

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS

MAY 4, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify regarding the Department of Defense's (DoD) efforts related to countering weapons of mass destruction (CWMD). DoD's CWMD mission is to dissuade, deter, and, when necessary, defeat actors of concern who threaten or use WMD against the United States and our interests. To accomplish this mission, the DoD CWMD Enterprise maintains the capability and capacity to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the effects of WMD use, while supporting broader whole-of-government efforts to prevent adversaries from acquiring or proliferating WMD. This mission requires the Department to invest in the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) defense readiness of the Joint Force, to execute cooperative threat reduction programs, and to support U.S. and international efforts to prevent WMD proliferation. I work alongside Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Defense, Dr. Brandi Vann; Acting Director of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Dr. Rhys Williams; Deputy Commander of the U.S. Special Operations Command, Vice Admiral Timothy Szymanski; and other DoD, U.S. Government, and international counterparts in developing the policies, strategies, capabilities, and expertise needed to deter and defeat WMD threats.

The WMD threat landscape continues to evolve and we continue to adapt how the Department is addressing those threats. Threats to international norms against WMD use, particularly in the chemical weapons arena, is a concerning trend. In recent years, both Russia and North Korea have employed chemical weapons for assassinations. Syria has used chemical weapons multiple times against its own population. As a result, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Conference of the States Parties adopted a decision on April 21, 2021 condemning Syria's use of chemical weapons and suspending Syria's rights and privileges under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). China, Russia, North Korea, and Iran, as well as select Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs), all possess or are working to advance weapons of mass destruction-related capabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to demonstrate the threat posed by biological incidents. And scientific advances in biotechnology are creating new types of challenges while also lowering the barriers to entry for WMD development, proliferation, and use. The dynamic nature of the WMD threat means that

the Department must continue adapting to mitigate threats to U.S. interests, building on what we have learned from experience.

## THREAT ENVIRONMENT

Secretary Austin's initial message to the Force made clear that China is the Department's pacing challenge. China is in the midst of a substantial modernization of its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems. While maintaining a robust silo-based and road-mobile ground-based nuclear force, China also possesses ballistic missile submarines and a bomber that can carry an air-launched ballistic missile that may be nuclear capable. The Intelligence Community estimates that the Chinese nuclear arsenal will at least double from its current estimated size of 200 warheads as China modernizes. Additionally, given China's military-civil fusion strategy, the U.S. Government has long-standing concerns that China seeks to acquire U.S. and other globally-sourced equipment, components, and technologies to advance its nuclear and other strategic military programs under the auspices of civilian or dual-use acquisition. Chinese entities and individuals continue to transfer proliferation-sensitive materials to North Korea, Iran, and other threat actors, and China has demonstrated lax enforcement of domestic export controls and multilateral sanctions regimes intended to prevent such transfers. Separately, China is a State Party to the CWC and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). According to the Department of State's most recent annual Compliance Report, though, China "engaged in activities with potential dual-use applications, which raise concerns regarding its compliance with Article I of the BWC. In addition, the United States does not have sufficient information to determine whether China eliminated its assessed biological warfare (BW) program, as required under Article II of the Convention." Another Department of State report on the CWC notes for the first time that the United States "cannot certify that China has met its obligations under the Convention due to concerns regarding China's R&D on pharmaceutical-based agents and toxins."

Likewise, Russia continues to expand its WMD capabilities. Russia is devoting substantial resources to its nuclear triad, and its development of new, destabilizing delivery systems – including a nuclear powered cruise missile, autonomous underwater vehicle, and

hypersonic glide vehicle – continues apace. Russia has demonstrated flagrant disregard for international norms against chemical weapons use. The Russian Government has twice used nontraditional nerve agents in failed assassination attempts against Sergei Skripal (2018 in the United Kingdom) and Aleksey Navalny (2020 in Russia). Russia also continues to prop up the Assad regime, despite Syrian forces having used chemical weapons against its citizens on at least 50 occasions. Finally, we continue to have concerns about Russian pharmaceutical-based agent (PBA) programs and their intended purposes.

North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons jeopardizes international stability and weakens the global nonproliferation regime. These capabilities pose a threat to U.S. forces, allies, and partners and violate multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs). Given the risk that Kim Jong Un could seek to employ WMD in the course of or to stave off a conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the Joint Force must be ready for any number of WMD-related contingencies that require operating in a CBRN contaminated environment. DoD works with our South Korean ally to increase and improve decontamination capabilities in support of an improved CBRN deterrence posture on the Korean Peninsula. These efforts focus on maintaining the capability to decontaminate and operate air and seaports that support reception, staging, onward movement, and integration of forces in the event of a contingency. As the threat from North Korea's WMD programs persists and grows, the Department will continue to work with international partners to deter and delay North Korea's WMD ambitions.

