SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

June 26, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF
ALL MAJCOM COMMANDERS

SUBJECT: Rebuilding the Air Force Nuclear Enterprise

We are in a critical period of transition. As the acting Secretary, I need your personal support to continue mission accomplishment across the Air Force while we focus immediately on strengthening performance in our nuclear mission and determine the longer term actions necessary to rebuild the nuclear enterprise. Since September 11, 2001, our Air Force has responded with 524,000 deployments and more than 1,000,000 sorties in support of the joint fight–a contribution without which, as Secretary Gates has said, America's war effort would simply grind to a halt. I urge you to continue to lean forward in every respect in support of current joint operations.

A credible nuclear deterrent is essential to our security and that of our allies and friends. The Air Force has an essential role in this national mission. We were created as a separate Service over 60 years ago with nuclear responsibilities foremost in our mission set. There is no mission more sensitive than safeguarding our vital nuclear capabilities and maintaining nuclear deterrence. We have a sacred trust with the American people to safely operate, maintain and secure nuclear weapons. We must constantly strive for perfection in this mission area. Rigid adherence to standards, personal accountability at all levels, and leadership are the foundations upon which our success depends.

Over the past 10 months, we have received clear indicators of a decline in our nuclear mission focus and performance across our Air Force. Multiple investigations and reviews have provided both observations on our key challenges and recommendations for how to overcome identified weaknesses. Progress is being made. In recent weeks the Air Force has:

- Performed at the direction of the Secretary of Defense a comprehensive inventory of all nuclear weapons and critical and code components;
- Begun to extend positive inventory control systems and procedures to a newly defined class of nuclear weapon-related materiel;
- Consolidated all nuclear sustainment and oversight under AFMC, specifically under the Nuclear Weapons Center; and
- To improve leadership focus on nuclear matters, assigned General Officers to key positions on the air staff with singular focus on nuclear enterprise policy; to the National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy; and to command and grow the Nuclear Weapons Center.

In addition, dozens of individual initiatives are now underway to improve nuclear-related policies and procedures, logistics and sustainment, and other important matters. These initiatives are necessary and should continue, but they are not sufficient.

The most important conclusions of Admiral Donald's report to the Secretary of Defense relate to systemic and institutional issues now confronting the Air Force: the well-documented decline in focus on the nuclear mission, declining nuclear expertise, and erosion of performance standards and compliance, complicated by an ineffective self-assessment culture which undermines critical self-examination and aggressive problem resolution. In particular, Admiral Donald noted split organizational authorities and responsibilities, and a lack of clarity for nuclear matters among multiple commands, as a root cause of these problems.

To build on current initiatives, integrate our collective efforts at the strategic level, and to address the cultural, systemic and institutional challenges identified in the Donald Report, I have directed the Vice Chief of Staff to establish a Nuclear Task Force to perform the following functions:

- Coordinate and synchronize the ongoing implementation of specific corrective actions underway in response to the Minot and Taiwan incidents;
- Develop in coordination with USSTRATCOM, other DoD components and interagency partners, and in all dimensions of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, and Education, Personnel, Facilities (DOTMLPF) and the inspection process, a strategic roadmap to rebuild and restore capabilities and confidence in our stewardship of the Air Force nuclear enterprise;
- Undertake an organizational review to assess and recommend options for alternative assignments of responsibility and/or command arrangements; and
- Serve as the Air Force focal point for coordination with and/or support to other nuclear-related panels, commissions, or review groups outside the Air Force.

The Task Force will provide to me an initial progress report in 30 days and a draft roadmap, including recommendations for organizational adjustments, for the nuclear enterprise in 60 days. At that time, together with the Chief of Staff, I will assess progress and the Task Force will incorporate results from the Schlesinger Panel, recently established by the Secretary of Defense to recommend follow-on actions from Admiral Donald's report. The Task Force should then be prepared to complete deliberation within 30 days and the roadmap would be reviewed and approved at a 4-star Nuclear Summit to be scheduled in September. Supplemental guidance will be forthcoming from the Vice Chief. We will keep OSD and the Congress informed of our progress and advise them of any additional FY09/10 resource requirements that may arise.

In addition to establishing this Task Force, we must also move quickly to address the issues of accountability. Separate information will be forthcoming to affected commanders.

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