



US STRATCOM Commanding General Tells Congress “It is not U.S. Policy to Defend Against Russian and Chinese Nuclear Missile Attack”

Description

Exposing the Madness of MAD

During a Strategic Forces congressional hearing earlier this week, General Anthony Cotton, the new commanding general of US Strategic Command in charge of America's nuclear triad made an astounding statement which was not reported by U.S. media. He stated that “it is not U.S. policy to defend against Russian and Chinese nuclear missile attack.” The reason this explosive revelation is not considered newsworthy is that it is essentially a restatement of America's nuclear doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). The aptly named Western theory of MAD is without a doubt the most certifiably irrational national security strategy America has ever adopted in its history. The U.S. nuclear strategy of MAD, in effect, risks making nuclear war more likely because it prevents us from being able to defend ourselves against even a relatively limited nuclear strike and therefore serves as a powerful disincentive against responding to even a limited nuclear strike in kind, emboldening our enemies to commit nuclear aggression to win wars. MAD is also exceptionally dangerous in that it essentially offers a single course of action in the event of a nuclear attack which is a full retaliatory response.



General Anthony Cotton appearing at a congressional hearing earlier this week

For over half a century, U.S. leaders have indoctrinated the American people in the false belief that the best way to deter enemy nuclear missile attack is to ensure that the U.S. remains defenseless against it. This insane and illogical theory was first articulated by Donald Brennan, a strategist working in Herman Kahn's Hudson Institute in 1962 and was largely embraced and adopted by then U.S.

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara shortly thereafter. The theory postulated that so long as each side had a guaranteed second-strike retaliatory capability able to destroy the other that neither nuclear superpower would dare launch a nuclear first strike as that would amount to national suicide. The problem is that the theory's logic only holds if both sides maintain a robust and survivable nuclear triad and maintain rough nuclear parity which the U.S. has not done for the past dozen years or so.

Adoption of this theory, which was built on false assumptions, led to popular acceptance of the false Western misconception that nuclear wars cannot be won and that any employment of nuclear weapons by any country would be suicidal no matter how small the yield, whether they are employed against civilian or military targets or how few people are killed by them would automatically escalate to a full nuclear exchange between the nuclear superpowers destroying both sides. However, this fallacy is a relic of Cold war thinking that was never true anyway. The reality is that a Russian or Chinese use of non-strategic nuclear weapons, typically defined as nuclear weapons with yields of 50 kilotons or less, against other countries would most likely lead to U.S. attempts at de-escalation, rather than nuclear retaliation, to avoid the very real possibility of a full-nuclear exchange which would result in the destruction of the U.S. and its allies. This is particularly true in the case of a potential war with China since the US has no non-strategic nuclear weapons deployed in East Asia. Russia's "escalate to de-escalate" military doctrine postulates that the Russian use of non-strategic nuclear weapons would not trigger a US nuclear response but could be used to force the US and its allies to capitulate and end the war on Russian terms. Russian political and military leaders view the use of super-Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) weapons, which are nuclear weapons specially designed to enhance their EMP effects, as an extension of cyberwarfare because they would not kill anyone directly. Given that Russia has approximately 25 times more non-strategic nuclear weapons than we have, both Russia and China likely have the ability to overmatch the U.S. in terms of escalation dominance at every run of the nuclear escalation ladder.

