CENTER FOR
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REINVIGORATING THE NUCLEAR ENTERPRISE:
A CRITICAL AIR FORCE MISSION

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RAYMOND DUBOIS: Good morning, everyone. I'm Ray DuBois, senior resident fellow here at CSIS. I welcome you and thank you for coming this morning. It is a packed room; we might have to get a few more chairs. Mary, are there some chairs in the back, around the corner? On behalf of John Hamre, who wanted to be here this morning to welcome Secretary Donley, I want to say thank you very much for coming and for addressing this important issue of nuclear stewardship in the Department of the Air Force and the Department of the Army – Department of Defense, excuse me.

As some of you may know, Mike Donley succeeded me as director of administration and management at the Pentagon. I take pride in the fact that I had something to do with his succeeding me. And the fact that his experience and his career in our national security community has been extraordinarily deep and wide, beginning with, I might add, service in the United States Army, as was the case with myself back in the early '70s with the 18th Airborne Corps and the Fifth Special Forces.

But more to the point today, he then graduated from USC and then went to work at the Heritage Foundation and quickly went to the Hill and became a professional staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee from 1981 to 84. During the second Reagan administration, he went to the National Security Council's staff and became the deputy executive secretary; that, also, is when I began to recognize his contributions. He was instrumental in setting up what we referred to then as the Packard Commission, and also went on to coordinate White House policy with respect to Goldwater-Nichols, the DOD Reorganization Act of 1986.

Under Bush 41, Mike became the assistant secretary of the Air Force, financial management and comptroller and succeeded in the transition to – and became acting secretary of the Air Force for seven months into the first Clinton administration. From there, he went to IDA and then joined SAIC. As I said, in May of 2005, date certain, I swore him in as the deputy – as the director of administration management. On the good days, we're known as the "mayor of the Pentagon," an honorific that is pretty special, I must say.

As you know, we've got 25,000 folks who come to work in that building every day. It is a small city. And it is a terrific responsibility, because it includes everything from – as I used to be called – the man in charge of parking, parades, and protests. But it also has the enormous reconstruction project called the Pentagon Renovation Program, which is depending upon how you calculate it, with all the IT and everything else, it's $7 billion over a 10-and-a-half year period.

As you all know, on June 5th of this year, Secretary Gates removed the secretary of the Air Force, Mike Wynne, and the chief of staff, "Buzz" Moseley. Four days later, he recommended to the president that Mike be nominated as secretary of the Air Force, and the Senate confirmed that nomination on the 2nd of October. It is never easy to take a position like secretary of the Air Force under any circumstances, because it is a tremendously demanding

position. The Title 10 responsibilities of organize, training and equipping are, for any of the three service secretaries, are not entirely well-known by the world outside of the Beltway, but for those of us who've worked at the Pentagon and worked in the national security arena, we know those burdens can sometimes be very, very demanding.

We've had the secretary of the Army, Pete Geren, here. Next week, we'll have the secretary of the Navy, Don Winter, here. So this is kind of my service secretary series, if you will. Mike and I talked about a month ago about the nuclear weapons and nuclear safety issues emanating from Secretary Gates' instructions and Secretary Schlesinger's report. We agreed that this would be a terrific opportunity for the secretary of the Air Force to expand on what Bob Gates – Secretary Gates – referred to as "restoring excellence in our nuclear stewardship." So, without further ado, let me ask Mike to the podium. Thank you.

(Applause.)

SECRETARY MICHAEL DONLEY: Thanks, Ray. Thanks for the invitation to join you here, today. CSIS has long played a leading and bipartisan role in facilitating communication and debate within our national security community and between the U.S. and other countries on a wide range of international security and economic issues. Over the past 30 years or so, I've spent many hours in this building on various committees and panels – can't count the number of times I've come into this building and pushed B1 – (laughter).

And so I've been here many times, listening to U.S. and foreign leaders discuss the defense and international issues of the day. And I also recognize in this audience many un-indicted co-conspirators from the last 30 years of national security work in this city. So it's truly an honor to see so many old faces and to be here with you today. A lot has changed since I last had served as an assistant secretary of the Air Force and as acting secretary in 1993, so the learning curve has been pretty steep.

