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"STRATCOM Perspective"

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**General Kehler:** Good morning, and thank you for inviting me. I'm going to give you some perspectives today on my first two and a half weeks in command at STRATCOM. And let me give you one right off the bat. It is a lot colder in Omaha than it is in Orlando. [Laughter].

I really want to thank the Air Force Association for inviting me. Mike Dunn and his team -- Mike, you always do a great job at these events. Although I haven't been able to spend much time here I can tell just in the short time I've been here that my hat goes off to you once again. And of course to Sandy Schlitt, the chairman of the board, and the rest of the AFA team, thanks for hosting these really interesting symposiums.

I know that you already heard from some distinguished speakers this morning. I listened to the last panel and I was intrigued with the discussion. I know that Generals Fraser and Shelton talked this morning, and I know also the Vice Chief is here, General Breedlove, and many many familiar faces across the audience. So again, it's great to be here. And especially great to be here to talk a little bit about my time so far as the Commander of Strategic Command. It's an honor and a privilege to be leading that command and in particular leading the men and women who conduct some of the most important missions in the United States military.

You heard a little bit of this from Mike when he made the introduction, but STRATCOM is responsible for detecting, deterring and preventing attacks against the United States and employing appropriate force to defend the nation should deterrence fail. To do this, STRATCOM is assigned a portfolio of capabilities and that portfolio is really globally connected. When you look at the individual pieces of STRATCOM you might not see the connection. When you look at it, though, at the big picture level, I believe that the missions that we have been assigned all make sense as a portfolio of global capabilities. I believe if you looked harder you would find that STRATCOM is either directly or indirectly involved with every military

operation in every domain in every operating area and in every region. Now that's a big statement, but when I look at it there is no part of our military force today that doesn't rely in some way on capabilities wielded by Strategic Command.

So let me offer you some initial perspectives on the command, the environment we operate in, the challenges that lay ahead, and our priorities as we confront those challenges. Ten I'd like to talk a little bit about how we can take advantage of the opportunities that I believe accompany those challenges.

So first let me share my perspective on today's operating environment because it provides the context for all we do and all we need to do. And quite simply, we've never seen an operating environment like the one we have today.

While warfare is still an ugly business between human beings, the characteristic of the operational environment, especially as it pertains to Strategic Command, has changed. What has changed about it? Some of you have heard me say this before. This is a perspective I had in my last job and I certainly have brought that perspective to this one and have had it reinforced in the last two and a half weeks that I've been getting my feet on the ground there.

The characteristics that have changed, I believe, are time, distance, boundaries, symmetry and ambiguity. Think about time and distance today and what space and cyberspace have brought us in the way of capabilities that can span global distances and really beyond in seconds or perhaps when we're talking about cyberspace, in milliseconds. Boundaries are completely different in space and cyberspace than they are in the air. And certainly those characteristics and the changes that those bring to the way we think about today's operating environment, I think are enormous. Couple that with changes in symmetry. The best way to take on the United States military is asymmetrically. Now that's not new to warfare. That's always been the objective of one opposing force to another. Take them on where they're weak or where they have vulnerabilities. So we find ourselves in a position today where our adversaries and our potential adversaries are looking for those very vulnerabilities where asymmetric approaches will make the biggest difference and hopefully, from their view, with the least investment -- conversely, the most investment on our side. And ambiguity. It's easier sometimes to operate in the shadows.

So we're facing a different battlespace. The domains of space and increasingly cyberspace are intertwined with the traditional domains of land, sea and air and that means that STRATCOM's battlespace surround the earth, and it extends from beneath the sea to geosynchronous orbit some 22,000 miles above the earth, and it includes the global connection of networks within the Department of Defense that we use to conduct military operations.

We've also seen the development of new weapons and the potential, if you've been reading about the Deputy Secretary's remarks the last couple of days, his comments about the potential of weapons in the future that would involve cyberspace. So we've seen development of potentially brand new weapons we've not had to deal with before, and certainly advances in existing ones like ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

There's been an unprecedented proliferation in the number and type of non-state and non-traditional actors who are able to wield influence and pose asymmetric threats to our security. Today it's become harder to differentiate between combatants and non-combatants. Warfare is now characterized by hybrid combinations of capabilities -- conventional, irregular, terrorist, kinetic and non-kinetic -- and those are combined with hybrid combinations of strategies and tactics, and wielded by adversaries who may strike either while the cameras are rolling, or remain in the shadows to present us with ambiguity. These changes to the operating environment have all been defined and accelerated by technical and tactical innovation and adaptation.