The United States remains committed to preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. The Department of Defense plays a supporting role in the United States' Iran strategy by focusing on deterring and defending against Iranian military threats, while the Department of State leads diplomatic efforts to bring Iran's nuclear program back into compliance with limits under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). We are concerned about Iran's efforts to pursue an expansion in its uranium enrichment capabilities, including the installation of multiple cascades of advanced centrifuge models and recent announcements that Iran is enriching uranium up to 60 percent. Iran has also stated that it has conducted work on other capabilities of concern, such as [the production of] uranium metal. The Intelligence Community continues to assess that Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development

activities that it assesses would be necessary to produce a nuclear device. Iran also possesses and employs the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the region. The United States has concerns that Iran is developing agents intended to incapacitate for offensive purposes.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) have pursued WMD with varying degrees of success. The availability of dual-use chemical and radiological material that can be used to make crude WMD is a particular concern. Given safe harbor and access to knowledge, skills, and materials, VEOs still pose a threat to the United States, partners and allies, and U.S. interests.

The threats outlined above represent enduring features of the threat landscape that the United States faces. At the same time, other emerging dynamics portend the possibility of more complex threats in the future. Two bear particular mention:

First, advances in biotechnology provide both promise and peril in the realm of bio-threats. A confluence of advances in biological science, computing, automation, and artificial intelligence / machine learning is fueling a new wave of innovation poised to transform the globe, with the potential for significant applications in defense and national security as well as benefits to the health and welfare of individuals globally. Biotechnologies like gene-editing and synthetic biology may provide the tools to develop more precise therapeutics more quickly and cheaply in the near future. Additive manufacturing may reduce the need for costly and difficult-to-procure equipment necessary to produce those advanced therapeutics. The advent of these advances, however, brings with them the potential for misuse. Rather than develop therapeutics, threat actors may develop more potent and novel biological agents. The greater availability of gene editing, synthetic biology, and additive manufacturing may allow those actors to conduct research and development on a smaller and more difficult-to-detect scale. Many of these technologies are becoming more available to the general public. And the dual-use nature of many of these advancements makes their use for nefarious purposes difficult to identify. As a leading developer of biotechnology and its myriad applications, the United States is often the source of breakthroughs and revolutionary technologies in this space. As such, the United States must also work to protect and secure the U.S. bioeconomy, both to maintain U.S. leadership in this rapidly evolving field and to minimize the risk that U.S.-developed technologies or information will be diverted and misused.

Second, although not a weaponized biological agent, COVID-19 changed the biological threat landscape. The global pandemic demonstrates the breadth and depth of harm infectious disease can exact, exposes the difficulty of combating pandemics, and makes clear the risks our nation would face if State and non-State actors' develop or deploy biological agents to pursue their objectives. The pandemic also shows that biological threats do not respect borders or treaties. Although the total damage from COVID-19 on humans, economic systems, and global infrastructure will not be known for some time, we should have no doubt that other actors have taken note of the effects it has had on the United States and its allies and partners.

## THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO WMD CHALLENGES

The Department's CWMD professionals are working every day to dissuade, deter, and defeat these threats while maintaining the ability to respond to and mitigate the effects of WMD use. The Department has three lines of effort that support that mission: prevent acquisition, contain and reduce threats, and respond to crises. Achieving effects across those lines of effort is a Department-wide effort. In addition to OSD(Policy), the Offices of the Under Secretaries of Defense for Research and Engineering, for Acquisition and Sustainment, for Personnel and Readiness, and for Intelligence and Security, as well as the Joint Staff, the Military Departments and Services, the Combatant Commands (particularly U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in its role as Coordinating Authority), and the Defense Agencies (including the Defense Threat Reduction Agency), work collaboratively to meet CWMD challenges.

Under the lines of effort focused on preventing acquisition or containing existing threats, the Department plays several important roles, from implementing global nonproliferation and nuclear arms control agreements and arrangements, to supporting whole-of-government efforts to prevent the transfer of WMD material to threat actors of concern. More specifically, DoD contributes to efforts to support and advance the objectives of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that has now been in force for more than 50 years; remains postured to conduct WMD interdictions; and leverages tools such as the Proliferation Security Initiative so that partners are prepared and willing to interdict illicit WMD-related transfers. The Department also stays abreast of potential future WMD threats, such as security

dynamics that may lead countries to consider pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities, and works with our interagency and international partners to prevent future proliferation.

