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GS Challenge Symposium

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General Kehler: I'll just say at the start it's not the first time I will have been shouted down in a speech so we'll see what happens.

I am in the highly coveted last guy before dinner on the last day slot, so this is -- sit back and relax. This is a three hour speech. [Laughter]. And after 45 minutes I'm going to be talking to myself. My job is to stop talking at the exact moment you stop listening so we'll see how this turns out.

I've got to thank General Kowalski and the team here for inviting me. It's been a little while since I've been to -- Well, I've never been to a combined competition like this one. I of course grew up on Olympic Arena and grew up then into Guardian Challenge then was Commander of Air Force Space Command when we moved the ICBMs out to the new Global Strike Command. And I knew that the legacy that had been started in Bomb Comp years ago, I attended a Bomb Comp score posting it must have been for like a week. I don't exactly recall. After day one it was a little blurry. But I attended one of those and of course I knew that General Kowalski, General Klotz before him, and General Kowalski were working hard to put something back together. I cannot tell you how glad I am that this command did this. I tell people, competition makes us better. It's why we are the global force that we are today. It is the great event, I believe, that separates us from lots of other forces around the world. We know that we have to compete to get better. This is where that all comes together and we demonstrate that in ways that are really truly remarkable. As I say, this all helps us look better, act better, and mostly perform better. You can see this certainly in our operational activities everywhere around the world. So Jim, thanks for inviting me.

General Jumper, Chief, Sir, it's always good to see you. I'm looking forward to hearing you this evening at dinner. I know that I've benefited from being around a lot of great leaders and mentors throughout my career. It's why I'm standing here today as a matter of fact. So General Jumper, thanks Chief, for all you've done for our Air Force and for many of us who have grown into responsible positions. Thanks for that.

I do of course stand here today as the Commander of United States Strategic Command. I would have told you 38 years ago that that was not even an interesting thing to say. I never would have envisioned this, but here I am. I'm here for lots of reasons and among those reasons are of course I have been the beneficiary of a lot of great assignments, great opportunities, great leaders, great mentoring opportunities, and I hope that all of you are taking some of those kinds of attributes from your experience here because it does in fact benefit you in many ways.

But as the Commander of Strategic Command I also stand here as the leader of the command that has its combatant command legacy back to Strategic Air Command or SAC. Many of you remember I think, or I hope you remember, SAC actually had two major organizational features. Number one, it was a combatant command but it was a specified combatant command. Number two, it was an Air Force major command. Put it in an interesting position, as a matter of fact, unique among all of the Air Force major commands at that time. The commander of SAC could change hats and use whichever avenue best suited him, whatever way he needed to go, in order to address issues.

So as the Commander of Strategic Command, I command the direct combatant command descendant of that specified command that once was Strategic Air Command. And I'm standing here at the home of Air Force Global Strike Command which is the major command descendant of that same Strategic Air Command.

Now it's always difficult to be the progeny of strong and famous parents like both of these commands now share. SAC was indeed legendary as both a specified command and as a major command. So when I was a kid I know there were times when our neighbors thought that I was a good idea because they knew my parents. They weren't always right, but you get the point here. I know your parents so I know because of your parents who you are and I know the kind of job that you can do.

This past June I had the honor to participate in a reunion at a memorial dedication for Strategic Air Command at the Air and Space Museum near Lincoln, Nebraska. Now I couldn't believe, actually, that it was the 20th Reunion of the stand-down of SAC. It didn't seem possible because I served in SAC from 1975 in one form or another until its stand-down in 1992, and it didn't seem to me like it was that long ago. But in fact we have in our Air Force today people who have served entire careers since Strategic Air Command has stood down.

At that gathering of former Commanders-in-Chief, I think we had five of them, senior officers who had been assigned to the

command over the years; senior enlisted advisors and command senior enlisted leaders who had been assigned there; and a healthy contingent of what had been the backbone of the command, the crew dogs really, were all present. I was able to reflect with them on what that command had accomplished.

As I say, as an alumnus of that command I'm aware of the very stern and tightly focused countenance that Strategic Air Command had and mostly it was the countenance that it's most famous leader, Curtis LeMay had. In fact it's the first picture that I see when I walk onto the floor the command suite is on when I go to work every morning. It's still a little bit of an intimidating countenance as you look at it today.

I was professionally raised on the dedication and the professionalism and the uncompromising standards that were the hallmarks of SAC as were many of Global Strike Command's senior leaders today. So I think all of us who served in SAC would say as parents go, Global Strike Command had good ones.

We in the Air Force had become so good at nuclear deterrence that when SAC was dissolved we thought those hallmarks would naturally pass to the offspring. Even in the face of pressing demands of crisis and conflict. We were wrong. With the best of intentions we diluted the very unique and critical skills needed for the nuclear deterrence mission. As our attention turned to long range conventional strike and the demands of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, we began to lose the corporate culture and collective memory to execute the muscle movements needed to operate in the zero defect nuclear enterprise because all of us know in this business such a culture is a necessity. It took two very embarrassing and very public mistakes for us to refocus on the need to once again have a command solely dedicated to long range strategic deterrence and global strike operations, and to its credit I think our Air Force did refocus and make the necessary changes.