And it was a pretty sharp turn. When I returned to the Air Force this summer, it was under unprecedented circumstances, which Ray mentioned. As you recall, this was due to concerns with the management of our nuclear enterprise, and particularly, two significant events – the accidental movement of weapons from Minot to Barksdale, Louisiana, and the shipment of a nuclear-related fuse to Taiwan. I'd like to spend most of our time this morning addressing efforts by the Air Force leadership to reinvigorate the nuclear enterprise and then briefly touch on some other work underway to support the transition to a new administration and prepare for the next QDR.

Since its inception in 1947, the Air Force has had a long and proud history of contributing to America's strategic deterrence posture. For over 60 years, stewardship of the Air Force nuclear enterprise has been our solemn obligation. Certainly, nuclear weapons systems, delivery platforms, and organizational structures have changed over the past decades, reflecting changing presidential guidance, advancing technology, geopolitics and America's commitments to its treaty obligations. During the past decades, the nuclear arsenal entrusted to our care has increased and then decreased in size, and its composition has changed in several ways.

But, regardless of size or composition, there's one fundamental precept that must undergird this critical enterprise: In the nuclear business, precision and reliability must underscore every action by every airman at all times. And perfection must be our standard. As one commander noted, sometimes in the Defense Department, we focus on managing risk, but in the nuclear business, we need to focus on eliminating risk. This is an important philosophical distinction. Whether one is managing or eliminating risk can lead to very different views on how to organize, train and equip, and it can lead to different views about how you manage the enterprise and what we need out of our inspections process, for example. So it makes sense that how we organize, train and equip for nuclear operations and sustainment might differ from how we organize, train and equip for conventional operations and sustainment.

When I arrived in June, multiple corrective actions related to nuclear matters were already underway. However, it was clear to me that the Air Force needed to consider the nuclear enterprise from a more comprehensive and institutional perspective. The signal events were symptomatic of a deeper problem; what we were experiencing was not just a series of minor mishaps. We needed to find and confront the root causes. As the Schlesinger report and similar investigations revealed, there had been a serious, systemic erosion of focus, expertise, mission-readiness and discipline across the Air Force nuclear weapons enterprise, especially following the end of the Cold War.

We had lost our nuclear focus as other priorities emerged. At the same time, nuclear advocacy and our culture of accountability and rigid adherence to standards had also eroded. We had weaknesses in our nuclear inspections, in our staff assistance visits and unit quality assurance programs. Our nuclear policies and guidance were inadequate and conflicting. Additionally, there had been reduced priority for the development and management of nuclear subject matter experts, and our nuclear training programs were also inadequate. And underlying all of this was a lack of critical assessment of our state of affairs.

In response, we needed a comprehensive approach to problem solving, with broad institutional support. All the studies and reports indicate that we need to rebuild our culture of accountability and rigorous self-assessment, rebuild nuclear expertise, training and career paths for personnel, ensure that we have solid end-to-end sustainment systems, and develop comprehensive investment plans for nuclear mission requirements, that we need to sustain nuclear deterrent mission advocacy in the Air Force and align authorities and responsibilities to meet mission requirements. Greater introspection was warranted, and we needed to recognize this situation as a unique opportunity for change. We needed to collaborate with other partners in the nuclear arena as we discussed the way forward.

To start these deliberations, General Schwartz and I established an Air Force Nuclear Task Force in late June with the overarching goal of developing a strategic roadmap to rebuild and restore capabilities and, especially, restore confidence in our stewardship of the nuclear enterprise. Additionally, we held a series of meetings with Air Force leadership, both civilian and military, and with our DOD and interagency partners to gain a shared view of a problems and potential solutions. The results of these efforts are reflected in the Air Force's "Nuclear Roadmap," which we published about a month ago. It is comprehensive, and I believe, it is an

objective assessment of both root causes and actions required. So I'd like to share with you some of the major results and recommendations included in the roadmap.

First, we've established a new A-10 directorate within the Air Force headquarters. This new air staff directorate reports directly to the Air Force chief of staff and is responsible for oversight and integration of all our nuclear enterprise activities and issues. By elevating nuclear matters as a direct report to the chief and centralizing all our policy responsibilities into one organization, the A-10 directorate will increase institutional focus at the headquarters and provide a single point of contact for the management and integration of nuclear issues.