The U.S. enjoyed nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union from 1945-1972 enabling the U.S. to fight wars in Korea and Vietnam with only a very minimal fear of Russian nuclear escalation. We actually had five to nine times more nuclear warheads than the Soviets during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, a fact that undoubtedly played a major role in persuading them to seek a diplomatic solution and de-escalation of the crisis. Before the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) I and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaties were signed in 1972, the US boasted 4,000 fighter interceptors, 4,000 Surface to Air Missiles and an increasing number of Anti-Ballistic Missiles to defend the U.S. against nuclear missile and bomber attack. We also had thousands of blast shelters and fallout shelters designed to protect hundreds of millions of Americans against the existential threat of nuclear attack. However, with the signing of the ABM Treaty, successive U.S. administrations made it U.S. policy to leave the American people virtually defenseless against nuclear missile attack. In 1975, the U.S. set up the most advanced ABM system in the world known as the Safeguard system with hypersonic Sentinel ABMs mounting the world's first operational neutron W66 warheads with low yields using enhanced radiation to destroy incoming warheads or prevent them from detonating. Unlike the officially declared Russian ABM system, which was designed to defend Russia's capitol of Moscow, U.S. missile defenses were designed to defend U.S. ICBMs in North Dakota from a pre-emptive Russian military strike. Unfortunately the U.S. Congress ordered the system dismantled even before it was declared operational so it was deactivated scarcely more than four months later. The Russians viewed the idea of using Enhanced Radiation/neutron warheads to disable incoming nuclear re-entry vehicles as so effective they deployed 1,750 SA-10B SAM/ABM's during the 1980's equipped with neutron warheads to defend Russia from U.S. nuclear attack, many of which remain in service today.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan gave his Strategic Defense Initiative speech inaugurating his so-called "Star Wars" missile defense research and development program pledging to build a new national missile defense system to make nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete. However, it was not until President George W. Bush wisely repudiated the ABM Treaty that the U.S. deployed its first missile interceptors in over a quarter century. Dr. Peter Pry, the late courageous and visionary Executive Director of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security wisely proposed that we replace our national security strategy of MAD with one of Strategic Assured National Existence (SANE) by deploying space-based missile defenses based on the "Brilliant Pebbles" program which was canceled by the Clinton Administration in 1993.

The SALT I Treaty gave the Soviets rough nuclear parity for the first time ever after which the Russians began to overtake the U.S. both in terms of numbers of strategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems as well as the aggregate explosive power of their nuclear arsenal which was twice as great as ours by the late 1980's. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, **the U.S. effectively dropped out of the nuclear arms race, failing to test or build a single strategic nuclear warhead or delivery system over the past over three decades.** While the US continued to enjoy rough nuclear parity with Russia for the first decade after the end of the First Cold War, it then began unilaterally disarming its nuclear arsenal at a much faster rate leaving the Russians with nearly four and a half times as many operational nuclear weapons as we have and making the Russian Federation the uncontested winner of the nuclear arms race. Russia has spent the equivalent of over a trillion dollars to heavily modernize and subsequently expand its strategic and non-strategic nuclear arsenal and its national missile defense system over the past few decades. While the U.S. once boasted nearly 20,000 non-strategic nuclear warheads at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union with 7,200 deployed to deter a Russian invasion of NATO alone, today it has only one percent of that number

deployed in Europe to deter Russian aggression and none deployed in East Asia and the Western Pacific to deter Chinese aggression effectively giving China absolute theater nuclear supremacy over the U.S. in any future Pacific War waged over Taiwan or our Pacific Treaty allies.

The illusion of U.S. Rough Nuclear Parity with Russia

Today, U.S. leaders continue to delude themselves into believing that the US continues to enjoy rough nuclear parity with the Russian Federation. This is due to the provably false assessment of the Federation of Atomic Scientists (FAS) that the U.S. has a nuclear arsenal consisting of just over 5,400 nuclear warheads while Russia's consists of nearly 6,000 nuclear warheads, an assessment which is backed by the U.S. intelligence community in support of the continued US policy objective of promoting our unilateral nuclear disarmament. The truth is that the U.S. only has 1,515 operational strategic nuclear warheads and as many as 200 non-strategic nuclear warheads. We also have 2,050 partially dismantled nuclear warheads in reserve which would take six to twenty-four months from the time of a presidential executive order to re-assemble and return to active service. These reserve warheads are intended to serve as a hedge against exactly the kind of massive Russian and Chinese strategic nuclear buildups we have been witnessing over the past several years which is why I have been advocating that they be re-assmbled and returned to active service.

The remaining 1,660 or so FAS claimed U.S. nuclear warheads no longer exist as they have been fully dismantled and are nothing more than plutonium pits which could be used to create new nuclear warheads but at a very slow rate given that the US is still in the process of ramping up our nuclear production capabilities to be able to manufacture eighty warheads a year whereas Russia is able to produce 3,000 nuclear warheads a year. I estimate that Russia's existing strategic nuclear delivery systems are capable of mounting up to 7,500 strategic nuclear warheads so Russia could double the number of its deployed strategic warheads within a year. By contrast, even at increased nuclear warhead production rates it would take the US over three decades to build up the size of its strategic nuclear arsenal to the same level. FAS also claims that China has only increased the size of its nuclear arsenal by 50 warheads during the past three decades and that none of Communist China's nuclear arsenal, which likely now exceeds our own, are operationally deployed or ready to fire atop their missiles both of which are completely ridiculous and unsupportable claims.

