



# RHUMB LINES

*Straight Lines to Navigate By*



November 17, 2011

## Strategic Systems Programs – Keeper of the Survivable Strategic Deterrent

*“We began work on Trident II in 1980, and it remains operational today. The decisions made now will affect the SLBM program for the next 30 years and beyond. It is critical to our nation’s security that we make the right decisions to balance our strategic responsibility, national security interests and fiscal accountability for generations to come.”*

**– Rear Adm. Terry Benedict, Director, Navy Strategic Systems Programs**

The Navy’s [Strategic Systems Programs](#) is responsible for the survivable leg of the triad for the nation’s [strategic nuclear deterrent](#), the submarine-launched fleet ballistic missile (SLBM). On Nov. 17, 1955, the Special Project Office (SPO) was created and tasked with developing the Army-Navy Jupiter intermediate-range ballistic missile system. Later redesignated Strategic Systems Programs (SSP), the office met the challenge in less than five years to develop, design and test the first-ever SLBM, marked by its successful launch of two Polaris (A1) missiles from submerged ballistic missile submarine [USS George Washington \(SSBN 598\)](#) off the coast of Cape Canaveral July 20, 1960. That first submerged launch signified the beginning of six generations of SLBMs that have since been produced, ensuring the continued viability of the nuclear deterrent.

### Unmatched Missile System

- During more than 55 years of existence and six generations of missile systems, SSP has expanded SLBM capabilities from the original accuracy and range of approximately 1,200 nautical miles for the Polaris A1 to a range of greater than 4,000 nautical miles for the [Trident II \(D5\)](#).
- Originally developed in the 1980s and operationally deployed on [Ohio-class submarines](#) in March 1990, the Trident II D5 missile is currently undergoing a Life Extension Program to provide updates to all major systems of the missile. These updates to the existing missile will extend deployment into the 2040s and will be the initial missile system-outload for the Ohio-class replacement SSBN, making it the longest deployed large-diameter ballistic missile system in the history of the nation.
- The Trident II (D5) is a majority portion of the [Nuclear Triad](#), which includes bomber aircraft, land-based missile systems and submarine-launched ballistic missile systems. SSP partners with the [submarine force](#), ensuring the continued viability of the Trident II (D5) weapons system in support of the [maritime strategy](#) and the nation’s strategic nuclear deterrent.

### Unique Partnerships Ensuring Mission Success

- SSP’s mission includes responsibility for the safety and security of all nuclear weapons systems in the Navy’s custody, as designated in SECNAVINST 8120.1. As a result of this mission, personnel and units from all three of the nation’s sea services – the Navy, [Coast Guard](#) and [Marine Corps](#) - provide specialized security capabilities under SSP’s guidance at various operational locations.
- The [Polaris Sales Agreement](#), signed April 6, 1963, between the United States and the United Kingdom, provided for the sale of Polaris missiles (less warheads) and the subsystems of the weapons system to the U.K. The British provided their own warheads and built their own nuclear-powered submarines to house the weapons system. In the 1980s, the [agreement was extended](#) to the Trident system and remains in force today.

### Key Messages

- SSP is responsible for the Navy’s submarine-launched fleet ballistic missile weapons system.
- The Trident II (D5) weapons system is a majority portion of the nation’s Strategic Nuclear Triad.
- SSP actively supports the maritime strategy by partnering with the submarine force to provide nuclear deterrence from the sea.

### Facts & Figures

- Six generations of missiles have been produced, including the Polaris (A1), Polaris (A2) and Polaris (A3); Poseidon (C3); Trident I (C4) and Trident II (D5).
- SSP has a highly specialized workforce of more than 2,200 military personnel from each of the nation’s sea services, nearly 1,100 DoN civilians and more than 1,900 contract-partner employees.