We're also using a phased approach to consolidate all nuclear sustainment matters under an expanded nuclear weapons center at Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico. This action will clear up previously ambiguous chains of command by transferring nuclear-related program management responsibilities from the space and missile systems center to the nuclear weapons center. In addition, we are extending positive inventory control over all nuclear-related materials entrusted to Air Force custody. Additionally, we've proposed the establishment of a new major command, responsible for all Air Force nuclear operations. This new, Global Strike Command would streamline the Air Force's organize, train and equip functions for our nuclear-capable bombers – essentially, the B-2s and B-52s – and ICBMs under a single commander.

This means that the nuclear-capable bombers of what is now Eighth Air Force and all of what is now in 20th Air Force, will report to this new single command. The B-1Bs will remain subordinate to air combat command, as will the ISR and command and control aircraft. Splitting the bomber force was a significant decision; this arrangement preserves the tremendous gains we've made in the past 18 years in improving bomber support to theater operations. It's also consistent with the B-1's role as strictly a conventional bomber. And it's important to add that the B-2s and B-52s will continue to support conventional operations, as they do today, when necessary.

This approach restores the necessary focus on the nuclear mission, provides a clear chain of command for all Air Force nuclear forces, and allows for one-to-one alignment between operations in Global Strike Command and sustainment with the nuclear weapons center. In essence, the new command has one source for nuclear sustainment, and the nuclear weapons center has one operational customer. The combination also serves U.S. Strategic Command's nuclear deterrence and its global strike missions with dual-capable bombers and an ICBM force that could support STRATCOM's interest in prompt, global conventional strike in the future.

We plan to stand up Global Strike Command by next September, and we'll announce interim leadership and a provisional location by the end of this calendar year. This stand up is significant not only because it restores our focus on the nuclear mission and culture, but because it demonstrates our clear commitment to restoring excellence in nuclear matters. Proposing to stand up a new MAJCOM was not a decision that we took lightly and the entire Air Force leadership is now committed to its success. To improve our processes and procedures for nuclear matters, we're also paying careful attention to the nuclear inspection process.

Specifically, the I.G. has the task of centralizing standards and developing more consistent policies and interpretation of policy across the major commands. This includes development of inspector training and certification programs, and creating a core team of nuclear surety inspectors that have the skills, experience and expertise to carry out these important duties. Our intent is to create a cadre of personnel with in-depth knowledge and expertise. This will ensure that our inspection process can deliver the results we need from it, not only upholding consistent standards, but also benchmarking and tracking performance, and sharing best practices across the enterprise.

We're also enhancing how we integrate nuclear stewardship across the Air Force. Also in headquarters, for example, we're consolidating all our nuclear-related program elements into one management portfolio. Our corporate panel process, which addresses resourcing issues in the Air Force, is being revamped to include a panel dedicated to the nuclear mission. These changes will significantly improve our corporate Air Force and leadership visibility and how we're resourcing the nuclear mission area. We're also establishing a new senior civilian position within the office of the undersecretary of the Air Force, who will have broad responsibility for policy oversight of nuclear matters. This focused, civilian oversight in the secretariat will ensure strong partnership with the uniformed A-10 function, enabling a comprehensive focus on enterprise management.

We're also establishing a nuclear oversight board, chaired by the chief of staff and myself. It will establish nuclear-related policies and standards, as well as develop and oversee enterprise-level performance metrics. The board will also review inspection and audit reports pertaining to nuclear matters, and our first order of business will be to oversee the implementation of the roadmap. In addition to these changes, we're taking steps to reorient many of our organizations in the Air Force toward a compliance-based culture. These changes will ensure that the Air Force returns to the standards of excellence in nuclear matters for which it was so well-known during the Cold War.

In general, our emphasis across the Air Force reflects a back-to-basics approach in accountability, compliance, precision and reliability. With respect to nuclear matters, we're currently reassessing and rebuilding the requirements for education, training, career development and force development at all levels. Clearly, steady leadership is crucial to reversing this systemic and cultural decline that devalued this important mission since the Cold War. And, although important changes and fixes are underway, we find ourselves at the beginning of what will be a long road of rebuilding Air Force excellence in nuclear matters. Here, establishing a culture that appreciates how the nuclear mission requires focus and providing a steady hand to this work will be key.