Given Russia's announced decision to suspend its participation in the New START Treaty, it is likely that Russia is in the process of fully breaking out of New START's 1,550 treaty accountable warhead limit as we speak, though 55% of Russia's strategic nuclear arsenal was not even covered by treaty limitations. Russia likely has at least twice as many deployed strategic nuclear warheads than we have and China likely already has more nuclear warheads than we do as they are on track to complete their "breathtaking nuclear buildup" by the end of next year. This will leave Russia and China with vastly more nuclear warheads than we have and up to ten times more ready to fire/on-alert strategic nuclear warheads which can be utilized in a nuclear crisis that materializes with little warning.

Massive U.S. Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament has Allowed the Sino-Russian Alliance to Win the Nuclear Arms "Race"

Unfortunately, the U.S. adopted what essentially amounts to a minimal deterrence nuclear force posture with the signing of the New START Treaty in 2010 which has no margin for failure, and which is insufficiently large to hold Russia's and China's deep underground military leadership protection bunkers, nuclear forces and military strategic targets at risk. The U.S. policy of unilaterally disarming

America of 94 percent of its nuclear arsenal that won the Cold War and kept the nuclear peace for nearly eight decades has severely degraded the ability of our much shrunken and near obsolescent nuclear triad from being able to credibly deter nuclear attack by our adversaries. The dangerous combination of the U.S. having virtually no defense against nuclear attack and slashing 84 percent of our strategic nuclear arsenal while going on a nuclear procurement holiday which has lasted over three decades while Russia, China and North Korea have engaged in massive nuclear missile buildups putting the Sino-Russian alliance on track to obtaining a 5 or 6 to one advantage over the U.S. in terms of operational strategic nuclear warheads by the end of next year which will give them nuclear supremacy over us for the first time in history. Needless to say, if we had allowed the Soviet Union to have 5-6 times more strategic nuclear warheads than we did, the U.S. would have lost the First Cold War and the world would be dominated by the Soviet Union. For the same reason, we have lost the nuclear arms race and are on track to lose the Second Cold War with the Sino-Russian military alliance today with not merely America's leadership role at stake but our very survival as a nation. The achievement of Sino-Russian nuclear supremacy will likely have extremely adverse effects for the US and its allies potential enabling Russia and China to employ nuclear blackmail to terrorize us into doing their bidding.

Furthermore, less than half of the US nuclear triad is on alert and ready to fire at any given time which could enable a nuclear aggressor to attack and destroy our entire strategic nuclear bomber force and nearly three-quarters of our nuclear submarine force with as few as five nuclear warheads. Adding to the problem, despite several instances when Russia has put its strategic nuclear forces on high alert, Biden has kept the US nuclear triad at DEFCON 5 which is its lowest level of readiness since he became President. These developments have served to make nuclear war much more likely. Meanwhile, the U.S. leaders responsible for this dereliction of duty have largely remained oblivious to this alarming danger even as the US proxy war against Russia in Ukraine serves as a potential powder keg that could spark a Third World War with little warning that would likely quickly escalate to the nuclear level with President Joe Biden's repeated declarations we will defend Taiwan militarily against Chinese attack threatening to do so as well.

U.S. spends Trillions to Fight No-Win Wars and Expand America's Liberal Empire but Only One Percent of its Defense Budget to Defend America from Nuclear Missile Attack.

