

National Institute for Deterrence Studies & Peter Huessy Seminar

***ICBMs and Bombers: A Status Update on Two-Thirds of the Nuclear Triad
with Lt. Gen. Michael Lutton***

June 3, 2025, 8:00am – 9:00am AM (Eastern)

Webinar Transcript

How to cite:

National Institute for Deterrence Studies. (2025, June 3). *ICBMs and Bombers: A status update on two-thirds of the nuclear triad with Lt. Gen. Michael Lutton* [Seminar].

Abstract

The seminar titled "*ICBMs and Bombers: A Status Update on Two-Thirds of the Nuclear Triad*", hosted by the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, featured Lt. Gen. Michael Lutton, Deputy Commander of the Global Strike Command. The session provided a comprehensive update on the current status and strategic importance of the U.S. Air Force's Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and bomber forces. Lt. Gen. Lutton discussed modernization efforts surrounding the Sentinel missile and the B-21 Raider, emphasizing their critical role in maintaining national security and deterring potential adversaries.

He highlighted the dual challenge of modernizing the Minuteman III ICBMs while keeping them on alert, and the transition to the Sentinel system. The B-21 Raider was presented as the future backbone of the bomber fleet, alongside the ongoing upgrade of the B-52 to the J model. The seminar underscored the importance of sustaining a credible nuclear deterrent amid evolving global threats.

Lt. Gen. Lutton also addressed the Global Strike Command's global mission, talent management strategies, and the need for continuous adaptation. He emphasized the importance of collaboration with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), industry partners, and national laboratories to ensure readiness and modernization success.

The event concluded with a Q&A session covering operational challenges, force protection, and strategic planning, reinforcing the seminar's central theme: the enduring necessity of a robust, modernized, and agile nuclear force.

Executive Summary

The seminar titled *"ICBMs and Bombers: A Status Update on Two-Thirds of the Nuclear Triad,"* hosted by the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, featured Lt. Gen. Michael Lutton, Deputy Commander of the Global Strike Command. The event provided a high-level overview of the current status and strategic importance of the U.S. Air Force's Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and bomber forces, focusing on modernization efforts and their role in national security.

Key Points:

1. Modernization of ICBMs and Bombers

- Lt. Gen. Lutton detailed the transition from Minuteman III to the Sentinel missile system.
- He emphasized the B-21 Raider as the future backbone of the bomber fleet, alongside upgrades to the B-52 from the H to J model.

2. Strategic Importance

- The seminar reinforced the critical role of ICBMs and bombers in deterring adversaries.
- Sustaining a credible nuclear deterrent amid evolving global threats remains a top priority.

3. Global Mission and Talent Management

- The Global Strike Command's global operational scope was highlighted.
- Talent management—including recruitment, retention, and development—was identified as essential to mission success.

4. Collaboration with NNSA and Industry

- Lt. Gen. Lutton emphasized the importance of partnerships with the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), industry, and national labs to ensure modernization and readiness.

5. Operational Challenges and Strategic Planning

- Topics included force protection, supply chain issues, and the complexity of maintaining readiness while modernizing.
- The command's approach to strategic planning and execution was discussed in the context of real-world constraints and evolving threats.

The seminar concluded with a robust Q&A session, reinforcing the enduring necessity of a modernized, agile, and resilient nuclear force to meet today's complex global security environment.

Unabridged Transcript

(Note: there will invariably be some word errors in the following transcript.)

00;00;00;00 - 00;00;24;20

Peter Huessy

Good morning everybody. I'm Peter, you see and on behalf of the National Institute of Deterrence Studies, I want to welcome you to this. And another one of our in-person breakfast seminars here at the Capitol Hill Club. We're honored today to have General Michael Lutton, who was the head of 20th Air Force, and now he is the number two guy of the Global Strike Command in Louisiana under General Bussiere.

00;00;24;20 - 00;00;50;27

Peter Huessy

And he's going to talk today about the Air Force Leg of the triad. I'm sure he's going to say something nice about our Navy folks, because this is all for one, type deal. And, General, thank you again on behalf of NIDS and the entire and everybody here, I want to thank our sponsors, who are many of whom are here today.

00;00;50;27 - 00;01;15;14

Peter Huessy

I want to thank you for making this a possibility for those who are new to this, program. We started this program in January of 1983. I can't remember I don't know how many we've done. We've done something like 1500 of these, and we've done not just nuclear weapons and deterrence and arms control and proliferation. We did a series on the C-17.

00;01;15;16 - 00;01;37;27

Peter Huessy

We did a series on bombers. We did a series on a number of think missile defense. We started in 1994, which we will continue. Matt Costlow was speaking this Friday. Phil Karber had had some hospital issues that he had to take care of. So, we will reschedule him. Rose Gottemoeller, who's going to talk about "Is Arms Control Dead Yet?"