This is long-term work, where success will be measured in years and not weeks. As we implement these organizational and structural – cultural – changes, we must also consider the emergent challenges recently noted by Secretary Gates. More countries in the world have nuclear weapons than at the height of the Cold War, and we must have a credible deterrent force to meet these challenges. He observed that, as long as other states have or seek nuclear weapons and, potentially, can threaten us, our allies and our friends, then we must have a deterrent capability that makes it clear that challenging the United States in the nuclear arena, or with

other weapons of mass destruction, could result in an overwhelming, catastrophic response. As he also noted, the nation's nuclear weapons complex is aging and expensive, and transformation to a smaller, less costly and more modern enterprise is necessary.

While the Air Force is adding resources to its budget to implement the initiatives in our roadmap, I want to emphasize that our efforts to strengthen and recommit to this mission are not focused on increasing the size of our nuclear arsenal. Indeed, I would argue that our commitment to this mission needs to be independent of size. The Air Force needs to focus on being a good steward of the nuclear forces entrusted to us, regardless of their size and regardless of changing emphases in other DOD mission areas. As we look forward, the nation will face critical decisions on the type and level of investment required to keep the current forces safe and reliable, even as they potentially grow smaller.

And the Air Force is not alone in this work. The nuclear enterprise includes the Navy, DOE, and other important policy partners in the executive branch and Congress. As operators of nuclear forces, the Air Force and our partners in the Navy will need strong policy and programming guidance from our DOD and national leadership to sustain focus on this critical national capability. Even as our national leaders move forward to consider how nuclear arsenals might be further reduced, we as operators need their attention and support to ensure America's nuclear deterrent remains credible. And to be credible, it must be operationally effective and flexible, safe, secure, and reliable and not allowed to atrophy or decay through lack of attention or neglect.

Of course, attending to the nuclear enterprise has not been our only task for the last five months. Certainly, we're keeping up with the day-to-day business of the Air Force and the oversight of almost 780,000 personnel. So, as you can imagine, all the details that go with organizing and training and equipping and working personnel management issues keeps the Air Force headquarters pretty busy. And we have a special responsibility and a special focus on the 37,000 airmen who are deployed and the hundreds of thousands who are supporting the joint team from home station in the global war on terror. Making sure they have the policy, the guidance, the resources necessary to carry out their work in support of the joint commanders; increasing ISR assets in the CENTCOM AOR, for example, has been a high priority.

We're also preparing for the transition, which is, of course, a hectic and exciting time for our democracy. Two-thousand and eight marked the first time since 1952 that neither the incumbent president nor vice president was on the ballot. The certainty of this change allowed the executive departments and agencies to begin planning early. And 2008 also marks the nation's first wartime transition in 40 years – the last one during Vietnam. Today, we're involved in two shooting wars as well as 24/7 international efforts to track down terrorists. So it's tremendously important that we make this transition as smooth as possible.

To that end, Secretary Gates, who is a long-time veteran of administration transitions started DOD's transition planning several months ago, and began several efforts that would establish a transition management framework in the department, have prepared transition materials for each of the political appointee and critical non-career SES positions, has prepared facilities to receive the transition team and to bolster the logistics and personnel capacities within

the department to efficiently on-board new personnel. And we've attempted to anticipate the needs and focus of the incoming team based on past transitions and discussion with those who've been part of earlier processes. Additionally, Secretary Gates has asked for the department's political appointees to consider staying on as long as possible to assist the transition teams. His hope is to avoid the bathtub in leadership that typically accompanies changes in administrations, especially as we remain a nation at war.

Within the Air Force, we're working to identify key decisions on a range of issues that will need to be made in the coming months – decisions on F-22 and C-17 procurement as well as an acquisition strategy to support the air refueling mission top the list of some acquisition issues requiring senior leader attention. It's also becoming increasingly clear that space and cyberspace are interagency domains and that our work in these areas requires careful coordination with several DOD and interagency partners. And the Air Force is investing time and manpower in several mid-term studies where we need to be prepared to engage and contribute in the next QDR – issues such as institutionalizing Air Force contributions to our nation's irregular warfare and COIN operations capabilities, strengthening interagency discussion and decision structures for national security space, incorporating UAS systems and capabilities in the long-term plans for the Air Force and migrating from supplemental budgets to baseline budgets are a few of the issues that are on our plate.