National missile defenses serve as a kind of catastrophic insurance policy to ensure that if war breaks out and nuclear deterrence breaks down, a country's citizens have a much-increased hope of surviving either a limited or perhaps even a full nuclear exchange. I have been a passionate supporter of deploying a comprehensive national missile defense system to defend the US against nuclear missile attack for the past four decades since reading Robert Jastrow's excellent book "How to Make Nuclear Weapons Obsolete" in reference to President Ronald Reagan's famous March 1983 speech announcing the Strategic Defense Initiative. I subsequently worked for the Missile Defense Agency from 2003-2005 and participated in a simulated nuclear warfighting and missile defense exercise. It was well-known at the time that the U.S. had no capability to use our 44 land-based ABMs to defend against Russian nuclear attack and only a very limited capability to defend against Chinese nuclear missile attack. Thus, General Cotton's statement was likely in reference to the fact that our small-scale missile defenses were only designed to defend against North Korean nuclear attack. The fact that our current ABM force has no capability to shoot down incoming Russian nuclear re-entry vehicles means that even in the case of an accidental launch against Washington, DC for example the US would have no way of shooting them down and we would just have to watch it impact and obliterate its targets.

Such a level of vulnerability to enemy nuclear missile attack underscored by the fact it is against US policy to defend our citizens against Russian and Chinese nuclear attack is not merely a dereliction of duty but is borderline treasonous and any elected or appointed US leader that supports it should be immediately removed from office.

Unfortunately, we don't currently have much of an insurance policy against nuclear missile attack as our leaders have refused to deploy a force of more than 44 ABMs to defend the American people which likely would be insufficient even to defend the U.S. from a full-scale North Korean nuclear missile attack. By way of comparison, the Russian national missile defense force boasts over 225 times more land-based ABMs than we have. In addition, the US has spent the last couple of decades developing a limited sea-based missile defense capability with hundreds of SM-3 and SM-6 SAM/ABM with a potential capability to intercept intermediate and potentially intercontinental ballistic missiles in their boost phase shortly after they are launched. However, it is unknown how many of these missiles may be operationally deployed.

While the U.S. government has spent trillions of dollars on offensive conventional military power projection and helping other countries defend their borders, it spends very little on actual homeland defense and defending the American people and our great country against the existential threats of nuclear, super EMP and massive cyberattack. The Biden Administration's 2023 National Defense Authorization Act spends \$816 billion on "defense" yet only slightly over one percent, totaling \$9.6 billion, is dedicated to funding the Missile Defense Agency-which is the agency designated to defend the U.S. homeland against nuclear missile attack. By contrast, the U.S. government spent over \$6 trillion fighting no-win counterinsurgency wars in the Middle East when it would have only cost a small fraction of that to defend the U.S. homeland against nuclear attack. The Biden administration spent \$113 billion in aid to Ukraine during the first ten months of the Russo-Ukrainian War which is nearly a dozen times more than it spends on defending the American people against what Biden has stated is the greatest threat of nuclear Armageddon since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

What is the point of spending \$800-850 billion a year on the U.S. military if only one percent of it is being spent on defending the American people against the greatest threats which have ever faced mankind in world history which is defense against the twin threats of nuclear missile and super-EMP attack? The U.S. could have a military ten times more powerful than Russia's and China's but if they used super EMP or nukes in a first strike attack and our leaders refuse to do anything to defend us against nuclear/EMP attack it wouldn't matter one bit as they could win a war against us in a matter of minutes.

Russian National Missile Defense System and Nuclear Survivability

While the official U.S. policy over the past half century has been to keep the U.S. homeland as defenseless as possible to Russian and Chinese nuclear missile (and EMP) attack, the Russians have adopted a much more rational and sane strategy designed to ensure the survival of the Russian Federation against even a full-scale U.S. nuclear missile attack. Russian military and political leaders have rejected this Western construct of MAD believing that nuclear wars can be fought and won by the side that best prepares to fight it. During the late 1990's, the Russian Federation reportedly spent over fifty percent of its military budget on national missile defense and nuclear war survivability. Unfortunately, the belief of Russian and Chinese leaders that they could successfully fight and win a nuclear war against the U.S. is not unfounded. Today, Russia boasts between 10,000 and 12,000

SAM/ABM's, the majority of which are advanced S-400 and S-500 variants which would likely be sufficient to shoot down eighty to ninety percent of the nuclear reentry vehicles hurled against it as part of a U.S. retaliatory strike before they impacted Russian soil. This fact serves to invalidate the theory of Mutual Assured Destruction because if Russia were to launch a nuclear first strike against the U.S., we have no assurance that the six dozen or so US warheads which were able to penetrate Russian missile defenses would be sufficient to destroy Russia in response. In fact, it would not be.

