the threat of mass



precision and persistence to support the regional combatant commanders.

But in both conventional and nuclear missions, we're challenged with an aging force and the associated problems of corrosion, declining industrial base, vanishing vendors, overseas components, and rising depot costs. Taken together, these serve to complicate the long-term challenge of balancing sustainment with modernization during a period of budget austerity.

The Minuteman III came online in 1970 with an expected life span of 10 years...now planned to be in service until 2030...50 years beyond its designed life; yet it still maintains a 99% alert rate. We are focused on sustainment programs such as: replacement boosters, upgraded environmental controls, modernized security and support equipment, and special purpose vehicle procurement. Fiscal year 2013 fully funds fuze replacement initiatives in partnership the U.S. Navy, a new transporter erector, and the next solid rocket motor program.

To counter the deferral of a replacement helicopter for the 40-yr-old UH-1N, we transferred three helicopters from the U.S. Marine Corps



and we are reviewing affordable force structure, mission, and safety upgrades to the fleet. Those stop-gap measures don't negate the need for a replacement...the UH-1N is deficient in payload, speed, and range, and is unable to meet nuclear security or national Continuity of Government, Continuity of Operations mission requirements. It's not a matter of if we get a replacement helicopter, it's really an issue of when we can afford to replace the UH-1.

We are also working to enhance our current force of B-52s...an airframe that is 50 years old...to ensure it is viable through 2040.

Several upgrades are in the works: better software for the advanced targeting pod, and weapons bay modernization to allow full carriage of smart weapons, a 66% increase in payload. We're restructuring the combat network communications technology (CONNECT) program to determine a way forward to address the need for a digital backbone; and due to affordability and performance issues, we've deferred two programs: the strategic radar and the advanced satellite communications upgrade.

Our B-2s, a 30-yr-old design, remain funded for defensive systems upgrades and a weapons computer upgrade. We've terminated the



second phase of the B-2 EHF SATCOM program in favor of a more affordable VLF/LF solution to ensure survivable communications in all environments.

On the weapons side, the B-61 tail kit needed to integrate with the life extension of the warhead is fully funded, as is the life extension of the air launched cruise missile through 2020 with partial funding through 2030.

These upgrade and life extensions efforts won't ensure our nation retains a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent force. We're living with the results of a 20 year procurement holiday and must move forward with several key programs. At the heart of our modernization efforts is the long range strike family of systems--a new penetrating bomber, a new stand-off nuclear cruise missile, a conventional prompt global strike capability, and a replacement for the Minuteman III.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, we will have a safe, secure, and effective arsenal. With the end of the Cold War, our need for strategic stability endured. Today, thanks to your success, our Cold Warriors, we live in a world without the imminent danger of our ideological conflict with the Soviet Union. But the need for deterrence did not go



away, and the challenges of modern deterrence are not simpler -- they are much more complex. Nuclear deterrence, especially at lower numbers of weapons, is a force more sensitive to risks such as technical surprise, disruptive technologies, or rapid geo-political shift. It's world where the role of smaller nuclear powers becomes more significant, and the extended deterrence that has served our non-proliferation goals for fifty years becomes fragile as our commitment and credibility are questioned. A world where the value of the Triad increases. It is also a world where emerging non-nuclear capabilities and domains create a dynamic we don't fully understand. We've had 67 years of peace between major powers, and we have seen the de-escalatory effect of the presence of nuclear weapons. But rapid advances in missile defense, precision conventional strike, offensive tools in space and cyber have the potential to do the opposite—to rapidly escalate confrontations as leaders risk losing battle space awareness, command and control, or their own offensive capabilities through a vortex of independent escalatory decisions.

As we go forward with these challenges, we stand on your shoulders.

We look to our SAC heritage for the discipline, professionalism and



excellence, and courage to make the tough choices, to be the experts in providing safe/secure/effective forces, to understand and advocate for strategic deterrence, so that wishful thinking does not lead us down a path to conflict. As former U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk said: we must not expose adversaries “to intolerable temptation through our own weakness.”

Conclusion

Preserving the peace requires we give our national leaders a broad range of options to manage a crisis. Should competition become confrontation, our nation’s resolve and military strength will prove decisive to deter and assure...and preclude confrontation from becoming conflict.

The weapon systems are simply tools, and they have no value without the warriors who man and maintain them...Airmen such as the SAC veterans in the audience today, who provided the foundation and legacy for AFGSC.

Thank you all for your kind attention today. I’m happy to answer any questions you may have...