Today's Air Force faces many challenges and through circumstances largely of our own making, finds itself at a critical milestone in our nuclear mission. We've started the hard work of recommitting to excellence across this enterprise, making adjustments in processes, organizations, and culture, and ensuring that our leadership remains focused and attentive to this important work, but much work remains. A credible and reliable nuclear deterrent is essential to our national security and it instills confidence in our allies and friends. And the Air Force has a continuing and essential role in this mission.

Today, thousands of America's airmen ensure the readiness of this nuclear arsenal. They operate America's missile fields and train to deliver weapons from nuclear-capable aircraft. They sustain the current nuclear weapon and delivery systems, ensuring the engineering integrity of all these nuclear systems. At the senior leader reaches of the Air Force, our responsibility is to provide these airmen and their civilian counterparts with the appropriate guidance and resources so they can execute their responsibilities in accordance with the standard of perfection demanded by this mission. We're fully committed to this task and we do appreciate the expertise and the knowledge that many of you in this room offer as we move forward. So thank you for allowing me to join you this morning. I look forward to our discussion. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. DUBOIS: We're now going to entertain questions from the audience. I think we have a small enough room – I'm not sure that we're going to need the mike as long as you stand, identify yourself and the organization that you represent, and speak clearly – hopefully we can keep our questions to a concise fashion so that we get as many Qs and As for the secretary as possible. Yes, sir?

Q: Howard Moreland (ph), private citizen. I'm familiar with – I'm also a former Air Force pilot – I'm familiar with the areas of deterrence, but could you describe a specific scenario in which the detonation of the U.S. nuclear weapon will improve a situation without ultimately making it worse?

SEC. DONLEY: The purpose of these forces – I'm sorry. The purpose of these forces is to deter the use of nuclear weapons. And so I believe these capabilities are essential, especially in a state-to-state environment. They get a little harder with non-state actors and how we perform the deterrence mission in that environment is, obviously, subject to lots of debate. But, especially with respect to the state-on-state environments, the nuclear deterrent mission remains a backstop for much of what the United States does in its national security posture.

MR. DUBOIS: Yes, ma'am?

Q: Thanks. Elaine Grossman, National Journal Group's Global Security Newswire. How are you doing, sir? I want to ask you about the announcement that the Air Force recently made about a fire that had occurred last spring in a nuclear weapons launch control facility. A couple of questions on that: One is, are you thinking now that perhaps, in light of the reforms that you're making, that the Air Force should have made that incident public earlier, and not waited these many months? And, second, I'm wondering if the Air Force is taking any immediate action to correct some of the deficiencies found related to that fire, namely – some of the things that have been worrying to experts include the use of duct tape in launch controls and our wiring and the fact that the fire raged on for hours and was undetected until after it burned out? Thank you.

SEC. DONLEY: Part of the Air Force's response to that incident was to go understand what had happened in that silo and the work area surrounding the silo, which is where this incident took place. It is a remote area – it's not immediately accessible. And, really, what took so long to figure out was really the forensics of what happened in that incident. So there was really not much to announce before the Air Force had figured out that there was a – that there were battery problems and heating problems in that local area that needed to be attended to. And the Air Force has taken corrective action on those systems.

Q: Could you be a little bit more specific in what the Air Force has done in response to, you know, the duct tape and the fact that the fire went undetected?

SEC. DONLEY: The fire went undetected for some period of time, but it was – relatively speaking, it was a small fire – and all the systems for that missile remained green. So that tells you something about, you know, the reliability of that system – so it did take a little while to figure out what was going on. But I won't have anything further to say, today, on the specifics of what we have done in response.

Q: August Cole, Wall Street Journal. A lot of people in the defense industry that I've talked to say the Air Force acquisition system is broken and there's not real clear steps to fix it. How are you addressing that with the transition team and how much of a priority, given the other issues that you're working on, will that be?

SEC. DONLEY: Well, there are a lot of things in that question. First, I think we do have some challenges in our acquisition process. And we've set in motion both an internal review and an external review, which will be delivering some recommendations on how we can improve our situation by the end of the calendar year. And that timing is specifically intended to bridge the transition so that we have actionable recommendations in front of us for how to improve our acquisition process.

