



Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Well, good afternoon. I'm impressed with how many of you have stayed till the last event of the last day, which we will call the best event of the Air Force Association Air, Space & Cyber Conference.

I'm Major General Retired Roger Burg. I will serve as a moderator for this panel, which will be discussing the imperative of the development and deployment of the Sentinel ICBM system. We have a very experienced and talented panel who agreed to come here to let you know what they think about this incredibly important weapons system.

It's been a long time since some of you went through IQT and pulled your first alert. It hasn't been that long for others of you. But during that entire time, the ICBM has been the backbone of the nuclear deterrent force. And I'm very happy to begin our panel with an introduction.

General Thomas Bussiere is the commander of Air Force Global Strike Command. We go back a few years. And I could give you an extraordinary resume, but that would just waste your time, and embarrass him, and get me in trouble. I've asked each of our panel members to be prepared for some opening comments, five to seven minutes or so, and give us the messages about the Sentinel ICBM and the importance of the system to national security. And so I will turn the microphone over to my friend, General Thomas Bussiere, the commander of Air Force Global Strike Command.

Gen. Thomas Bussiere:

Hi Roger. And I'll introduce my colleagues on the stage, Mr. Mike Shoultz and Major General Mike Lutton. They wanted me to introduce myself as Mike Bussiere, better refuse to do that. And it's a privilege to be here today to talk about our nation's most important mission. Mike and I go back 100 years also, and the other Mike too.

So I want to thank AFA for bookending our nation's most important professional development opportunity here in DC, beginning it with the B-21 and ending it with a Sentinel. So they bookended this most important professional developed forum by giving a venue for us to talk about our nation's most important mission.

And I truly believe it is. It's not just a bumper sticker. It has been the most important mission since the advent of atomic weapons post World War II. It has been the most important mission that has stabilized the international community for decades.

And I'd offer to you just a couple thoughts. The ICBM land leg of the triad has been the most stabilizing force for our nation for a very, very long time. And quite frankly, it's an assumed capability that most of the population doesn't understand. They truly don't understand what happens every day out in the missile wings.

And we're lucky enough to have our missile wing commanders here in the front row and our senior enlisted leaders. It's a privilege to command in any organization in the Department of the Air Force. But offered to you, it's the highest privilege to lead the missile warriors of the ICBM wings.

For today right now, as we enjoy this forum, and we enjoy our conversation and our fellowship in this professional development opportunity, right now today, there are operators, maintainers, defenders, facility managers, chefs maintaining the watch, like they have done for decades. And I reckon back, are there any Brits in here? Any Brits? One please, someone raise their hand like they're a Brit. Thank you.

So I reckon back to I'm a big history buff. And if you remember what happened back in 1940, from 10 July essentially to the end of October in 1940, where Britain was fighting for their survival with a German Luftwaffe attacking the UK, and the marshaling of the Royal Air Force to defend London and the United Kingdom.



And on that fateful day in August of 1940, then Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a very, very famous quote that I would offer to you today is the foundation of what this force has done for our nation for 60+ years. And think about that. Right now today, we have around 1,200 missile operators in the Department of the Air Force. Global Strike Command has about 22 to 23% of the defenders in the Department of the Air Force. And we have a host of maintainers that maintain this weapons system in a very austere environment. So I'd offer to you that Winston Churchill in 1940, when he said in the House of Commons that, "Never in the history of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

So ask Mr. Google about the few, and then I'd offer to you that your picture would pop up in the search engine. Never in the history of our country has so much been owed to so few. Mike.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

And our second panelist, Mr. Mike Shoultz is the associate director of A10, the nuclear counter-proliferation directorate of the Air Staff, and we're pleased to have him on board. Mike.

Michael Shoultz:

Thank you General Burg. So as General Bussiere talked about, is we all recognize the importance of the ICBM weapon system, Minuteman III transitioning to Sentinel. What I wanted to do is give you a brief overview and perspective from the DC area of responsibility, because that appreciation doesn't always resonate inside the beltway.

When we have new members come into Air Force A10, the first thing I give them is a science project. And I said, "What I want you to do is I want you to go read the 2010 NPR Nuclear Posture Review, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, and the '22 Nuclear Posture Review." And if you go back to the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, what you would see is the threat was not Russia or China, it was nuclear terrorism. We were going to reset our relationship with the Russians. And China was an unknown, but there was still the belief that we were going to be able to figure out how to do strategic competition with China where we could both benefit.