In addition, Russia boasts vast underground cities and nuclear command centers at Yamantau Mountain and Kosvinsky Mountain, which are the size of the Washington DC beltway located three thousand feet below granite each capable of feeding and housing 30,000-60,000 Russian leaders and their family members. Recent nuclear war drills demonstrated that Russia had the ability to protect at least forty percent of its population in underground blast shelters. Russian leaders have hardened its critical infrastructure, most importantly its electrical power grid, against the threat of Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attack. Russia also has vast quantities of food, fuel and strategic industrial materials stored underground which it could use to rebuild Russia following a US nuclear strike. The U.S. by contrast has some blast shelters for its political leaders but none for its own citizens.

Communist China has followed Russia's lead building its "Underground Great Wall" consisting of 3,000 miles of deep underground tunnels believed to house hundreds of road-mobile and/or rail-mobile ICBM's. In the event of war, Chinese leaders would relocate to their nuclear command center located 2500 feet underground. China also likely has a few thousand HQ-9, S-300 and S-400 SAM/ABM's and may have an operational joint missile defense system with Russia. Both Russia's and China's nuclear command centers are believed to be capable of withstanding a direct hit by America's most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile nuclear warhead.

The Credibility of the U.S. Nuclear Deterrent is in Doubt

In 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed Presidential Decision Directive (PDD)-59 making it U.S. policy to target and kill Russian political and military leaders and then attack Russian nuclear and strategic military targets with U.S. nuclear weapons rather than Russian cities, thus leaving most of its population unscathed by nuclear attack. This nuclear warfighting strategy has been extended to include the People's Republic of China. In 1997, President Bill Clinton signed PDD-60 changing America's nuclear posture from one of "launch on warning" to one that amounts to essentially "launch on impact" meaning that the U.S. would not launch a nuclear retaliatory strike until it had confirmed the first nuclear impact on U.S. soil.

Unfortunately, the first nuclear impact in any nuclear warfighting scenario would be our nation's capital of Washington, D.C. as part of a decapitation first strike. America's nuclear missiles are not targeted against Russian and Chinese targets at all. Instead, they are pointed at the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and would take minutes to retarget. In the event of such a decapitation attack as was threatened by Russian President Vladimir Putin last February, the President would likely only have four to five minutes to retarget US nuclear missiles and launch a U.S. retaliatory strike against Russia or China. However, this short time period would likely be insufficient to do so let alone for the President to attempt to escape on Air Force One. Furthermore, the FBI has revealed that China's Huawei cell tower located in Washington, D.C. has the ability not merely to intercept nuclear launch orders but disrupt them potentially preventing nuclear launch orders from reaching America's nuclear triad before the capital is destroyed. The U.S. nuclear command, control and communications (NC3) system is being

modernized but remains vulnerable to cyber/super EMP attack while U.S. GPS and early warning satellites that would be needed to coordinate a defense against a hypothetical nuclear missile attack let alone launch a retaliatory nuclear strike. In the event of war with Russia or China, they would likely employ a massive coordinated cyber and space warfare attack to disable U.S. military and commercial satellites at the beginning of a major war, blinding us to follow-on attacks.

Due to the massive unilateral nuclear disarmament over the past few decades, the U.S. no longer has enough strategic nuclear warheads to pre-emptively attack all Russian leadership and military strategic targets as two-thirds of a hypothetical U.S. nuclear first strike would likely be shot down by Russia's massive national missile defense system. The most likely full-nuclear exchange scenario would involve both Russia and China launching their nuclear warheads at the U.S. homeland and the U.S. striking back at both Russia and China leaving the U.S. nuclear arsenal even less capable of holding both Russian and Chinese underground leadership protection facilities and their nuclear forces and military strategic targets at risk of nuclear attack.