The result is a new Global Strike Command. A command with deep roots in a storied past but bright eyes that look to the future. The organize, train and equip role of this command is vital to what I as the STRATCOM Commander must have to perform the mission that I'm given by the President and the Secretary of Defense. Ours is a mission that every other combatant commander relies upon. STRATCOM provides the deterrent foundation for every other military mission and if someone needs to reach out and touch someone at global distances, they turn to STRATCOM. I simply have to pick up the phone to meet their request with a superbly trained and capable Air Force Global Strike Command. The end result of such a phone call is that somewhere an enemy of the

United States is intimidated or in extreme cases eliminated, promptly and accurately.

Global Strike Command has a direct and daily impact on our national security. At the beginning of this year the Secretary of Defense published a new strategy document entitled Priorities for the 21st Century. While no command is specifically mentioned in this document both Global Strike Command and Strategic Command have leading roles in executing the primary missions of the United States Armed Forces that this document describes, and let me list some of those for you. Counterterrorism and irregular warfare; deter and defeat aggression; project power; despite anti-access and area denial challenges counter weapons of mass destruction; maintain a safe, secure and effective nuclear deterrent; defend the homeland; provide a stabilizing presence. Global Strike Command. You provide forces that contribute to each of those missions. I hope you heard or saw yourself in those missions because you are in every one. And while Strategic Command is the unified combatant command face of those capabilities, Air Force Global Strike Command is the Air Force, one of two Air Force components to Strategic Command. I rely on you.

So today your mission is more important than ever before. From the extreme demands of nuclear deterrence operation to continuous bomber presence to precision strike at global ranges, your contributions are critical.

Regarding the importance of the nuclear mission, our national leaders have public stated, and I'll quote, "As long as nuclear weapons exist in the world the United States will have a nuclear deterrent that is safe, secure and effective."

Since its inception our triad of nuclear forces have proven exceptionally effective in providing strategic deterrence to our adversaries and assurance to our allies. You've heard today from General Wilson on the benefits of our most flexible leg of the triad, that being the strategic bombers; you've heard from General Cary; you've heard from the Commander of Sub-Group 9 about our ballistic mission legs, ICBMs and submarine launched ballistic missiles. I'm not going to restate what they said, but I will reiterate that each leg is just as important to today's national security as they have ever been, and I believe will be for the foreseeable future as well.

AS we look to modernize the ICBM force, build a new long range bomber, and field the Ohio Class Submarine replacement, we're relying on your expertise to ensure the technology of the next

generation of the triad will serve our country for our children, our grandchildren and beyond.

As we reduce our nuclear force to New START levels, it's imperative that we maintain a compelling and credible nuclear deterrent force, and until our new weapon systems are fielded, we will continue to use the systems we have today. Systems that were built before many of you in this room were born and that were designed for a much different world.

These systems that were never intended to remain in the inventory for 60 years or more remain our front line systems today. And that's because, and because it's a testament to every person in this command that we're able to do so. The pride, professionalism and perseverance shown by each and every one of you is not lost on me and it is not lost on our nation's leaders. Nor, significantly, is it lost on our potential adversaries.

Missile crews today are pulling alert, ensuring that 24x7 near perfect operationally ready rate of our ICBMs. Even as we celebrate the role these first Minuteman missiles and crews played in averting a tragic ending to the Cuban Missile Crisis 50 years ago, the deterrence they provide is just as relevant today as it was then.

On the bomber side, your ability to generate and launch nuclear equipped bombers is now supplemented by over 10 years of combat experience dropping a wide variety of conventional weapons in some of the most challenging conditions we have ever seen. And you've made it look easy.

I have to tell you a story. Because STRATCOM's responsibilities are so much broader than the nuclear mission today, I give a presentation when I'm talking to joint audiences about the role that many of our capabilities in the command play. One of the things I do, many of you remember flash cards. In fact some of you still use them when you sit around some days and do flash cards for recognition of aircraft or ground objects. Usually they're targets. Not always. And one of the things that I do is I always put one of the bombers up on a flash card and it shows it in top view and plan view. When you look at it, the one that comes to mind, the last time I showed these slides I put up a B-52. I said okay, everybody, what's that? What I got was, people said it's a bomber, some said it was a B-52. Some could identify the model of B-52 that it is. The good news is that I had the current model on the chart. Then I always say, what does it do? And it was interesting because all the Army guys said provides close air support. [Laughter]. Think about that. Think about what that means. I have yet to have any audience say that's a

nuclear deterrent bomber. What they say is it's a close support aircraft, or they say in some case, it got me out of a jam in fill in the blank. Some say no, it was a B-1 that did that. Some say no, it was a B-2 that did that. But you get my point. This is ten years' worth of combat experience that really shows the true value of air power and the significance of that long-range strike platform that this command manages so well.

We do these incredible missions because you show us that we can. We also know that today's strategic deterrence has to be based in the 21st Century, not the 20th Century. Sometimes I have people who come to my headquarters to become familiar with what Strategic Command is doing today and I say to them, listen carefully, do you hear that sound in the background? That's a whirring noise. That's Curtis LeMay whirring in his grave. Then I say, but I say he's whirring in his grave not because he thinks we've done something wrong with his command, but because he thinks it took us too long to do what we're doing. I think Curtis LeMay knew, and I never had the opportunity to meet him. I saw him from a distance once. That was enough. [Laughter]. But I think he knew something. I think that for all the stern countenance, Curtis LeMay was an innovator. We know that. Those of you that fly bombers know that he invented the combat box in World War II in Europe which helped address the phenomenal losses that we were taking in those airborne raids into the deepest parts of Germany. But I think Curtis LeMay knew that you prepare for tomorrow's enemy, you fight the enemy you have today, and you relegate yesterday's enemy to the history books. That's what we need to make sure that we've done when we think about deterrence in the 21st Century.

Today we have to shape it to specific adversaries. It is no longer one size fits all. It has to fit the unique global security environment we find ourselves in. An enormously complex and uncertain world that includes nuclear weapons but also has the proliferation of ballistic missiles, the potential for nuclear proliferation, threats in space and cyberspace, anti-access threats, and the list goes on.

Deterrence today must deal with all strategic threats and not just nuclear threats. In fact I believe, and my unified command plan responsibilities which is the document signed by the President of the United States that says not STRATCOM is responsible for, it says the Commander of STRATCOM is responsible. That gets my attention. Call me old fashioned on this one. But when the President signs something that says the Commander's responsible for it, I read that carefully and I do what it says. And what it says is, alone among the combatant commands "Strategic Command is responsible for strategic

deterrence planning and nuclear employment operations." They're not the same. Strategic deterrence is about what all of you bring in a broader sense while still keeping this laser focus on the demands of the nuclear mission.

Our ability to put together capabilities, hybrid capabilities that use platforms that were never intended to be used like you're using them today but are brought to bear for specific national security reasons, that kind of ability was most recently proven in Operation Odyssey Dawn. The leading roles of the B-1s, the B-2s, tankers, space and cyber assets in conjunction with our NATO allies made that operation a success. This was a combined and joint armed success story which demonstrated our ability to act rapidly and to act globally.

This is a story that could not have been told even ten years ago, but I think provides a glimpse into the way future conflicts will be fought.

It all comes down to you. Your talent, your skill, your professionalism and your dedication make Global Strike Command what it is. I can say the same about those of you who are here from other commands and those who are here from our reserve components and our allies as well. You make the difference.

I know that each of you every day when I look at my morning operational updates, my ops and intel briefing, I know that each of you is ready to perform your mission and I can look at both the President and the Secretary of Defense with assurance and tell them that I know that you're ready to perform your mission.

When I got to Capitol Hill I'm able to say with great confidence that we are in fact good stewards of our nation's nuclear deterrent force and we are in fact even better practitioners of strategic deterrence in the 21st Century.

So today during score posting when we recognize the culmination of all of your months of preparation, competition and incredible teamwork, the focus will be on you. This premier demonstration that will culminate this evening has a larger purpose. It shows our adversaries your capabilities and your talents and your professionalism and how that relates to our national resolve and that we take this business of deterrence seriously and will not accept anything less than perfection. In my view, there can be no better deterrent than what we will demonstrate through your actions tonight.

For our allies present today and those around the world, there can be no better assurance than the capabilities you bring to bear as demonstrated during this competition.

So as I stand here today, over a thousand of Air Force Global Strike Command's personnel are deployed in place performing the nuclear deterrence mission, nearly a thousand more are deployed around the world supporting other combatant commands. Together they bring the unique expertise of this command's missions and capabilities to the fight wherever it's needed. Even in today's changing world with different adversaries and different threats, Global Strike Command is and will remain the foundation of our nation's strategic deterrence and a global force to be reckoned with.

Let me finish by saying how very proud I am of you. Your accomplishments, moving the mission forward, are second to none. I have no doubt that the men and women of Air Force Global Strike Command will continue to meet the challenges of the future. After all, I know your parents.

Keep up the great work. Never give up. Your nation's depending on you. I'm proud to wear a uniform with you. Thank you.

Moderator: General Kehler, thank you sir, for taking the time to come and speak with us. You've made a number of great points here, and one thing that I think I will take away as our new unofficial motto is to intimidate or eliminate. [Laughter].

General Kehler: Thank you.

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