At that time, we were under New START, where we decreased the number of on alert warheads for the ICBM, reduced it to 400. We reduced the number of ICBMs out in the field. And there was conversations about, okay, this is just one point on a glide path to not having nuclear weapons, where we were going to go from 1,550 to 1,000.

And of all the weapons systems that make up the triad, the bomber, the Ohio-class boat, and the ICBM, the ICBM was the one that got the most attention, especially from the nonproliferation community.

So if those of you that are philosophers and like baseball, there's the great Yogi Berra who said, "Making predictions is hard, especially about the future." And boy is he right. If in a period of eight years, where we're going to reset our relationship with Russia, we were going to reduce the role of nuclear weapons. We were going to try and get on a glide path to reduce the reliance on the ICBM. That strategic environment completely changed in eight years.

Thankfully, there were enough people that saw the need to continue on with the modernization efforts, despite the pressure and the trend to go lower, because they knew that the strategic environment was uncertain.

So you look at the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, it clearly acknowledges the threat that Russia is, and the speed and pace at which China was developing their capabilities. And if you looked at the 22 NPR, the only thing that you might say that they got wrong was how quickly things would change from 2022 to 2024.



So luckily people have realized, as General Bussiere pointed out, the stability aspect of the ICBM brings, the imperative to modernize the ICBM, and transitioning from Minuteman III to Sentinel. And what I will tell you is that Secretary Kendall, General Brown are completely committed to this nuclear modernization. It has widespread support within the building.

If you watch General Allvin's confirmation hearing yesterday, all the questions about Sentinel were not about why do we need it, but how do we keep it on track? So people recognize the strategic environment has changed, and we need to accelerate that modernization as much as possible.

But the problem is we have reduced any margin, not just for ICBMs, or for bomber transition, or for the boat transition. And unlike an aviation unit, and this is for all the ICBMs and all the people that support the mission out here, the task in front of you is huge. And I don't think that our Air Force fully understands it, but we're going to educate them.

Because unlike an aviation unit, when you transition from one system to a new system, as you bring down the old system, you declare that you're C5, you're non-mission capable, you're going to train up in the new mission. And then you're going to get to an IOC and then declare you're ready.

From today with 400 on alert warheads all the way through Sentinel transition, we're going to have to maintain that alert requirement. We're going to have to transition from Minuteman III to Sentinel. We're going to have Airmen out in the field, some supporting Minuteman III, some supporting Sentinel. And it's going to be a huge task. But I do know that under Mike Lutton's leadership and his successor, that they're going to arm you to do that, and your nation is counting on you to do it seamlessly. Thank you.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Thanks Mike. And our third panelist is the commander of 20th Air Force, the operational force of the ICBM, Major General Mike Lutton, recently nominated for his third star and a position as the deputy commander to General Bussiere at Air Force Global Strike Command. No name changes required. Go ahead, Mike.

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Sir thanks, and it's honor to be on the stage with General Bussiere and Mr. Shoultz. It's also an honor with the chief and I to represent the almost 13,000 Airmen of 20th Air Force that are on alert, ready to go tonight.

It's unbelievably important for the nation. It's unbelievably important to serve at a time of consequence, and this is a time of consequence for our nation and our allies. And our Airmen embrace that. They understand what they do, and they understand the contribution. They're part of the joint team that they provide.

Some of you that know me, this is a family business for Brenda and I. My wife was an operator, my wife was initial cadre under General Burg when he was our ops group commander, that actually brought the current C2 system online. And our son is an operator that works for Colonel McGee.

So our focus is on the weapon system, but we know the weapon system is only as good as the force and the family. And so it's an honor to represent that force and family. It's an honor to serve that force and family, to make sure we deliver results for the nation. Thank you.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. Thanks Mike. I've been developing questions for quite some time for our panel, with their assistance I might add. That's the way you do this, right? We hear often that the Sentinel is a critical



capability to support nuclear deterrence. But I'd like each of our panel members to describe in their words, the why. Why is a deployed ICBM system critical to the concept of nuclear deterrence and national security? General Bussiere.

Gen. Thomas Bussiere:

I'll give you my two cents first, and then we'll see if Mike or others have any comments. So I think, again, you can fact check me on this, but I think we're on the 14th straight administration, political party agnostic, that has reviewed the threat and has validated the need for a triad. So we've gone back time and time again as a nation and tried to evaluate what our national security needs are. And we've revalidated that a triad is an important thing for our national security needs, and those of our closest allies and partners that we have extended deterrence requirements for.