About two weeks ago, I took the Air Force acquisition team over to GAO and we had a good sit-down, face-to-face discussion with our GAO partners, who see our work when it comes in under protest from – specific decisions that we've made that contractors bring in for appeal. It was a very good discussion and I will, without speaking for GAO, one of their senior folks sort of said, your system is not broken. The vast majority of our work remains untainted by protest or successful appeal so the acquisition system continues to work in a way that we think, overall, provides confidence to the American people.

But I have to say that when you go up the value of the contracts and there seems to be a little bit more incentive for contractors to appeal, and when the appeal occurs, if it does not work out on the government's side, it's sort of – it ends up being a very high-visibility decision that undercuts the credibility of all that we do around the world – thousands and thousands of contracts which operate and are awarded successfully, without any major hitches. So, is there room for improvement? Yes. Are we working on it? Yes, we hope to have some particular recommendations in front of us by the end of the year.

MR. DUBOIS: Let me just follow up on Mr. Cole's question, Mr. Secretary. With respect to the tanker acquisition program, in your transition documents – transition briefings – to the next civilian leadership team in the Department of the Air Force and in OSD AT&L, will the Air Force lay out the roadmap that you think is properly to be pursued so that we can conclude an effective – I don't know if there's such a thing as a non-protestable acquisition program anymore – for tankers? Will you give them a set of recommendations on the requirement issue that I guess was one of the questions that was raised, for instance?

SEC. DONLEY: Right. Our goal, during this transition period, is to tee those issues up for the incoming administration, so we have panels working on requirements issues, acquisition strategy, different ways to approach this, and our goal is to set the table. So we'll offer several different options for how to approach this, engage with the new administration – make sure they have a range of options for consideration.

I don't think presenting them with a single option would be a very effective way to pursue it. There are lots of questions and issues that need to be addressed, so our focus is getting them a menu of options, pros and cons understood for each of those, and all the data that they want, sort of pulled up, validated, verified – so they have all the facts in front of them as they confront this issue.

MR. DUBOIS: Okay. Yes, sir?

SEC. DONLEY: And I should add that they – an incoming team might decide to make a decision in February, or they may decide to make a decision in June, or on some other schedule. I can't really predict exactly how they might respond to that.

Q: Jim Wolf, Reuters. You mentioned the F-22 as among the top acquisition issues facing the Air Force. There's $140 million that Congress has provided for long-lead acquisition items. Does the Air Force want to put that on contract immediately? And if so, why hasn't it happened? And if not, why are you waiting?

SEC. DONLEY: The secretary's commitment back in the summer was to put the F-22 over to the next administration. And the department's on track to do that. The issue is how to bridge the last procurement of F-22s with some option to continue if that's what the future administration decides they want to do. I mean, they're obviously aware of the Congressional action there. The department is – Air Force and DOD are under discussion on how best to do that and I would expect a decision out of the department, I think, before the end of the week on that subject.

Q: But my question is, does the Air Force want to put that on contract without further delay? You know, do you want to sign a contract for $140 million to cover the long-lead items without any delay?

SEC. DONLEY: I believe we will end up putting on contract soon some amount of money for advance procurement of aircraft that will bridge this issue of lot nine and potential decisions early in the year on the future – whether or not there should be future procurement. We will provide some money – put money on contract to bridge those months.

Q: Would that be for all 20 possible future aircraft, or only four, as part of some future –

SEC. DONLEY: I won't speak to that today. The department will make those decisions. They've been under discussion for a couple of weeks, and I expect that we'll get decisions –

MR. DUBOIS: Am I correct in recollecting that that particular issue and decision is one that John Young (sp) is on the hot seat to decide, in conjunction with you?

SEC. DONLEY: Yes.

(Laughter.)

MR. DUBOIS: Therefore, that's why we're not getting a direct answer to the question. Any – another question? Yes, ma'am.

Q: Roxana Tiron with The Hill. You mentioned external –

MR. DUBOIS: With the Hill?

Q: – with The Hill newspaper. You mentioned external reviews into the Air Force's acquisition process; who's conducting those?

SEC. DONLEY: CNA is doing that work for us.

MR. DUBOIS: The Center for Naval Analysis.

Q: And the other question that I had: How much do you expect the nuclear enterprise to cost, overall, and how much money would you expect to ask for next year, considering it's a new administration and a new budget process?

