



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
UNITED STATES STRATEGIC COMMAND

Reply To:
USSTRATCOM/J0CC
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Senate Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members:

Thank you for your continued support of United States Strategic Command. During my confirmation, Senators Reed, Inhofe, Hirono, Hawley, Ernst, and Blackburn each asked for my assessment of the Sea Launched Cruise Missile – Nuclear (SLCM-N).

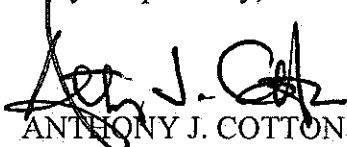
Today's security environment is dynamic and marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Putin's nuclear coercion, and the ongoing nuclear expansion from the People's Republic of China (PRC). For Russia, we have a growing nuclear deterrence challenge centered on Putin's potential perception that the threshold for regional nuclear employment is lower than treaty-limited systems. The PRC is also developing capabilities that would present a similar deterrence challenge, and they are unconstrained by any treaty limitations.

As the Commander of United States Strategic Command, it is my responsibility to advocate for nuclear capabilities and present options to the President that preserve or restore strategic deterrence. Nuclear and conventional capabilities, combined with strategic messaging, are required to demonstrate U.S. stake and resolve to deter, and if deterrence fails impose unacceptable costs and deny benefit the adversary seeks should they employ any nuclear weapon.

A low-yield, non-ballistic nuclear capability to deter, assure, and respond without visible generation (similar to the characteristics of SLCM-N) offers additional options and supports an integrated deterrence approach. It is one of several possible nuclear or conventional capabilities the U.S. could develop to enhance strategic deterrence. I support funding to assess the full range of possible options to address this challenge in a rapidly changing security environment with the backdrop of multiple nuclear adversaries.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide my view on this deterrence challenge.

Very Respectfully,



ANTHONY J. COTTON
General, USAF
Commander

cc:

House Armed Services Committee

Senate Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense

House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Defense

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, Secretary of Defense

General Mark A. Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff