



# Virtual Event | A Conversation with Admiral Richard

## TRANSCRIPT

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- Admiral Charles Richard, *Commander, U.S. Strategic Command*
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**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Good afternoon. Welcome to this virtual event with Hudson Institute. My name is Rebecca Heinrichs and I'm joined today by Admiral Charles Richard, commander of US Strategic Command. Admiral Richard has led this command since November 2019, we're so glad that you're here. If you would, provide us with a few minutes of remarks to let us know what you're thinking about, what you're concerned about, and then that will be followed by a conversation between you and I. And with that, sir, the floor is yours.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Rebecca, thank you very much. Very nice introduction and very much appreciative of the opportunity to discuss a few issues that I think are important for us to be talking about. I'll start with, I applaud where Secretary Austin is taking the department right now in any number of respects.

I think it's important to acknowledge up front that I think that right now is the ideal time, given the changes in the threat environment that we're seeing, particularly in my mission sets, for us to be doing a national defense strategy review, a nuclear posture review, a missile defense review.

These are the ideal forums in my mind to address the threats that we're facing, look at our strategy to address those, and then make wise decisions on policies, postures, and capabilities. In particular, where I applaud Secretary Austin's leadership is in development of the concept of integrated deterrence.

And I'll go into a little bit more detail on that here in a second. I do think it's important for us to understand that every operational plan in the department of defense and every other capability that we have rests on an assumption that strategic deterrence is holding.

You'll hear people like me often talk about strategic deterrence as most important mission in the department, number one priority. All that's true. You'll hear me say it again. But that actually has a bit of an academic ring to it. And I'm an operator. And so putting it in practical operational terms, this is a type of permissive operating condition that has to be set to allow the rest of the joint force to go accomplish its mission.

Said another way: if I can't get strategic deterrence, and in particular, nuclear deterrence to hold, no other plan and no other capability in the department is going to work as designed. I think it's important, we are under a period of very rapid change in our national security environment and particularly the threats to this nation and our allies.

We have never before in our history faced two peer nuclear capable, potential opponents that we have to deter at the same time, that we have to deter differently. And that threat is growing rapidly. We are witnessing a strategic breakout by China. And I will concentrate on the strategic and the nuclear aspects of this, but that's only a piece of the broader conventional space, cyber and asymmetric capabilities that China is developing.

Bottom line out of it, what does that mean? Business as usual is not going to work, in my opinion. And putting together, what are they doing? To my mind, this is the final brick in the wall. This is the final piece of capability designed to build a military that is capable of coercion. One that is able to confront, appear a nuclear-capable state, in other words, us, to achieve a change to the world order that I think they desire.

I have used the term breathtaking and I'm not sure... I'm searching for the right adjective to describe exactly what's going on over there. Rapid expansion in intercontinental ballistic missile silos, rapid expansion of road-mobile intercontinental capability, six and probably more Jin-class submarines, ballistic missile submarines, carrying a new JL-3 missile as capable of ranging CONUS from protected bastion in the South China Sea.

Completion of a true triad, with the addition of an air leg and their H-6N bombers with an air launch ballistic missile, and many other improvements. New nuclear command and control, ability to launch under warning launch under attack, scape echelon, command and control changes designed to enable an entire range, any possible nuclear employment strategy, infrastructure that's growing, better missile defense. The list goes on.

And you can see some of the open press reporting of one of their companies reporting a four-fold increase in the orders that they're receiving on strategic forces. And I'm sure we'll get into this a little bit later, Rebecca. And I have said in the past, hey, it doesn't matter why they did this, right? Actually, it does a little bit, but I want to put it in an operational perspective, is once you have the capability as an operator, I'm much more interested in what you're going to do with it.

And it's this idea that they have moved off a true minimum deterrent posture to one that can employ any plausible nuclear employment strategy. That is part of why I describe this as a strategic breakout. And remember, I don't get the luxury of deterring one country at a time. I have to deter all of them, all of the time. And that brings me over to Russia.

In some of my recent speaking, I may not have done justice to Russia's still the near-term pacing threat for strategic and particularly nuclear, at least for a little bit longer. 80%, 85% modernized. It's actually easier to describe what they're not modernizing, nothing, as opposed to what they are, which is basically everything. This is on top of novel capabilities, never before seen. China's doing that too, by the way.

Very good at advanced technology development. Hypersonics would be an example of that. Over 2000 non-treaty accountable on nuclear weapons, unconstrained in that respect, evolving doctrine. And this is, again, before I get into space and cyber capabilities that they have. And we see collaboration between Russia and China. And I think that is this idea that we are now in a three-party problem.

We need to work on the basic theory behind that. So not only what do they look like individually, what does it look like opportunistically between them? What does cooperation between them look like in terms of the threat that we're going to have to deter? That's why I say it's not that we're going into uncharted waters, if you'll forgive the Naval analogy. We're there. We are in uncharted waters.

And in some respects, Rebecca, what offer is we are facing a class of potential adversary that we haven't had to deal with in 30 years. Both Russia and China have the ability, unilateral, at their own choosing, to go to any level of violence, to go to any domain, to go worldwide with all instruments of national power. We've not faced competitors like that in 30 years, which I think we need to re-examine any number of our basic operating concepts, starting with our escalation control.