Biden Must Act Now to Implement Critical Steps to Secure America against Nuclear/EMP Attack

In addition to America's 44 land-based ABM's defending the U.S. against North Korean nuclear missile attack, the U.S. Navy has ten Aegis ballistic missile defense equipped warships but they aren't deployed to protect the U.S. Proposals to deploy Aegis Ashore to defend the U.S. against nuclear missile attack have been defeated and we only use Aegis Ashore to protect NATO's eastern flank against Russian nuclear missile attack showing U.S. leaders care much more about protecting our allies against nuclear missile attack than they care about the American people that elected them to office. The Biden administration needs to act immediately to deploy thousands of space-based ABM interceptors which can more effectively destroy incoming nuclear missiles in their boost phase. When Clinton killed Brilliant Pebbles in 1993, the price tag was estimated at around \$55 billion which would only be \$126 billion in 2023 dollars. That is only \$13 billion more than we have given to Ukraine to help them be victorious in their ongoing border dispute with Russia. The US should also deploy hundreds of additional land-based ABMs, ideally armed with one-kiloton neutron warheads which have the potential capability to take out more than incoming re-entry vehicle per each warhead.

The importance of the U.S. implementing my recommendations to redeploy our 2,000 partially dismantled strategic nuclear warheads to active service, deploy a comprehensive national missile defense system consisting of 5,000 Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABMs) and hardening the US electrical power grid against EMP attack has never been greater. However, given the fact that it will take 6-24 months to do so. Biden should also send a message of strength by acting immediately to increase our nuclear alert level to DEFCON 3 to deter potential Russian nuclear escalation until the current threat of a Third World War has abated. Most importantly, the Biden administration should negotiate an immediate cease-fire with Russia in Ukraine to end the war, allow Ukraine to consolidate its battlefield gains before the Russian winter offensive begins later this week and end the immediate threat of the outbreak of a Third World War with Russia that could end in America's destruction.

House and Senate Strategic Forces Committee Hearings

This past week I watched and re-watched both the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) Strategic Forces Subcommittee Hearings held on March 8th and the Senate Armed Services Committee Strategic Forces Committee hearings on March 9th. I was disappointed to see that the answers to several important questions posed by members of the two congressional committees

provided by General Anthony Cotton were both incomplete and often misleading. Meanwhile during the HASC Strategic Forces Subcommittee hearing yesterday, U.S. officials reiterated that the U.S. has no intention of developing nuclear hypersonic missiles like Russia, China and North Korea. Conventional hypersonic missiles will do absolutely nothing to deter enemy attack or aggression. Similarly the US has no plans to develop super-EMP weapons like Russia, China, North Korea and possibly the Islamic Republic of Iran could use to threaten to kill up to 275 million American citizens in a comprehensive super EMP attack according to a report issued by the Congressional EMP Commission. Here are some of the highlights from the House and Senate Strategic Forces Subcommittee hearings earlier this week.

HASC Strategic Forces Subcommittee Hearing

Chairman Doug Lambourn (R-CO) asked General Cotton who serves as Commander of US Strategic Command, about whether the US nuclear force posture needed to be reexamined given the fact that we are now faced with having to deter Russia and China simultaneously with China engaged in a massive nuclear buildup and the US is doing nothing to increase the size of our strategic nuclear arsenal in response. Cotton replied that we are needing to have a conversation as to the size of our nuclear forces to deter both Russia and China giving our current nuclear deterrent size was based on deterring only Russia based on their adherence to the New START Treaty. Rep. Lambourn stated that we needed to provide for a hedge against Russia uploading warheads to its strategic missiles following their suspension of the New START Treaty. However, the US has no ability to detect that even if they were allowing us to visually inspect the outside of their strategic missiles let alone by satellite reconnaissance. He also highlighted the fact that Russia is providing large amounts of weapons grade plutonium to help China massive increase its nuclear warhead production.

General Cotton stated as a matter of clarification that it is against US policy to defend the US homeland against Russian or Chinese nuclear attack. Thus, our limited missile defense system is only meant to defend against North Korean nuclear missile attack. He said he believes that the reason Russia has spent a huge amount of money on its non-strategic nuclear weapons is because they view their battlefield usage as being below the threshold of provoking a US nuclear response. General Cotton said the US is working hard to ramp up to producing 80 plutonium pits a year. As I have noted above, Russia has the ability to produce 3,000 nuclear warheads a year.