SEC. DONLEY: Right now the overall investment in the cost of the nuclear enterprise in the Air Force runs between about – somewhere between 3.5, 5 percent of the Air Force's budget, which, for '09, is about $116 billion, blue Air Force – that rough order of magnitude. We added money in the future year defense program, but I won't address the specifics of that. But actually, our focus will be what we need to do in fiscal year '09, which we're now in; remember of course, we've been working on POM-10 – goes to the incoming team and then to the Hill.

We have to figure out what reprogrammings we'll require in '09 to get Global Strike Command started and to get things up and rolling. So we took end of year funding in the Air Force for fiscal year '08 and began to address the sustainment and other issues that had been addressed in our nuclear taskforce. So we've funded as much as we could in '08. We have bills to pay in '09; we've laid in additional funds for '10, now, to address these issues.

MR. DUBOIS: Of course, the nuclear weapons budget, writ large, is not solely within the Department of the Air Force. But that prompts me, Mike, to ask the question about the Reliable Replacement Warhead. And do you want to make any comments as to why, in your opinion, the Congress has frustrated that program?

SEC. DONLEY: Uh, no.

(Laughter.)

MR. DUBOIS: I tried.

SEC. DONLEY: I mean, the secretary addressed this at length a couple of weeks ago; I think that's – he covered it, he covered it.

MR. DUBOIS: All right, yes?

Q: Morning, I'm Michael Siriac (ph) with Air Force magazine. Mr. Secretary, the Schlesinger task force phase-two report, dealing with the entire OSD nuclear enterprise is due, I believe, next month. Do you anticipate the Air Force could make any additional changes to its enterprise based on those findings, or do you feel that the service has done pretty much everything it needed to do already?

SEC. DONLEY: Certainly, we'll be looking for part two of the Schlesinger report, and whether there are implications for the Air Force. You know, their first report was intended to focus on the Air Force, and we benefited from their input – took that into consideration as we finalized our roadmap. And we'll – you know, we're open and we'll be looking for any potential implications for the Air Force going forward.

Q: Just to follow, why did you decide not to put all bombers under a single numbered Air Force – under a single command? Why did you decide to keep the B-1 separate?

SEC. DONLEY: Oh, I think I addressed this, but mainly, we wanted to – we talked to many former Air Force leaders on this subject. And everyone has an opinion. There is no perfect way to do this; these aircraft are intended to work both for a nuclear mission, generally, and also for conventional missions. We spent 15, 20 years improving the use of the bomber force for the theater warfighters, and that's what we're doing today in Southwest Asia.

We don't want to lose all the benefits of that, even though we needed to get back to focusing on the role of those bombers in the nuclear enterprise and tighten up the training and discipline and the commitment to the nuclear work, which is specialized work – takes time; takes commitment. We clearly needed to move back that direction, which is what we're doing, but without losing the benefits of improved support for theater command. We'd already made decisions to make the B-1 strictly conventional, and that work is underway and continues. So that seemed to be a natural break point in the bomber force.

MR. DUBOIS: Yes, in the back, there.

Q: Hi, I'm Miles Pomper (sp), from Arms Control Today. Some experts have suggested that the nuclear force should become a dyad, rather than a triad, with the bomber leg being removed. I'd like your thoughts on that.

SEC. DONLEY: I think as the force gets smaller, it's – potentially, in the future – it's more important than ever that it become flexible. And I think the air-breathing leg still has a role to play; how that might evolve in the future – don't know. But I think the bomber force does add to the nuclear deterrent, but it complicates attack planning and allows the United States to signal, to deploy forces without fully committing that way. So I think it adds capability that you don't get in the other two legs of the offensive triad. And as I say, if the force is going to get smaller, the freedom to mix and the flexibility across that force becomes even more important.

MR. DUBOIS: On that, getting smaller, Mr. Secretary: I remember the day after you – the day after Secretary Gates nominated or recommended your nomination to the president – he went on a tour of several Air Force bases, including Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, and while he made it very clear that the – his decision to remove Mike Wynne and "Buzz" Moseley was due to the – as he said, the – I think he said – the decade-long erosion in nuclear weapons security within the Air Force – he was asked by a senior NCO at Scott about personnel cuts and the personnel cut program that had been put in place by Secretary Rumsfeld. And he answered that – he announced, as I remember, that day – that he was halting immediately those cuts and holding the Air Force end strength at 330,000. Can you give us some more indications as to

where that – is that a temporary status, or is that something that's going to be put into black and white in the 2010 budget submission?