So my take-away from all of this is there is no single textbook solution, no dominant technology or doctrine. Indeed, I think we can no longer talk about "the joint fight". There is no simple "one size fits all" solution that we can adopt.

The post-Cold War of 15 to 20 years ago has given way to a new defining point, I would argue, pre- and post-9/11. And the post-9/11 world is proving to be a more difficult and dangerous place with an entirely different mix of threats and actors. Only now the potential adversary could be a rogue state, a group that isn't directly aligned with any state, or a faceless criminal or hacker able to inflict damage, both virtual or physical damage, from the sanctuary of cyberspace.

So that's a treat way to lay out sort of my perspectives in working through this for the last couple of weeks. The question is, what the heck do we do about all of that?

I would say that first, even though the challenges that we face are complex, unremitting and compelling, STRATCOM's operations have to keep pace. We need better understanding of adversaries capabilities and intentions and better understanding of our own mission context. Joint operations have to be characterized by unity of action and effective partnerships across the entire interagency and with our international partners. And of course it has to be characterized by highly effective synchronization. We must get better at framing problems before we begin to plan how to solve them or certainly to execute those plans.

In short, I think to survive and thrive in this dynamic operating environment demands flexibility and adaptation and innovation. We have to prepare for the future, account for uncertainty, and anticipate and prepare for surprise. Because in my view, surprise may be the deadliest foe we face and our complex world is full of it.

I think it's safe to say that today we can count on two constants -- constant change and maybe constant surprise. Today's world presents many opportunities for surprise. Proliferation of advanced military technologies, protracted conflict with state and non-state adversaries, nuclear uncertainties in unstable regions, asymmetric combat in all domains, trans-regional connections and linkages. So surprise is a great equalizer, and that great equalizer can set us back by making our plans ineffective, our training irrelevant, our organizations vulnerable, and our commands incompetent. Think about how you felt on 9/11.

The critical factor in addressing today's challenges is how we deal with surprise, in my view. How we anticipate surprise. How we determine worst case scenarios and then prepare to deter or confront them. I think that anticipation demands faster and more comprehensive awareness in all domains and across all operating areas. It demands flexibility and agility in thinking, in planning, in relationships, and in execution. It demands decentralization and delegation. It demands unprecedented information sharing and inclusion. It demands resources and processes for rapid innovation.

It also demands that we force agility and innovation into our organization with exercises and activities that depart from the script. And it demands that we put in place the technical means to expose and share data across multiple domains and mission areas. I would argue, that's our job.

In a nutshell our job at STRATCOM is to prepare for and operate in this complex dynamic environment by shaping and employing capabilities to deter and when needed, to fight this ever-changing joint fight. We'll have to seek ways to minimize the chance of being surprised, particularly where surprise can be strategically decisive in STRATCOM's nuclear, space and cyberspace mission areas. And in the case where an adversary achieves surprise, we must ensure we have the ability to adapt and respond quickly with the options that our national leaders will need.

With this as a backdrop I've laid out some priorities that are on my mind for United States Strategic command.

The nuclear enterprise remains our number one priority. Our focus is to guarantee a safe, secure, effective and ready nuclear deterrent force. Providing this assurance demands keen and current knowledge of our potential nuclear adversaries' outlooks, plans and calculations. And along with the traditional threat spectrum, we must also plan continuously for non-traditional nuclear situations which include the nightmare scenario of a nuclear device or weapon of mass destruction falling into the hands of a terrorist group.

In particular, we must develop and sustain the nuclear enterprise so that we are equipped and capable of deterring future threats. This means that we'll pursue an effective stockpile stewardship program and advocate for continued investment across the nuclear enterprise. We need to ensure that today's force, including the nuclear command, control, communication and supporting ISR assets remains ready and sustained. We're going to have to make sure we have carefully worked through a set of requirements and that we advocate for the modernization of the strategic force and their supporting elements, and yes, I believe that this includes the need for a new tanker.