00;01;38;00 - 00;02;06;05

Peter Huessy

Down the road, Matthew Kroenig is also going to be speaking. We've got him and Greg Weaver signed up, and Uzi Rubin will be coming from Israel to talk about worldwide missile threats and missile defense, including Golden Dome, among other things. And he'll be here at the Capitol Hill Club. Later in, in June. Again, General Lutton, thank you very much for coming to visit with us here at in Washington, DC.

00;02;06;07 - 00;02;15;22

Peter Huessy

I appreciate it very much. So did you give a warm welcome to Lieutenant General Mike Lutton?

00;02;15;25 - 00;02;34;26

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Thanks for the opportunity to have a discussion today. And, I'll provide some comments and then look forward to any questions you have. My father was in the Navy. Enlisted when he was 17, in 1943, in World War II. So I'm a big Navy fan. I'm also reminded, really good friend of mine, General Armagost, is in Normandy today. This pretty consequential week, anniversary week, I think, when I think of Normandy, I was there, with my son and wife because we lived in Europe. And I remember making sandcastles on Utah Beach with my son. And how profound that was. The other thing I remember about that is.

00;02;58;18 - 00;03;26;12

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And sometimes it's forgotten. But on the 5th of June, U.S. and allied forces liberated Rome. And then the next day, began the liberation of Europe. So, I reflect on that because I know the U.S. military, and allies, always take on difficult challenges and to succeed. And it's a reminder to me that that was, very challenging.

00;03;26;14 - 00;03;50;05

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Very consequential times. And to look from a military perspective at the scope of that operation, where you're on one portion of the continent where you're driving up, to liberate Rome, and the next day you're going to launch, to liberate, Western Europe and France. I mean, those are monumental military tasks that are a proud heritage for not only Eighth Air Force, but all of our department.

00;03;50;11 - 00;04;19;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So thanks, Peter, for allowing me to provide a couple comments. I look forward to the conversation. I think it's, beyond an interesting time, in the world, our force in global strike command, which I am very proud to represent. The 35,000 total force airmen guard reserve, active duty, who stand to watch every day, and who deploy around the world every day, are just amazing people and their families are absolutely incredible.

00;04;19;02 - 00;04;41;16

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, it's proud to serve them and it's proud to serve with them. We have, a series of potential adversaries around the world, and we have a series of, potential challenges that face not only our command, but the joint force. And we are proud to be a part of that joint force, that takes on those challenges.

00;04;41;18 - 00;05;15;26

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And our primary focus is deter potential adversaries. And if deterrence fails to be successful, for what our nation requires us to do. So, again, it's great to be here. There is, if anybody has ever been to Malmstrom Air Force Base, I think it's important they have a clock there. Since the

Cuban missile Crisis that increments up one second, one minute, one hour, one day, one year for every second, minute, hour, day and year that that bases deliver deterrence.

00;05;15;29 - 00;05;36;00

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

It's pretty profound. Clock. So if you ever get a chance to see it, if you ever get a chance to visit, and it's a reminder of the airmen, their responsibility and what they provide for the country. So, I think it's an exciting time. It's a challenging time as we continue our alert mission, but also modernize our force.

00;05;36;02 - 00;06;02;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And I think that is probably for our force. What will separate us from other elements of the joint force that modernizing? So, for example, with the Minuteman three, we fully expect to modernize that with Sentinel while maintaining the Minuteman three on alert to deter potential adversaries. Very much like, the United States Navy will have to do with Ohio and Columbia as they transition.

00;06;02;05 - 00;06;32;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Unlike maybe another element of the joint force that, infantry division or some element, in the joint force is going to get new capability. That unit, the readiness level will drop, they'll get the new capability, they'll train up, and then their readiness level increase. We don't expect any type of relief like that. So, we expect to drive on and it is, I would say an incredible opportunity, but an incredible challenge and something that we face every day.

00;06;32;27 - 00;06;54;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

We also are a global command, so similar to the Air Mobility Command, our focus is globally. We're not a regional focus. We're not a theater focus. And you saw that, over the last several years, but it really came into focus for the last couple of months. We had to B-1s and Misawa. So that was, a first for them.

00;06;54;04 - 00;07;25;06

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

The B-1 bomber, in northern Japan, working with our allies in Japan. It was outstanding success with the B-52s in Fairford. I think it's fairly common knowledge we had the B-2s and Diego Garcia for quite some time. Doing combat operations and not a BTF. In fact, we've had our bombers, every one of our bombers, the B-1, the B2, or the B-52, since I signed in on the 7th of January 2024, every one of those bombers has been in combat.

00;07;25;09 - 00;07;49;17

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So that is quite the pace. We haven't turned down a tasking. We haven't turned down an

engagement. And the airmen are just absolutely amazing at accomplishing that. We also just conducted, one of our operational test launches for the Minuteman 3, which was, extremely successful. Opportunity for the airmen to demonstrate their capability and demonstrate the deterring capability in Minuteman three.

00;07;49;19 - 00;08;13;10

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And for the Grey Wolf, if you're familiar with that, the MH-139, it has just completed its operational tests. So, we'll await the results of that operational test. So that completion is a very exciting milestone for that platform. The other part of that floor platform that's being modernized, to replace the, UH1N is actually the facilities.

00;08;13;12 - 00;08;45;08

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And the way I describe the Grey Wolf is as a strategic scout. So, it teaches us things about modernization at a scale that's different than the B-21, at a scale that's different than the Sentinel, but it teaches us about modernization and timing and scheduling and staying on schedule. The example is, for F.E. Warren Air Force Base that will get the Grey Wolf, and for Minot Air Force Base there are no hangars for the Grey Wolf.

00;08;45;11 - 00;09;07;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, the actual physical infrastructure has to be delivered on time and on schedule. Because, Boeing Leonardo is delivering the helicopters. One of the primary reasons to go to Malmstrom was the size of the missile complex. But there was also existing KC 135 hangar space. That didn't require a capital investment. We could refurbish that and put the Grey Wolves in there.

00;09;08;01 - 00;09;30;20

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

We won't have that opportunity at every one. And so, I'm happy to report that the infrastructure builds at the Warren and Minot are going well. Along with that, the infrastructure builds of the weapons generation facility F.E. Warren, is all but complete except for certification. And then Malmstrom is doing very well. Their facility is moving along, quite well.

00;09;30;22 - 00;09;59;09

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, I think those are exciting opportunities. And the airmen working with the joint Force and many, industry partners are actually delivering capability for the nation. As we modernize, I just wanted to talk about a couple things, and then we can, get to questions of folks, have them. Again, I wanted to underscore that unique mission that we all have, which is to maintain the readiness of the current deployed force while we modernize.

00;09;59;12 - 00;10;20;26

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And so, our force is about, like I said, 35,000 total force airmen, guard reserve active duty. That is the same force that will use to stand the alert. Do bomber task forces do Conus to Conus bomber operations, do combat operations if we need to, but it's also the same force we're going to draw on to field airmen that are going to go to the B-21.

00;10;20;29 - 00;10;47;05

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So for us, talent management and retention and development of those airmen is central to what, our, our commander is focused on. And that is absolutely true of the Grey Wolf. It's true of the B-21, and it's true of, Sentinel. I think those are things that aren't often discussed of how you recruit, how you retain, and how you develop that talent.

00;10;47;05 - 00;11;30;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

But it's something we are absolutely laser focused on, because we absolutely have the best talent and we need to retain that, talent as well to deliver for the nation. Sentinel, I think, is well understood where Sentinel is that I think what maybe not as well understood are the successes that the program is having. As the acquisition community works through, their Nunn McCurdy process to get back to milestone B, in fact, we've engaged, with their program executive officer, General Rogers, to try and open up a little more on the public affairs side to talk about, some of the successes that Northrop has had and the development

00;11;30;02 - 00;11;59;17

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

of the actual missile. So, we're eagerly anticipating that, I can say that General Connor, who is our site activation task force commander, as well as a director, Global Strike Command is, I would say, on the road at least nine. That's probably conservative 90% of the time. He is not in the headquarters building. He is out and about making sure that he is partnering with General Rogers to deliver that capability for the nation.

00;11;59;19 - 00;12;30;20

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And we're excited for that. And we absolutely need that capability. For the B-21 Raider. That will serve as the future backbone of our bomber force for the nation for the foreseeable future. Until it arrives, we have the B-1 and the B-2 and the B-52. And it's understood that we are going to modernize, the B-52 as well, and go from an H model to a J model with new engines and a new radar.

00;12;30;22 - 00;12;58;05

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Those are, critical requirements and critical capabilities, not only for global strike command, not only for our Air force, but the nation, so absolutely critical that we maintain those programs, and we maintain the velocity of those programs to get them through modernization and deliver the capability for the nation. I mentioned the Grey Wolf. The last one that I wanted to talk about was

the long-range standoff LRSO.

00;12;58;07 - 00;13;24;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, it'll replace the outcome. And it's, undergoing its developmental testing, right now. And, it's had two successful test flights, and that's probably all I really want to say about the LRSO. So, there are exciting times across the modernization, and there are exciting times with the operational work that we're doing. So, Peter, again, thank you for an opportunity to have a conversation with the folks here today.

00;13;24;27 - 00;13;33;11

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And thanks for the folks, being in the room, I'm happy to take any questions that you have.

00;13;33;14 - 00;13;43;04

Speaker 3

Certainly. Can you talk about, what? The strike command's, priorities and how they align to reconciliation and the influx of funding that's coming from outside of the normal making process?

00;13;43;04 - 00;14;06;13

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, I think I would start with the Department of Defense's priorities and then the Department of the Air Force priorities, and then we're nested within that. Right. And so, in broad terms, you know, our priorities are to deter potential adversaries in this country and deliver a long-range strike capability, whether that's conventional or nuclear for the nation.

00;14;06;15 - 00;14;29;17

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

One of the things that doesn't get talked a lot about with respect to global strike is the nuclear command, control communications. So, they're in that, effort. That you described there, that portfolio that we look at so long-range strike conventional and nuclear and then nuclear command, control and communications will be our focus area in supporting our secretary of the secretary, defense.

00;14;36;27 - 00;14;50;09

Speaker 3

So recently series have raised questions about Sentinel as the Air Force budget is my translation of the nuclear enterprise still in the Air Force priority in the Air Force committed to funding the regional...

00;14;50;09 - 00;15;19;15

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, I think modernization, of the I don't think I know, modernization of the nuclear enterprise is clearly a national priority. I mean, you see that with, Congress, and their support of the nuclear enterprise. And I think you also see it, with the Department of Defense and, guidance and communications and, discussions on how central that is to deterring potential adversaries.

00;15;19;18 - 00;15;28;01

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Consequently, it remains a priority. The Department of the Air Force. Thanks.

00;15;28;03 - 00;15;33;07

Speaker 3

Thank you so much for your remarks. I'm just curious about the sort of human capital challenge.

00;15;33;09 - 00;15;34;27

Speaker 2

Yeah.

00;15;35;00 - 00;15;50;28

Speaker 3

How do you think about in terms of the Minutemen and the Sentinel? You know, I imagine folks will be very excited to work on the new missile that's just kind of coming in. Opposed to maintaining one for decades to come. So how do you is it going to be two separate pipelines for people to work on two missiles.

00;15;50;28 - 00;16;02;15

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Oh sure. The question was how do we think about human capital? And I think it was particularly for Sentinel.

00;16;02;15 - 00;16;04;24

Speaker 3

How do you think about the Minuteman versus the.

00;16;04;26 - 00;16;06;05

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Minuteman versus Sentinel...

00;16;06;08 - 00;16;13;08

Speaker 3

Lines of people? You know, I imagine, again, it's much more exciting for folks to be working on a new platform as opposed to sustainment.

00;16;13;10 - 00;16;46;20

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, It won't be two different pipelines. From the standpoint of you have an A and a B path. At some point there's going to be convergence. But very similar to any other type of program that we modernize when we're in a phase of developmental test, there'll be a cadre that goes that's selected, that goes off for developmental test and they are usually the group that will feed back in to operational test.

00;16;46;22 - 00;17;23;12

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And then you will usually see them in the very early operational units. So it's almost like an incubator, if you will, where you have a small group, a cadre, that forms the core, and then they'll continue on. We're also informed by history in, in areas where, not global strike command per se, but some programs chose to, take two different paths, and then you have either or.

00;17;23;14 - 00;17;45;14

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And to your point, I think it's your point. It's like, well, why wouldn't you take the new path? I mean, that's potentially where the future is at that and so, we're informed by that. A good example is our U.S. Air Force weapons school. When I was the 20th Air Force commander, we did work on that. That's our advanced instructor, course, at Nellis Air Force Base.

00;17;45;17 - 00;18;12;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So that syllabus that trains the students today is focused on the Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Weapons instructor course. Very much unlike if you were to look at a historical example on the flying side. And this is going back pretty far where they had a F-4 or Phantom weapons instructor course. And then you deliver the strike Eagle and now you ha.

00;18;12;06 - 00;18;32;12

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

You're asking folks, okay, hey, do you want to stay with the F-4? Do you want to transition to the strike and go, well, we don't fly the F-4 anymore. We're flying the strike Eagle. And so, you end up making your talent make a choice as opposed to how do you accordion that? So, a lot of it is in instructional design, at least with the weapon school.

00;18;32;14 - 00;18;55;28

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And I think from a talent management perspective, it's really where are the airmen at in their career? Where are their families that, you know, if there's children? And then the developmental opportunities for the children, the developmental opportunities for the airmen. So, it's, I was remiss I did not introduce Carolyn Hockaday. Carolyn is my E.A.

00;18;56;01 - 00;19;26;26

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I meet with RA1, like every was it every other week for like, 45 minutes, like on this topic and

it's and it's down to like, the people level. Right. It's down to the people level. Where are officers at intermediate developmental education? Where is their outplacement? Why are they going there? Is that a position?

00;19;26;26 - 00;19;46;06

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

If they're an officer, is that a position that they will get, joint credit for? If they're getting joint credit, what type of joint credit are they? Who do we need to have at the Department of Energy within NNSA? So, it's, very detailed. Yes, ma'am. Thanks for the question. Yeah.

00;19;46;09 - 00;19;47;27

Speaker 3

With the recent, Ukrainian strike in Russia, is that causing you to think differently about how bombers in the United States are stored? What kind of facilities they're in? What kind of air base defenses?

00;20;04;24 - 00;20;41;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, when I look at that, I first and foremost think of force protection and which is fundamentally a commander's responsibility. And how do you how do you protect the force, whether it's your people or whether it's your gear? And for us, on the US military side, there's a, tremendous relationship between, intelligence that informs us about potential threat vectors and how we would address those potential threat vectors.

00;20;41;27 - 00;21;13;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I think when I look at that particular instance, it's, really focuses the mind on when I was sharing it at the table. I mean, the conflict has been going on. The war has been going on since March of 22. And these are not new capabilities that we've seen on the battlefield. So, when I look at it there's an a failure to adapt, to that capability. That's instructive to me. Just as a senior military officer, and then I go through a series of questions of why, like Socratic method. Okay. Why, you know, why are they why are they not adapting to that or adapting to that? Excuse me. So that's about as much as I probably want to talk about that.

00;21;45;00 - 00;21;51;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yeah, that's a very good question though. Thanks.

00;21;54;26 - 00;22;21;19

Peter Huessy

It's often said that we're spending X amount of dollars on modernization. But we're not talking about Cluded in that number is all the sustainment of current legacy systems. For your work, how much of your work is sustaining the legacy systems and what are your most important challenges with respect to the Minuteman three and the legacy bomber forces?

00;22;21;22 - 00;22;47;28

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yeah. So, if I pivot back to like the developmental question, right. Not an industry. Been in the military for 34 years, but there's like a behavior pattern, you see, with industry in that, it's very challenging. To find vendors, to make parts for Minuteman three. It's very challenging to find vendors to make parts for the B-52.

00;22;47;28 - 00;23;14;23

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Right. And so right now we're working on an effort with, Boston Consulting Group and across the, B-52 ecosystem to raise the mission capable rate, significantly raise the mission capable rate of the B-52. And I will tell you, that is, it's a sustainment fight. I mean, it is a sustainment flight is a supply chain wing fight.

00;23;14;25 - 00;23;34;21

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

It is working with partners and industry. And so, I think that translates across maintaining the current force that is a sustainment fight, whereas the modernization is learning from that going, okay, we don't want to repeat these, mistakes. Yeah.

00;23;34;23 - 00;24;02;27

Peter Huessy

Sir, could you discuss your relationship with what NNSA is doing? And again, so who reset it? Breakfast last year. Is that we can't give a service life extension program to the Warriors anymore. That's ended. So, we have to build the new varieties. So, it's not just nice to have, it's. You have to have. Yeah. I'm curious what your relationship in Global Strike is with the NNSA people.

00;24;02;27 - 00;24;42;17

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Be anybody from NNSA. Awesome. A big yeah. Oh. Los Alamos. Yeah. Yeah. No, to I totally understand the difference. So I was, this is a couple of summers ago. Was the principal for military applications. I don't want to say so, huge fan of NNSA, huge fan of the national labs. And in in that space, I think it's, you know, I'm reminded that the labs, whether it's Los Alamos or Livermore, Sandia or the other national labs, have always made the difference for the country.

00;24;42;21 - 00;25;11;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I mean, they have always delivered for the country. At what, you know, so indispensable, capability. So, the relationship, I think, is largely for NNSA is with U.S. strategic command. Right. And then as an air component to the U.S. team, and we're working with Bob Taylor and, Admiral Buchanan and the folks there so that our requirements, are understood.

00;25;11;27 - 00;25;41;18

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

But that ecosystem with NNSA and whether it's Fleet Forces Command or Global Strike Command is, completely integrated. I think like anything else, we want to maintain the relationships, maintain the dialog. So, we'll have folks from NNSA come out to the test launches or visit bases or visit the weapons storage areas, so they understand, our mission set.

00;25;41;20 - 00;25;51;15

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, when they go back, they can have a better appreciation for that, whether they're in a lab or whether they're here in the district. Yeah. Yes, sir.

00;25;51;17 - 00;25;54;06

Speaker 3

I was up on the east side. Peacekeepers. Okay.

00;25;56;13 - 00;26;02;17

Speaker 3

They all look different now. You don't have, go cargo space now, so. But you have different challenge. This might... (inaudible)

00;26;02;20 - 00;26;04;03

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Right? Yeah.

00;26;04;26 - 00;26;05;10

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Thanks for your service.

00;26;05;10 - 00;26;34;17

Speaker 3

Service. The, the search commission, I called for a lot of changes, which is, you know, reconvert energies to a new chemical, removing other things like that. With the, as we said, the industry every 26. How do you see that impacting, one modernization? The two, just the deterrence calculus or a more balanced kind of globally.

00;26;34;19 - 00;27;08;01

Speaker 3

As we're, potentially building more systems, and give us kind of more toys on the chessboard for the company to, to utilize. What do you the impact that doesn't have a series and, you know, should we, you know, or how are schools recommend, prepare our from here on preparing, to maintain, some train space for future arms control agreement, or is it just focus on modernization and just waiting on the border from.

00;27;08;03 - 00;27;35;27

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I think for us, we're engaged with our combatant command, when they have queries on any of those subjects that you just mentioned. But we're really in the execution element of that. Right? And so any range of those, topics that you discussed, I mean, will be in dialog with us, Strategic Command. Giving them pros and cons, what it means to this or what it means to that.

00;27;36;00 - 00;28;01;28

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Obviously, some of this is very operational, so I'm pretty reluctant to talk in detail about it. But we're going to execute, and if they tell us, hey, we, you know, this is the play we're calling. Roger that. What we owe them is. Okay, that's the play you're calling. Here's the associated timelines and associated impacts with calling that, but it goes back to the for our command and airmen.

00;28;01;28 - 00;28;25;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

The way we think is we're not going to get relief from the alert mission right. So, there was this, I was, fortunate enough. I was the director of, deputy director for nuclear option homeland defense, the Joint Staff from 18 to 20. So, right as Covid started and one of my responsibilities is the National Military Command Center.

00;28;25;05 - 00;28;48;08

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, we very much adopted a motto of not. No, but how? Right. So, if you've ever worked in the building on a good day, there's like about 26,000 people that go there. On the 15th or 16th of March, there was about 2000 people in that building. There are less people usually than on a Sunday. And that mission couldn't stop.

00;28;48;11 - 00;29;09;05

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Right. And so I'm reminded a lot of that, I'm reminded that quite often when I think about our mission and say there's a tasking that comes down that we need to execute at the same time or modernize the we have to the talent management, we have unbelievably gifted airmen who are really smart. We'll go, okay, all right.

00;29;09;06 - 00;29;27;14

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

We can do A and B and C, but if we're going to do A and B and C, this is the timeline to do A and B and C. So, we look forward to those challenges. I mean we'll deliver for the nation. So, we're excited for that opportunity. Yeah. Yeah.

00;29;27;17 - 00;29;35;14

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yes, sir. The no tough defense program. Are you from Defense Program? Okay. All right. Please say hello to John Evans and everybody.

00;29;38;14 - 00;29;47;01

Speaker 4

The 23 Strategic Posture Commission report, there are two things that we don't. One, they recommended removing the ICBM thing. And they also recommended putting strategic bombers on continuous learning. So I guess. Logistically, personnel wise, woman wise, however you'd like to address it, how hard with those to do and how. Long would it take? What are the difficulties with actually putting. Those recommendations in practice.

00;30;05;29 - 00;30;46;24

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And actually yeah, so I think in particular, The, the challenges would be in sequencing. Right. And okay, what is that timeline? Look, if we were given any one of those tasking, I'm also reminded that the size of the force is considerably different. I like history. So at the high watermark and above, we had, at the B-52, we had like 756 B-52s.

00;30;46;27 - 00;31;12;08

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Okay, you can do a lot when you have 756. So we do not have 756, B-52s. So it goes back to the, question this gentleman asks is like, okay, I get a tasking to do A, B, and C, and then you, you do the analysis and then you go back to your higher headquarters, in our case, your strategic command, and go, okay, here is here's what you can gain.

00;31;12;10 - 00;31;37;21

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Here are the challenges. And then obviously the senior officers have discussions and then we just move out on, the option that's chosen, for us, that's our responsibility to do that detailed work from an airman's perspective. If we're given those tasks, say, okay, we're given these, I'm just making this number up three tasks. What's the timeline?

00;31;37;24 - 00;31;58;13

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

What's the immediacy of those tasks? So it goes back and we process it from a military perspective on what are our courses of action. Right. We do something called course of action analysis. To come up with it. And then we pass it back up to, in our case, our combatant commander and say, all right, we've done this analysis with the tasks you've given us.

00;31;58;13 - 00;32;03;29

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

This is how we plan on approaching it.

00;32;04;01 - 00;32;04;26

Lt Gen Michael Lutton
You, sir.

00;32;04;28 - 00;32;07;00
Peter Huessy
Your colleague, General Armagost?

00;32;07;00 - 00;32;08;25
Lt Gen Michael Lutton
Yeah. Armo, Yeah.

00;32;08;27 - 00;32;37;12
Peter Huessy
In September, about. He had 81 requests from countries that we send to Lebanon. Flying around and he said this is very serious stuff because it's signaling their enemies. All right. Would you elaborate a little bit how that is an ongoing mission of global strike. You're not dropping any bombs. Is there any conflict? But you are determined.

00;32;37;15 - 00;32;38;10
Lt Gen Michael Lutton
Oh for sure.

00;32;38;13 - 00;32;39;26
Peter Huessy
This is really important.

00;32;39;28 - 00;33;09;23
Lt Gen Michael Lutton
And I would say deterrence and assurance. Both simultaneously. Right. Kind of in the eye of the beholder, which one you're accomplishing? So we receive, those tasking, via, Department of Defense Joint Staff to us Strategic command, and allocated across the various combatant commands, is really how our timing and tempo works for the bomber task forces.

00;33;09;25 - 00;33;36;28
Lt Gen Michael Lutton
Bomber task forces are one element of it. Another element of it, that, doesn't get much discussion is we will actually do conus to Conus operations. So we'll have airmen, fly 32 hours, they'll take off from Louisiana. They'll go into the East China Sea or South China Sea. And on the way, they'll integrate with the Japanese Self-Defense force, though.

00;33;36;28 - 00;34;01;17
Lt Gen Michael Lutton
Integrate with the Korean Air Force. And then they'll go into the East or South China Sea, conduct, flight operations very much like the Navy conducts freedom navigation. We're

conducting freedom of flight operations. And then they will return. They don't land anywhere in that route. So those are usually 29 to 32 hour sorties.

00;34;01;19 - 00;34;33;20

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And, those are incredibly, consequential missions. When you look at them in the whole with bomber Task force, bomber task force, like the B1 example from Misawa. So, we sent several aircraft to Misawa. They land there at that point, they're integrating not only with Pacific Air Force airmen, but also Japanese Self-Defense force, members. So it's, longer duration persistence.

00;34;33;20 - 00;34;42;02

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

You're actually on the ground, with them, whereas we also have the opportunity to do Conus to Conus.

00;34;42;04 - 00;35;10;00

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

When we discuss it in particular, General Bussiere and I, among our allies, the United States is the only country that has bombers, and it's the only country that has intercontinental ballistic missiles. We think that is unique and absolutely critical. Part of assurance, to those, allies of that critical capability and the security it provides and the assurance it provides to them.

00;35;10;00 - 00;35;16;25

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yeah. So very exciting opportunity to do that. Sir. Yes, sir. The,

00;35;16;28 - 00;35;33;27

Speaker 5

We've talked a lot about modernization for global strike and, bombers and how important it is. To your to the match on, to have a strong, vibrant, national security enterprise, with the labs to deliver,

00;35;33;29 - 00;35;43;25

Speaker 5

The, a dashboard.... (inaudible) The those marks almost more for one. Just seeing your possible, yeah.

00;35;46;06 - 00;36;13;17

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I'll answer the question, but, Such as my life. I'm reading a book on the history of U.S. foreign policy. And it's very interesting book. From the perspective of that, like today, we say defense industrial base, and it's kind of like it. We think of it as like a utility, like the light switch on the wall.

00;36;13;20 - 00;36;45;01

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And it was really not that way. Like in 36, 37, it's really this individual's names, Vannevar Bush, who gets with President Roosevelt and says, hey, you do not have the right industrial posture for the nation. If you're thinking that we're going to go to war in World War II. And, and he's a character in history that I really didn't know anything about, but it's amazing.

00;36;45;03 - 00;37;09;07

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

He's a scientist. He's an engineer, MIT educated. So, I think about that, and I think about the labs. I think about the industry, that delivers for the airmen and the sailors and, I, I don't want to think about it like utility. It needs to be developed. It needs to be cared for. It needs to be modernized.

00;37;09;10 - 00;37;32;20

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I mean, I saw that firsthand with, my time at NNSA and say, just from a facilities perspective, just from a facilities perspective that had been neglected because they weren't modernized. And then then when they're asked to produce, they don't have the infrastructure to produce.

00;37;32;23 - 00;37;49;00

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And, that's not a position we want to be in again or, yeah. We just I mean, it's critical. It's it's like I said, it's that ecosystem that puts us together as a team. Yeah, yeah. Yes, sir. And then. Yes, sir.

00;37;49;06 - 00;37;54;08

Speaker 6

Related to that, I think that that is one of the key challenges is looking at some of. Our more near-term problems that we're trying to get through modernization, bringing all those things you talk about. Those are those are kind of today is still continuing on that, but there are immediate things that we're trying to push and funding has to get to those things. At the same time, we do have to look at that base, whether it's in NNSA industrial base, whether it's the actual conventional or the broader view of.

You know, for missile production. Right. For the mission. And so we can look at those and try to balance those. How does that even get done? Because we can I see it on the on the conventional side, for instance, because we're talking a lot about uncertainty for certain things. That's a little more near term. And there's a lot of laser focus on that now.

00;38;39;01 - 00;38;46;09

Speaker 6

And I would say that's also at the expense of longer term ambitions and being able to deal with

things. That are investing things now that will manifest benefit for another 5 to 10 years.

00;38;51;19 - 00;39;05;07

Speaker 6

It's the same kind of problem here. How do you guys look at that, that challenge where I need to update the industrial base and modernize facilities, but we won't see infinite that for seven years because that's how long it takes to construct. Versus the challenges we have today.

00;39;05;10 - 00;39;37;07

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yeah. So nonbusiness person going to now comment on industry and business. So just putting that in context. I think it depends on the industry. Right. So, software I don't think requires large capital expenditure for investment. Right. So in 2025 you have this range of what we define as industry. Now, where it gets challenging.

00;39;37;10 - 00;40;04;17

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And I know I've discussed it before is, is how you make a business case a good example. Anybody from Bell helicopters? Yeah, I think so. So in like two weeks, I'm going to Fort Worth to talk to Bell because there aren't a lot of people flying A UR variant of the one end. But I need to fly it to this point.

00;40;04;20 - 00;40;40;01

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And so, making a business case for parts for that is exceptionally challenging because it businesses look at you to the point of like there's the like this road end sign eventually, right. Because we've bought the Grey Wolf. So that that I think is a result of not thinking about modernizing that aircraft. And then you realize, oh, I have I have a combatant command that now has a requirement for this in vertical lift.