So if you take that for granted, then you look at the attributes of each leg of the triad, each one has its very unique attributes that adds and multiplies into the national security calculus. But the land leg, the triad is a dispersed, missile fields across the fabric of the US causes quite a dynamic of decision calculus for any potential adversary.

It is widespread. It requires an attack on the homeland. It requires a massive attack on the homeland, which changes the calculus of any potential adversary leader before he or she makes a decision to hold at risk what we value. And I would offer it to you, there's nothing that transmits more to our nation or our allies of what we value than the fielding of a land leg ICBM.

Now, we can go through the attributes of responsiveness, like right this second. If directed by the President of the United States, our forces are ready, like they have been for 60+ years. We can talk about the flexibility, we can talk about the level of effort required to hold that at risk. And then the attributes of the submarine forest and the attributes of the bomber leg are all unique to the triad. But the foundation, some would say the bedrock of that triad and that strategic deterrence foundation is the ICBM land leg.

And if you take that for granted, which several administrations have, then if you look at the age, the need... I mean don't get me wrong, there's probably not a person on the planet that would not hope for one day, we could free the world of violence and weapons. But I'd offer to you to find an example in history where that has happened from a position of weakness.

You have to negotiate from a position of strength. And you all know our motto, right? It's peace through strength. So we can talk about the attributes, but the nation has decided it's needed, and the nation is investing in its replacement.

Michael Shoultz:

Just a couple of things I'll piggyback on. If you went back to 2010 NPR, certainly there wasn't a perceived threat. So as General Bussiere talked about, every administration comes in, takes a look at the nuclear posture, and invariably they look at a [inaudible 00:17:12]. And when you actually get in the seat as the President of the United States and you look at the world around you, you quickly realize that that's probably not the nuclear posture that you need to have a credible deterrent.

So what is the importance and what value does on alert ICBMs bring? Well, if you talk to General Cotton, he said his primary responsibility is providing the president options, and the ICBM provides the president a number of great options. Because in a time of crisis, it's on alert. You don't have to do anything with it. It's there. You don't have to generate it. If the president wants it as an option, it's there. If he doesn't want to use it, he doesn't have to use it.



And then people will bring up the argument, "Hey, well the ICBM's on hair trigger alert." Well, anybody that is in a business knows that's not the case. There's only one person that can authorize a release of a nuclear weapon and an ICBM, and that's the President of the United States. And then as General Bussiere talked about, it puts the president in a used or lose situation. It doesn't, right? An adversary would have to commit about 900 of their assets to take out every launch facility that is out in the missile field, and that's assuming that they're going to hit every target. So it is incredibly stabilizing.

So people that aren't in the business day-to-day, they have the perception of the ICBM. And then when they come in and they look at the threat, they realize just how important and stabilizing the ICBM is.

And what I always do when I'm talking to somebody that's questioning the need for the ICBM is I have a chart that lists the two naval bases that support the Ohio, the bomber bases. And then I lay out all the ICBM targets, and then I take the ICBM off the picture and say, "This is what the adversary has to deal with if you don't have the ICBM." And then people quickly realize the importance and the value that the ICBM has on day-to-day deterrence. And not only for our nation, but for as General Bussiere talked, about our allies and partners.

Because unlike any other nation, we extend our deterrent to our allies and partners, so that they don't develop the capability, and we provide that assurance guarantee. So again, people come in. They're not sure why we need it. Once they start walking through it, and they see the threat, and they see the value, then they quickly realize the importance of the ICBM.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Thank you. General Lutton-

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Sir, I'd just add two parts. A part that often isn't discussed with our force, it has the highest degree of command and control of any asset that we have, right? And that is often overlooked but shouldn't be. So that is what allows our senior leadership and our highest national level leadership to have options is that degree of command and control.

I think it also provides an unbelievable dilemma to any potential adversary. And we have history in our nation where we haven't provided that dilemma to potential adversaries, and they've taken advantage of that historically, and we've had to respond. When you have a ready alert force that presents an unbelievable dilemma to a potential adversary, it stabilizes.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. There are a lot of people in this room who will be critical members of the teams that will develop and deploy the Sentinel missile system. I would like to know from our panel, as you look at Minuteman III capabilities versus what you want to see in Sentinel capabilities, could you describe the differences between what exists today, and what you hope to see deployed in a few years time as Sentinel becomes an operational weapon system? General Bussiere.