We've got to restore the scientific and intellectual edge and attract our best and brightest talent to this field, and we have to continue to reinforce perfection as the standard for all

nuclear-related activities. As an aside, I just went through a check ride. The Joint Staff comes to all the nuclear command centers once a year to do an assessment of our readiness to conduct that nuclear deterrence mission, and I can tell you that the check rides haven't gotten any easier in the last 35 years. It was very interesting for us to kind of work our way through that. The check actually goes on today. It goes on over about three days. I can tell you that we take to heart this notion that perfection remains the standard.

So next, and beyond the nuclear enterprise, in full partnership with the other combatant commands, we have to improve our plans, procedures, and capabilities to address trans-regional threats. Ongoing operations demand our full commitment and STRATCOM's activities both enable and support joint operations around the globe. Whether providing space-based communications for position, navigation and timing information, rapidly transmitting data around the world or ensuring other globally significant capabilities are developed, positioned and managed. STRATCOM intends to be a valued partner. In particular, our work to synchronize and advocate for capabilities like Global Strike, missile defense and combating weapons of mass destruction can help bring the unity of effort that I talked about earlier and more effective capabilities to the regional combatant commands.

In partnership with the other COCOMs we must identify how to better support urgent warfighting needs and implement integrated architectures and capabilities along with the appropriate operating concepts and tactics, techniques and procedures. This includes improvements in our ability to offer additional conventional and non-conventional, non-kinetic alternatives to meet today's deterrence needs.

In the space domain our priority is to ensure uninterrupted access to space-based capabilities. Mission assurance, if you will. And improve our awareness of objects and activities in space. This is a particular challenge given that this important domain is increasingly contested, congested, and competitive. But we know we need to enhance space situational awareness to strengthen safety, stability, sustainability and security across the space enterprise. We need to achieve fuller integration of space capabilities through all operational phases. We need to expand our planning and implementation for partnership operations with allies, coalition partners and commercial interests. Finally, we have to sharpen our warfighting requirements for space capabilities and insist on timely delivery of those same capabilities.

In cyberspace our priorities are to enhance protection of our networks and improve our organizations, capabilities, human capital and external relationships to ensure we can operate

effectively and assure our missions across this newest operational domain.

We must also respond to challenges imposed by the tighter fiscal reality of today. We've been charged by our leadership to ensure the best stewardship of taxpayer resources by reexamining the way STRATCOM does all of its business. For the foreseeable future we should expect to work under budgetary pressures and with limited resources, and within those parameters we must maintain our existing capabilities and adapt to the changing fight in order to stay ahead of potential adversaries.

So those are the challenges. A complex, dangerous environment characterized by constant change and potential surprise; the need to maintain flexibility and agility across our planning and our interwoven lines of operation; a continuing requirement for capability, sustainment and modernization; and limited resources to do so.

By lunch, we'll take on world hunger and several of the other big problems. [Laughter].

So how are we going to do this? Well, I am one of those people who believes that with challenge comes opportunity. I am encouraged by the opportunities that we have.

For example, national attention is now focused on nuclear affairs. The recently ratified New START treaty provides a path ahead, and there is demonstrated support for nuclear enterprise modernization, reversing a 15 year downward trend. That's going to be difficult in a declining budget environment, but we need to continue our advocacy to make sure those investment plans come to fruition.

Second, there's a realization that combatant commands must be innovative learning organizations as the best hedge against disruptive surprise.

Next, we've come to recognize the extensive and growing global dependence on space systems and their vulnerabilities, and we're taking steps to improve our awareness, protection, and resilience. The new National Space Policy and Strategy are welcome guideposts in this regard.

Cyberspace has established itself as an important domain. Its presence is pervasive. And while the road remains hard, with the stand-up of USCYBERCOM and its service components and other examples like the Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security, we're making progress to address these challenges.

Finally, I think we're also making progress in some key areas like missile defense.