00;40;40;01 - 00;41;13;19

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So I need a new capability, but I can't get that new capability fast fielded fast enough as this other capability is declining. And by declining I mean the ability to sustain it. You can magnify that and you can look at, other assets, right? In particular with an NSA that requires capital investment in infrastructure. My answer to that is probably not, very satisfying, which is you just have to have the long view.

00;41;13;22 - 00;41;39;10

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I mean, you have to have the long view and go, I can't ask scientists and physicists to do A and B without the facilities to do A and B in A, right. So, that that is incredibly important to have that perspective. And there, I mean, it's we lost that perspective in particular on the nuclear enterprise side.

00;41;39;12 - 00;42;18;09

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Absolutely lost it. It's I'll get it wrong. But there is a great, video, and I'll try and find it. I'll try and send it to you. And it's the '94 QDR, and it's the '94 QDR rollout. And Secretary Perry is there, at the podium. And he basically gets a question. He and it's along the lines of, why do you think you still need ICBMs?

00;42;18;11 - 00;42;42;08

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And he basically was like. I don't want to put words in his mouth, but you could see he's like, yeah, we were close. We were close to think because in 94, you could probably make a compelling argument if you had a 12 month time horizon, that you didn't need an ICBM force. I don't think anybody in 2025 is looking back we go.

00;42;42;09 - 00;43;13;20

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

We probably could do without ICBMs right now. So that so yeah, I say that as an example of, I would say a brilliant person, Secretary Perry, having the long view going, okay, this could be a very short gain, but to reconstitute that capability, would be exceptionally challenging. So I just, you know, for some. And then there has to be accountability, right?

00;43;13;27 - 00;43;35;09

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

I mean, for resources that the taxpayers are giving the department to execute that mission, there has to be accountability. There has to be transparency in the execution of those resources. And we have to deliver. I think that you can't just say, oh, I have the long view, and here's the checkbook. I have to deliver, and I have to be accountable to the taxpayers.

00;43;35;11 - 00;43;45;23

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yeah. Yes. Thank you sir.

00;43;45;26 - 00;43;46;25

Speaker 7

(Inaudible)

00;44;06;24 - 00;44;47;00

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

So, the one thing that I reminded of with that is our discussion on talent management. We have talented people everywhere. The density of the talent in that office is exceptional. And so, I'm reminded of that, the corollary I would give you is when I was a weapons squadron commander, and, weapon squadron is one of the or one of the squadrons that the US Air Force weapons

school.

00;44;47;03 - 00;45;24;01

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And so, normal Air Force squadron is about 60, 60 folks. We were able I may be a little biased. We're able to easily outperform, other organizations with a third of that, not only because of the talent that we had, but because of the trust we had with each other. You know, if my ops officer gave me a task to do when I was an instructor, there, it was a single person doing the task.

00;45;24;01 - 00;45;54;28

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

It was a single person doing the activity. Because there's extreme trust. Largely because you're all known quantities. Because you've developed and been through similar crucibles where you understand the talent that you have. And when I see organizations like RCO or I see other high performing organizations that that's really what I'm left with. It's like, okay, there's the density of the talent.

00;45;55;00 - 00;46;09;29

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

And then because of the density of the talent and egos are set aside, there's a high trust environment to get the mission done. Yeah. So, I think to that point, if one can export that, the better.

00;46;13;06 - 00;46;48;03

Speaker 8

So, I just sir, I know we're on time, but on the between one topic, I know we've talked about a minimum of 100 and then, general consensus statement on raising. That's 145. Is there any value the global strike season basically trying to, divorce the total aircraft inventory number and kind of using a better, you know, squadrons or combat aircraft to kind of better understand what you're bringing, this combat coded capability to combat commanders, basically, you know, knowing better what a 100 or 145 extra.

00;46;48;06 - 00;46;59;10

Speaker 8

And then also, just as a parting shot, if you know anything more about, how Wall Street will fare with, reduction in GEOs, for the department, that is too heavy.

00;46;59;12 - 00;47;15;03

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Yeah. So maybe we can add one more question, because I don't know that I, I definitely will not comment on the last one. So, I appreciate that opportunity. And then, on the second one, I just have to get you a more detailed answer. So, if I got your information, I could get you a more detailed answer.

00;47;15;05 - 00;47;37;27

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Sorry about that. Yeah, sir. Closing comments. Oh, well, thanks again. Sincerely appreciate the time. And I don't mind getting you an answer, sir, if I, if I get your contact information, sincerely appreciate the time and your questions and the discussion today. And, hope you all stay well and safe travels if you're traveling. Thank you.

00;47;37;29 - 00;47;43;19

Lt Gen Michael Lutton

Thank you.

00;47;43;22 - 00;47;54;20

Peter Huessy

Thank you all. And remember, Friday, Matt Costlow is going to do a zoom event at 10:00 in the morning. And please register if you haven't. And again, thank you to my sponsors and friends for coming.