SEC. DONLEY: Yeah, you'll see the details of that in FY10, but this was a key decision; it got made, actually, before I arrived – was the result of the Air Force's leadership's having reached the conclusion that a previous recommendation to go down to 316,000 was really not executable and not in the best interests of the Air Force. There are too many new missions – new requirements – coming at the Air Force that needed to be addressed and would not be able to be accommodated at the 316 (thousand) mark. So previous leadership had made a recommendation to stop the planned reduction in active duty end strength at 330,000; the secretary approved that just that day – prior to my arrival.

So we've been sort of – in terms of programming, building back up – filling that hole. We have new requirements, like ISR, for example – to build up ISR caps, to address some shortfalls in maintenance, to get some of this nuclear work back on track – so there are various calls, if you will, on that build back up to 330,000. And there's a lot of reshaping that's going on inside the Air Force to do that, and the Air Force did not go down to 316,000, it had been on a glide slope and we are now in sort of the mid-320s – 326, 328 – in that range. But, as we go forward, there's significant reshaping inside that going up to 330 to make sure we're focused on the right missions, because they're growing and presenting new requirements.

MR. DUBOIS: Okay. One, perhaps two, last questions – yes, ma'am, right there.

Q: Yeah, hi, I'm Susan Cornwell with Reuters. You've mentioned several times that it's important to keep the nuclear force credible as it potentially grows smaller, but I wondered if you'd like to comment on how realistic do you think it is to talk about possibly eliminating nuclear weapons now that they're – as Kissinger and Perry and a number of other people say – is a goal that should be pursued since they are – there's such a danger now from the non-state actors getting the weapons? Thank you.

SEC. DONLEY: Well, this is an important national debate, and I don't want to get into it too much, but I would like to emphasize that one of my main messages here today is that as the force gets smaller, it still needs to be credible, still needs to be effective, safe, secure and reliable. We need – if the national leadership wants to go in this direction, the operators of the nuclear forces need not just guidance on how to get smaller, but we need policy guidance and programming guidance, oversight – you've got to be careful what you ask for, you know, as a military department asking for more oversight – from those same – that same set of leadership that says stay focused on this mission and make it smaller, but don't let it atrophy or decay due to neglect.

That, I think, is a danger for the United States; that, I think, is more than the paradigm shifts that the Air Force had to confront and may not have done as well as it should have after the end of the Cold War, when you reduced the forces, you changed the mission focus to something else – global war on terror, for example – the inclination is to take your eyes off of this work. And what we have tried to put in place in these changes is to make sure the Air Force does not

take its eyes off this work, even if there are other, more pressing national security challenges – being at war in an irregular environment, for example.

We have tried to put in place organizations, structures, processes that will maintain focus on that – it will be a bright light shining down on that nuclear mission that will not be embedded in another command that has another mission. We'll have all of that work packaged together where we can watch it. And it needs to be sustained going forward. I think if there is one lesson, perhaps, that the Air Force has learned in the last 15 or 20 years, it would be that one – that this mission is too important for the country that we should somehow allow it to degrade or decay through lack of attention; we need to stay focused on it, whether it gets bigger or smaller, down to the last weapon.

MR. DUBOIS: I think that reference to George Schultz and Bill Perry and Henry Kissinger, and to our chairman here at CSIS, Sam Nunn, was their article in the Wall Street Journal that reflected their genuine desire, as well as the desire of many of us, that an ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons is a noble goal, but I think, as they also suggested, as have every president since Jimmy Carter, at least, and as Bob Gates has said, there's a reality that so long as others have nuclear weapons, we must maintain some level of these weapons ourselves, not just to deter potential adversaries but to reassure the some two-dozen allies who rely on our nuclear umbrella for their security, making it unnecessary for them to develop nuclear weapons. We're beyond our allotted hour, but I just, on behalf of John Hamre and our chairman, Sam Nunn, thank you very much, Secretary Donley. It's been enlightening; we appreciate it.

(Applause.)

(END)