Gen. Thomas Bussiere:

So I'll give you some quick thoughts from my perspective. So if you go back in time and you look at how we fielded the current weapon system Minuteman III and we've added and we've upgraded, etc., and we look at the technology of the time versus the technology today, the real value in the Sentinel is going to be in multiple facets.



It will provide more modularity for maintainers and sustainment. And again, just not unlike the B-21 development, the maintenance and sustainment challenges that we currently enjoy with the Minuteman III will be minimized and optimized in the Sentinel weapon system from day one. And so that's a unique aspect to it.

As the threat has matured and as our understanding of the threat has matured over the years, we've refined our security posture for our current system, and we've also refined our design for the future based on today and the future threats. So that's another unique aspect to it.

And then as the world has matured and become more complicated, we've added range and accuracy requirements into the weapons system so that we can hold at risk those things our nation has decided that we need to hold at risk, and that's a very unique aspect. So the underpinning of our strategic deterrence is having a credible force.

And like I said yesterday, I'm sure our nation would have, if we had the crystal ball like Mike had talked about looking into the future, we might not have waited for four decades to recapitalize our business. We probably would've said, "Hey, let's sequence and phase this," but it is what it is, and we are where we are today.

So how do we properly and agilely feel this capability to hold at risk what our nation has decided we need to hold at risk, and make no determination a fuzzy math for any adversary about whether or not today's a day you want to hold at risk what we value? And there are many other attributes, but I'm going to let the other mics cover that.

Michael Shoultz:

Yeah, I don't have anything to add. I'll just echo the things you hammered home. Obviously, you need a credible weapon system. Right? And so two things that General Bussiere talked about is range and accuracy, and payload. So it's a new system and you want to make sure it's got improved capability there.

The other aspect is reducing the workload on the Airmen to sustain it and maintain it out in the field. So the modularity, reducing trips out to the field, making it easier to change components, and reducing risk on the road, transporting various aspects of the subcomponents, and then the security features.

So everything that General Bussiere talked about are key elements of our credible weapon system. And those are things that from the Department of the Air Force are looking for, and I know that General Newberry is making sure that's going to happen. So nothing to add there. Mike.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Mike, before you go, I'd like to modify the question a little bit from your perspective. Operators, maintainers, and defenders have been operating, maintaining, and securing ICBM systems for over 60 years. As you look to the job that those Airmen must do, as it changes from Minuteman III to Sentinel, what advantages do you see? What improvements do you see? How do you see the airman's job changing as Sentinel becomes an operational system?

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Thanks, sir. I think two part. In the teamwork and the partnership so far, I see two components, both effectiveness, which is our primary driver. Effectiveness with respect to nuclear surety, effectiveness with respect to nuclear safety. Those are maintained and increased, but also efficiency. And I'd be remiss, Colonel Galbert and I were both peacekeepers, so some of this is not speculative. We had weapon systems that had modularity. We know how that works, and it works unbelievably well.



There are tasks we do today, Johnny's wing, Barry's Wing, Kenny's wing, Mike Power's wing, that require four to five times more Airmen than the squadron that Johnny and I were in operating, to do the same task. So there's an inefficiency with that, that we're excited for Sentinel to allow us to grow that effectiveness and efficiency with a new weapon system.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. Thanks Mike. I have a question for Mr. Shoultz, but I would certainly allow any panel member to jump in. In talking with various political leadership here in the city, I've been told that support for the Sentinel ICBM system is broad, but it is not deep. If you might address that issue from your perspective as you work the Washington AOR, do you see that as a reasonable description of the support for the system, or do you argue the point?

Michael Shoultz:

Well, I would ask clarification on the deep part. They know we need it, they don't understand the importance? Any specifics on what you mean by-

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

In the context that I heard, it was described more from the perspective of if we run into difficulties, some of our support might not be there. That the support is broad, but that assumes you keep it on schedule, on cost, deployed on time, and not run into any significant difficulties.

Michael Shoultz:

Yeah, so I have not personally heard that. What I have heard are... Certainly you have people that don't support the modernization, that are looking for opportunities either cross growth, schedule delays, to jump in the fray. And I know that even those that support the program have the same concerns.

But the reality is the Minuteman III option left the station 10 years ago when we did the AoA and we committed to GBSD, which is Sentinel now, right? So I know we're talking about ICBMs, but I'll use an airplane analogy. We are past decision speed. There's no stopping.