Both General Cotton and General James Dickinson who serves as the commanding general of US Space Command said they would not characterize the massive Russian, Chinese and North Korean nuclear missile buildups as an arms race! I would agree with their assessment because the US dropped out of the nuclear arms race over three decades ago so it's not an arms race if the U.S. is not racing our enemies. General Cotton stated that US hypersonic missiles are considered strategic weapons even though they are not nuclear-armed. I disagree with his assessment that conventional hypersonic weapons provide any strategic deterrent value at all against any of our nuclear-armed enemies.

Rep. Don Bacon (R-NE) expressed his concern that Russia or China might be able to take out our nuclear command authority (i.e. the President and other top US political and military leaders) in a nuclear decapitation strike with minimal strategic warning with as little as five minutes. General Cotton evaded a direct answer to the question and addressed the wider NC3 issue. The survivability of our nuclear command, control and communications system is my greatest worry in our ability to deter enemy nuclear attack as it is possible that our enemies could use jammers, cyberattack, and super

EMP attack to severely degrade it and potentially prevent nuclear launch orders from reaching the triad particularly if Washington, DC was destroyed with five minutes warning in a nuclear decapitation attack.

Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Jack Reed referred to Russia and China as “near-peer competitors” even though Russia and China have more nuclear weapons than the US. I think it would be more accurate to say that the U.S. is a “near peer competitor” to Russia and China.

Senator Roger Wicker, who serves as Ranking Member on the Committee, was clear in stating Russia had a larger and more modern nuclear arsenal than we have with nuclear superweapons we have little to no ability to defend against. He pointed out that China has the capability to drop nuclear weapons from orbit on the U.S. homeland without warning using its newly demonstrated nuclear hypersonic glide vehicle that we previously didn’t even know they had. China’s new Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) capability is something that Russia developed and deployed back in the late 1960s. He questioned why there was no urgency on the part of the Biden administration to modernize our nuclear arsenal under these increased threat conditions. He asked General Cotton whether the US nuclear deterrent was large enough to deter Russia and China simultaneously given that we are modernizing to a smaller and less capable nuclear triad. The general refused to answer the question saying that is a policy question determined by the President, but he did state the current legacy US nuclear deterrent had no margin, suggesting that if the US nuclear modernization schedule was delayed, it could lose its ability to credibly deter Russian or Chinese nuclear attack.

Sen. Eric Schmitt (R-MO) expressed his concern to General Anthony Cotton about Chinese FOBS weapons. He said that it was a destabilizing weapon because they are hard to see, and the warning time could be a lot less than for a typical ICBM that would give us about half an hour of warning time. Gen. Cotton said the most important thing he thinks Americans need to know is that for the first time in US history, the US is facing two nuclear superpower peer competitors. He was then asked about the definition of a tactical nuclear weapon and what the impact would be if Russia used a tactical nuke on Kyiv. He claimed non-strategic weapons, by definition, are all those Russian nuclear weapons not covered by New START which is incorrect given that 55% of all Russian strategic nuclear weapons are not covered by the New START Treaty. It is also incorrect by virtue of the fact that China does not have any nuclear weapons which are covered by the New START Treaty.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR) asked General Cotton how many non-strategic nuclear weapons the U.S. currently has but the general refused to answer except in a classified setting suggesting the number may be significantly less than the 200 B-61 gravity bombs which most analysts believe we have. Sen. Cotton then stated that “China and Russia together have significant overmatch in warheads and delivery systems. The fact we are constraining ourselves from building the nuclear forces we need to deter both Russia and China is the height of folly.” General Cotton replied that our current US nuclear modernization plans were based on a 2010 threat and did not take into account the massive Chinese nuclear missile buildups we are witnessing today clearly suggesting that the current and projected size of the US strategic nuclear arsenal may be insufficient to deter both Russian and Chinese nuclear aggression at the same time.

Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) then posed the most important question of the hearing, asking if given that Russia and China have no arms control constraints, we should begin uploading undeployed (partially dismantled) nuclear warheads to shore up our nuclear triad, but the General refused to answer stating

that is a policy question determined by the President. She then asked how long it would take to upload them, but General Cotton replied that the answer was classified. However, I know from open sources that it would take six to twenty-four months to do so.

by David T. Pyne

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