Additionally, the Department leads the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, which works with partner nations to secure and eliminate WMD and WMD-related materials. Now entering its thirtieth year, the DoD CTR Program originally worked with the states of the former Soviet Union to secure and eliminate vulnerable WMD stockpiles and delivery vehicles. The DoD CTR Program has adapted to the changing WMD threat landscape and is active in more than 30 States worldwide, working with partners to reduce the risk of WMD proliferation and use across the CBRN spectrum. More recently, support from the DoD CTR Program helped a number of countries to more rapidly identify and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, while also building regional networks to share outbreak data and best practices for COVID-19 diagnosis and reporting. The Department's successes achieved through the CTR Program are a result of the continuing partnership and support of Congress.

The Department also works to develop the capability and capacity of the Joint Force, allies, and partners to operate in a CBRN-contaminated environment. This includes developing the right plans, policies, authorities, and capabilities to protect U.S. forces in a contaminated environment. This is important not only for responding to CBRN crises, but also for deterrence: signaling to adversaries that using WMD against U.S. forces will not help them achieve their objectives. This approach works in tandem with our prevention efforts, particularly by shaping adversary motivation and intent to acquire WMD. To this end, the Department works with European and Asian allies and partners to ensure that U.S. CBRN defense capabilities are interoperable and to encourage them to share the burden of CBRN defense through their own development of robust capabilities. We also invest Security Cooperation funds to help allies and close partners build CBRN defense capabilities necessary to operate alongside U.S. forces. These efforts send a signal to threat actors that aggression using WMD will fail.

To address these issues, the DoD CWMD Enterprise collaborates and de-conflicts at multiple levels, including through the DoD CWMD-Unity of Effort (UoE) Council. The Council brings together the 20-plus stakeholders across the Department to share information and collaborate on cross-cutting issues to meet CWMD policy and strategic goals. Through this Council, we are tackling some of the Department's most challenging CWMD issues, such as

addressing CBRN readiness, and are advancing initiatives to make our Enterprise more effective and efficient. For example, in 2020 the Council finalized a classified document, approved by the Acting Secretary in January 2021, that creates for the first time Department-wide, tiered CWMD priorities. These priorities are designed to align our CWMD resources and efforts around the highest priority WMD threats to the nation and to the Joint Force. In 2021, we are conducting an implementation review to hold the Enterprise accountable to these priorities and to assess alignment with this guidance.

The Administration is reviewing existing, and developing new, national and departmental strategy guidance and issue-specific reviews. Those new strategies and reviews are underway and will set the course for our operations, activities, and investments for the next several years. DoD's CWMD community will have opportunities to inform those reviews and documents; I anticipate that the CWMD community's priorities will include a number of significant initiatives:

As the Department moves out of an ongoing, immediate focus on COVID-19 response, we must confront the bigger question of how the Department should be postured to mitigate the spectrum of biological threats, including natural, accidental, and deliberate. COVID-19 has made clear we cannot view biological weapons and biological incidents as firewalled, since either could have significant consequences for the nation. The Department has played a pivotal role in the current COVID-19 response – a contribution in support of our domestic agencies that has saved American lives. We cannot forget, however, the challenges that we face across the WMD-threat spectrum. In some of those cases, DoD's role is unique within the U.S. Government, and we must make sure we are focused properly on these issues where the President and the nation may depend exclusively—or in a supporting role—on our capabilities.

The Department must also provide the CWMD enterprise with clear guidance and direction, including by making sure CWMD issues are reflected in the Department's updated strategic guidance documents. The Interim National Security Strategic Guidance notes the profound danger that the proliferation of WMD poses for global security. The Department is working to translate that guidance into a new National Defense Strategy, from which we will derive more specific guidance for the CWMD community.



Additionally, the Department must improve readiness for chemical and biological weapons challenges in key theaters. As the Department shifts to an increased focus on competition among great powers, developing the capabilities necessary for us to fight and win in a CBRN-contested environment in those theaters becomes critical. Our adversaries are building WMD capabilities designed to make it more difficult for us to operate in such environments. Ultimately, the Department works to train and equip U.S. forward deployed forces to fight in these scenarios and to achieve interoperability with our allies and partners. The Department is prioritizing the improvement of CBRN defense capabilities, personnel, and equipment in the U.S. European Command Area of Responsibility and on the Korean Peninsula. As we build CBRN defense readiness, we will also work to ensure that the NATO Alliance's deterrence and defense posture is CBRN-informed.

## CONCLUSION

Chairman Gallego, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Department of Defense's efforts related to the CWMD Enterprise. The dedicated team at the Department of Defense has made important strides in mitigating WMD threats. However, much work remains and the threat landscape is changing. We are adapting the Joint Force to be better postured against future threats and assisting partners and allies to do the same. We have prioritized WMD threat actors to focus our efforts to prevent and contain WMD threats. And we are evolving to meet the challenge of the future. We will need your continued support for the programs and efforts that the Department has underway to confront these threats. Thank you for your continued commitment to and support of the CWMD mission.