That's my perspective as a grizzled veteran of two and a half weeks on the job. At STRATCOM we're committed to accomplishing our many and varied missions while continuing to provide full and undiminished support for our warriors and their families. STRATCOM's active duty, reserve component and civilian members who are standing watch this very minute at locations around the country and the globe are performing magnificently. They're deterring conflict and deeply committed to supporting ongoing operations around the globe. These outstanding men and women exemplify the best of today's joint force.

America's strategic forces proudly continue their longstanding role as the foundation of our national security posture. I am privileged to lead this remarkable team and I pledge that the strategic challenges facing our nation will command all the energy and commitment we can muster.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today, and good luck with the remainder of the conference.

I've got a couple of minutes left, and I'm happy to take some questions. Thank you very much.

[Applause].

**Moderator:** General Kehler, the first question is can you give us a little idea about how New START is going to be implemented? Some details on how that's going to work.

**General Kehler:** We have begun the planning process to implement New START. We have entry into force plus seven years to actually achieve implementation. There are decisions that we will have to make sooner than that, of course, because of the lead time for budgetary implications, but we are deeply engaged with the Joint Staff, the Department of Defense and others in our planning for how we will go about implementing the new limits that are in START.

At the same time I can tell you that we are paying particularly close attention to making sure that the new verification processes are equally effective. So in my view, implementation of the treaty is going to be done in two parts for us. One is the longer term planning we will do to actually structure the forces as we go forward to get to the numbers that are required by the treaty. And secondly, we need to work with the State Department and others, the intelligence community, on the verification piece of implementation.



**Moderator:** Talk to us a little bit about, you mentioned the nuclear enterprise and the state of trying to keep a viable and credible enterprise. What are some of the detail problems that you see that need to be addressed in the mid-term?

**General Kehler:** Let me put a little context around this. The instructions that I have given for my own personal education the first 60 or so days that I've been in the job, I asked my staff to arrange visits to all of the locations in the nuclear weapons complex -- the laboratories, the facilities that do the actual hands-on activities with the components, the weapons, et cetera -- because I am very interested in making sure that I clearly understand the health of that part of our complex. My number one concern is to make sure the stockpile is safe, effective, and able to support the deterrence needs that we place on that stockpile.

So number one, my concern is for the stockpile and that's where in my view we need to make sure that the investment is going to continue. That complex that does the stockpile stewardship program, that complex that actually does the assembling, disassembling, management of the materials, the production of the components, all the things that we are doing in the post-nuclear testing era. That complex is required, no matter what the deployed number of weapons turns out to be. It doesn't matter, because that complex will manage -- it manages dismantling as well. So the need to invest in the complex, I believe, exists regardless of your perspective about the weapons themselves.

So I want to make sure that I clearly understand what their needs are. I've already visited one of the facilities, had some conversations with the National Nuclear Security Administration. So that part is getting a lot of my attention.

I play a role in the stockpile assessment.

Second, the Nuclear Posture Review, after a very exhaustive review inside the government, both the executive branch and then ultimately discussions with the legislative branch regarding New START, we've come to a consensus that we will retain a triad of nuclear forces as we go through the implementation of START and get to a place where START, New START asks us to be.

So modernizing and sustaining carefully to make sure that we are wisely investing makes sense to me there as well. In particular, some of it, you get not only a nuclear deterrence and a driving force behind some of that modernization, but some of that modernization is also related to dual-capable activities -- most notably the bombers. So bombers have a special place as we are looking across this enterprise as do sustainment efforts for the Ohio Class, and eventually replacement of the Ohio Class, as

well as sustainment of Minuteman and then studies that will look at what a future land-based and strategic deterrent might look like.

You can't ignore the command, control, communications, nor can you ignore the supporting ISR. This exists as an enterprise, and the effectiveness and credibility of the deterrent is linked to the effectiveness and credibility of the force and the stockpile.

**Moderator:** I'm sorry to say we're out of time. I have a bunch of great questions here. Thanks to the audience for sending them in. I'll just give them to your staff, General Kehler, so you can have them write answers for you.

On behalf of all of us at AFA we're delighted to have you take time out of what I know is a very busy schedule in your first month or so of command. On behalf of the Chairman of the Board of AFA, Sandy Schlitt, thank you very much for taking the time to be here. Thank you.

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