Minuteman III has end of life issues that General Newberry and his team are managing Heroically, and Mike Lutton and his Airmen, to keep that weapon system credible until Sentinel comes on. But there is no backup plan for not having Sentinel. And I think all the folks realize that, and that's why you see a lot of commitment to doing the things that need to happen to do what we can to keep it on track, to minimize that gap.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Thank you. In conversation with General Lutton, he has told me that he is preparing for the deployment today. General Lutton, if you'd describe some of the things that you can describe in how you're preparing your Airmen, how you're preparing your facilities, for the future deployment of the Sentinel Weapon system.

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Sir, did you want to answer that question?

Gen. Thomas Bussiere:

I'll follow up.





Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Sir thanks, and a shout out to many of the folks in the room that did the hard work. Bill Barrington, wherever you're at, about three years ago, just looking at the challenge that was ahead of us and trying to determine what we refer to as setting the conditions for Sentinel deployment.

And so whether it's our helicopter operators, our ICBM operators, defenders, Maintainers, mission support, really leaned into it about two and a half years ago. So we are ready now, with no impact to our air component commander for our operational commitment, to begin to give launch facilities or a missile alert facility to Northrop. Whenever that word comes to us, we are ready today to do that.

I would say the other part is through innovation, and experimentation, and exercising largely in our sims. Over the last several months, our operators in particular, we've given them what we refer to as tactical problems about how we believe a mixed wing operation will look like, and the status they may or may not receive. And then we're gathering that data. And so we're not, if you will, at a cold start. We have informed positions, and we're also revising some of our operational procedures that we have right now to make them where possible, weapon system agnostic. So we don't have a Minuteman III procedure, when in fact we don't need a Minuteman III procedure, we need a security procedure. So we're excited about that opportunity.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. General Bussiere, Mr. Shoultz alluded to the complexity of deploying while sustaining. From your perspective as the MAJCOM commander and your obligation to support your combatant commander with a deployed number of weapon systems throughout this modernization, what do you see as the major critical points, the key issues that need to be worked as you sustain Minuteman III, while you set the stage for and begin deployment of the Sentinel?

Gen. Thomas Bussiere:

Roger, that's a good question. Let me kind of blend in. A little top off to Mike's comments about your support question, then tie it into the complexity of this fielding.

So from a support perspective, I would agree with your characterization that at least I've observed bipartisan across the aisle, political party agnostic support. I'd say it's pretty deep and wide, based on the understanding, on the need, the urgency, and the value to our nation.

And we are required and obligated to be good stewards of the taxpayers money, right? So the taxpayers are giving the Department of Defense, Department of the Air Force a significant amount of money to ensure their security blanket. And we acknowledge that. We have an obligation not only in this program but all programs, to make sure we are good stewards of the taxpayer's money, and we are doing that.

But I would offer to you, there are some camps that go, I'd offer to you a small subset of both the American public and some of our leaders on the Hill that maybe don't understand the nature and value of this system. There are some that say that, "Why would you invest so much money in a capability that's never going to be used?" I would offer to you it's used every day of every week, every second of every hour. It's used right now. The value, and power, and strength of this force is in its existence, in the message and the stabilizing factor it has across the fabric of the globe for any potential adversary that has bad intentions.

So if you're going to say, "We don't need it," or, "We can't afford it," we're obligated as a nation, as a security professional apparatus to go and answer the following questions. What's the world and the United States state in the international arena going to be like if we don't have it? What's our national





security going to be like if we don't have it? And if we're going to say we can't afford it, then we also have to say, why?

So again, I'm not going to debate whether or not there are different positions, because there are, but we need to completely understand that this nation has made a decision that we need it. It's essential, and the journey's going to be difficult.

The journey's going to be difficult because it's probably one of the most complex capabilities and force changes that we've done in at least 50 plus years. And the unique aspect of that is not only caused by its size and scope, but it's caused by the requirement that we have to maintain full operational capability for our nation while we transition. That's not something we can take lightly. It's going to be difficult. It's going to take everyone in this room effort and energy to make it happen. And quite frankly, it's a challenge we want.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. And I know General Lutton, you've also been thinking about deploying while sustaining, if there are any comments you'd like to add to the complexity that your successors are going to have to deal with?

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

I think the only add that I would have is, we've talked about this before, unbelievably proud Airmen within Global Strike, 20th Air Force. But basic things that are similar to a ground component.

