

Statement at Armed Services Committee Strategic Forces Subcommittee

"Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses, and to working with you and Mr. Reyes to ensure that the NNSA and our nuclear weapons complex are equipped to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent without testing.

As we consider changes to Stockpile Stewardship and to the designs of our nuclear weapons, it is essential that the NNSA sustain the intellectual capital that underpins our deterrent.

People are vital but structures matter as well. I look forward to working with Mr. D'Agostino and Ambassador Brooks to ensure that the NNSA becomes a more effective steward of our nuclear complex.

I reject the current proposal from the Department of Energy to merge the NNSA's intelligence functions with those of DOE.

I also believe that this subcommittee should review NNSA's role in the budget process as priorities and funding for nonproliferation and other programs has been contentious at times.

This is a time of great opportunity for the complex.

The Reliable Replacement Warhead Program holds the promise to transform our nuclear footprint, make the enterprise more effective and reduce the likelihood of underground testing.

If we are successful in achieving a safer, more reliable arsenal that makes use of more benign materials and if it is accurate that plutonium has a longer shelf life than expected, we will be able to achieve drastic cuts in the size of the arsenal.

Ultimately, I believe that RRW and the improved arsenal it promises will confirm the need for the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Ratification would strengthen US leadership in controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction and bolster global norms against proliferation.

I will continue to work with the NNSA to ensure that it supports the national laboratories as they provide innovative solutions to maintain confidence in our weapons and the processes needed to assess, maintain and certify them.

As Tom knows, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in my district has been a leader in the effort to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrent without nuclear testing, in fact LLNL led the invention of the Stockpile Stewardship Program in the early 1990s.

A vital LLNL will continue to be critical to the successful transformation of the nuclear weapons complex.

In fact the work of all three national labs will be vital as the nation confronts a number of other challenges from addressing the threat of a nuclear North Korea and Iran; implementing the vision put forth in the Department of Energy's Global Nuclear Energy Partnership; potentially strengthening our nonproliferation efforts in South Asia; and developing new critical homeland security technologies.

In closing, I look forward to Tom's leadership at the NNSA in transforming the complex into an efficient and integrated system that successfully employs the scientific ingenuity of the NNSA labs."