So for us, weather and traffic ability are the two key elements for any op that we do. And that's just a factor of living on the plains, right? I mean, if you live in Wyoming, Montana, Colorado, Nebraska, or North Dakota, and it's sometime after Labor Day till sometime before Mother's Day, you have to factor in snow and all other kinds of weather. So those are things that as we look at it long-term, are things that we're very mindful of.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. In the end when we deploy Sentinel, it will be Airmen who will be operating it, maintaining it, and securing it. Each of you sees this perspective in a bit of a different way. But what are we doing today, and what can we do in the future to ensure that those future Airmen are prepared for the challenges that the Sentinel weapon system will present to them?

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Sure, yes sir. So when chief and I talk about this, when chief and I work with the team, we're actually fielding two weapon systems within our numbered Air Force and MAJCOM. So Grey Wolf, the 139, and Sentinel. And when we talk to the team, Grey Wolf for us is very much a strategic scout. It is teaching us and talking to us about things, different scope and scale than Sentinel. But in particular, arrival of weapon systems synchronized with military construction. We cannot fit a Grey Wolf in any facility we have other than the KC-135 hangers that are at Malmstrom Air Force Base.

So building of hangars on time, on schedule for the arrival of that aircraft is something we look at and are informed by. The talent management for Grey Wolf is something that informs us.

And then lastly, we within my numbered Air Force need to do a better job on total force. Right now, the opportunities for Airmen to serve as total force Airmen within 20th Air Force are smaller. And we're working with the MAJCOM to understand how we can expand those opportunities. One, because that's our future. Two, because it will serve us with respect to retention and retaining talent, if we have



different total force options to offer Airmen within Global Strike and 20th Air Force in particular. Thank you.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Very good. We're nearing the end of our time, but I would like all of our panelists to be allowed to give any closing comments that you would like to have the audience receive on the importance of Sentinel, and your thoughts about deploying it. General Bussiere.

Gen. Thomas Bussiere:

So I'll end with saying what I normally say, and that's thank you. Thank you to our Airmen, officers enlisted, and civilian that perform this mission every day for our nation, our allies, and partners. Please know it is the most important mission in our nation. Thank you.

Thank your families when you go home from this forum, for myself and my wife Barbara, for their service and support of your service. Thank you to our civic leaders. Thank you to our industry partners. Thank you to Duke Richardson and John Newberry for everything you're going to do and are doing for the sustainment and modernization of our force. And it's the highest honor of any commander to serve in any command. But I'd tell you right now, I'm exactly where I want to be.

Michael Shoultz:

I would just echo the thank you. And not only is the nation appreciative of what you're doing. But when you talk to our allies and partners, when you have a conversation with the Japanese or the South Koreans, they view the ICBM as a part of their deterrent also. So the role and the value the ICBM has is not just to the US, it's to our allies and partners.

And the other thing I'll say is we live in very uncertain, strategic times. And people are looking to the ICBM force, both the Minuteman III and the Sentinel Force, to provide that hedge against that geographic uncertainty.

New START is going to expire in February of '26, and nobody knows what that world's going to look like when that treaty officially expires, even though the Russians aren't participating right now. But people are looking to the ICBM Force to maintain that strategic hedge, and I greatly appreciate the work you do each and every day to make sure that we have a credible deterrent for our nation.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:

Thank you. General Lutton.

Maj. Gen. Michael Lutton:

Sir, just echo General Bussiere's point on saying thank you first and foremost, but I'd also echo another point that General Bussiere makes. And it's a privilege to serve the Airmen and their families. It's a privilege for those Airmen to serve in a time of consequence for their nation. And it's a privilege for those Airmen to be put in a situation where they are going to deliver for their nation. So it's just an awesome opportunity, and we are going to get there through teamwork, whether that's with our industry partners, or across major commands. So we're excited for the opportunity, but realize it's fundamentally a privilege to serve.

Maj. Gen. Roger Burg:



Excellent. If you attended Monday's afternoon session with Secretary Kendall, you heard a three word phrase, China, China, China. If you attended the session on strategic modernization with General Bussiere and General Cotton, you heard another three word phrase, produce, produce, produce. And so now I'm looking at General Newberry and that Northrop Grumman team I see sitting back there, and I have a three word phrase for you. Deploy, deploy, deploy.

I'd like to thank our panel for their support of this very important topic and their insight into the issues that will come about, as we begin the deployment of Sentinel, and thank AFA for allowing us to have time to discuss the Sentinel program and its importance to the nation's security. And I thank all you Airmen, and civilians, and contractors who stayed to the last minute of the last day to hear this message.