I think we need to be far more humble about our ability to control escalation in a crisis than we currently give ourselves to. I mean, we're working this hard at STRATCOM, rewriting deterrence theory operationally, but this is not something that one COCOM by themselves is going to be able to solve.

This is going to take a much broader effort than that. And I'll kind of close with, and we can get into the conversation, I go back to that's why this is a good time to be doing a defense strategy review, to be doing a nuclear posture review and missile defense review, and to be clear-eyed about the operational implications of some very big decisions we're about to make in the near term.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Thank you, Admiral. That was great to get us started, and we are going to dig into the China-Russia problem. Before we do that, I have to ask because it's on everybody's TV right now as we watched unfold, how has what's going on in Afghanistan right now impacted your command? How is that affecting how you're thinking or how you're advising right now?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Rebecca, what I'd offer is we're certainly very aware of what's happening in Afghanistan and we're following the events very closely. But this is why you have 11 combatant commands, right? In ours, we are still very focused on our strategic deterrence responsibilities. We have to defend against all threats, all the time, not just one that happens to be in a crisis mode.

So we are very proud of our ability here at STRATCOM, if you will, to provide overwatch globally across all the rest of the combatant commanders to look to see what the global situation has added up to. Are there opportunistic actions happening in other theaters? And so we're very focused on our primary responsibilities of strategic deterrence.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Thank you. And I'd like to dig into China. You were just in Huntsville, gave a great, lengthier talk there, and you had essentially confirmed that reporting from some commercial satellite images, some researchers in two different places discovered two different ICBM fields in China.

And about the same time you were speaking, there was a third field that was first reported I think by the Washington Times. But it was by the China Aerospace Studies Institute discovered a third site. So sir, can you confirm, had there been three new Chinese ICBM fields? And are you expecting us to find more than that or would that surprise you?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

So Rebecca, first, what I'd want to confirm is that China is in a strategic breakout. That any one piece of this is just a piece of the totality of what they're doing. Look, STRATCOM doesn't generate intelligence. We read it. And it would be for others to confirm or not confirm any specific attributes.

What I'm focused on is the totality. And I have testified to this effect and secretary Austin. When you add up all of these very large capability increases, this is why I think it was wise to treat China as the pacing threat. That's why I say we're in a strategic breakout. They are changing what they're capable of doing and I am going to have to make sure that I am taking the appropriate actions to maintain strategic deterrence.

And I think another thing I think we need to keep in mind with China, as we look at how many intercontinental ballistic missiles, how many Jin-class submarines is, where are they going? I think it would be not a wise assumption to think somehow they're done. And so what is the next thing that we're going to find? And where does this end? I think are very important things for us to not lose sight of.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

And then, sir, I'm curious to know what you think about this theory though. So as researchers discover different things, which we believe to be ICBM silos, what do you think about this? There's been a lot of analysis that this is probably a shell game approach, that the China hasn't actually filled out all of these silos yet or they might not. What would you say to that for your planning at STRATCOM? What would you say to that kind of analysis or theory whether or not that's wise or not, or if there's any truth or wisdom in thinking that way?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Well, I think the point is to start with an assumption that you're probably not going to know for sure. Are some of them going to be filled? Are some of them not? Are some of them conventional? Are some of

them nuclear? Are some of them filled now and some of them are going to be filled later, and so all that adds up to is you got to be humble in your ability to predict this. You have to address what the total implications of this are going to be and is there more about it that you don't know?

And so I take it more from, and what I'd like to assert here that's very interesting because I read the same things that you and many others do, and it's kind of entertaining in some respects. It's evidence that there is very little operational, strategic deterrence expertise left inside of the Department of Defense or the government as a whole, and I think in some cases, that actually colors some of our analysis because you don't put it in the hands of a commander, in the hands of an operator to go, if they have this, this is what they can do with it, and so that's where we're trying to address is what could they do with these capabilities and then what is the right approach to deter that?

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Thank you. And I'm going to press my luck here with trying to get a better understanding of what we might know about some of these Chinese ICBM's. So our 400 active Minuteman IIIs are equipped with single, with a single nuclear warhead per ICBM. Are you able to discuss how we might be able to think about these other Chinese ICBMs and how much is possible, I mean, as we plan each of these silos and therefore each of these ICBMs, how many warheads they might actually entail a piece?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Well Rebecca, I think the simple answer is a lot and it gets to, I had said earlier that China was well ahead of the pace required to double its stockpile, and in fact, this is additional evidence that some of our previous projections may not be accurate at all, and I take it a step further. The idea of assessing a nation's capability simply based on the size of its stockpile, I assert that's actually a very crude measure of how you go about doing that. You have to think about the delivery systems, the accuracy, the readiness, the training, the doctrine.

There's any number of other factors that have to go in there and I do get a little frustrated that I do see some things in the press sometimes that says, well, the United States has a lot. They have a little. There's really no problem. One, I'm treaty constrained. China is not. I don't get the luxury of deterring countries one at a time and while we have a particular... We have the stockpile we have, it's not all operationally available to me to deter anybody with and all of this seems to get left out of the conversation, which again, when you're responsible for the defense of the United States and our allies, are very much factors you have to consider.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Well, I'm going to try to hit a Russia, China here twofer. So you mentioned we're treaty constrained. Everything they have is unconstrained. Their whole arsenal is unconstrained, and Russia's treaty constrained, but they also have a whole lot of unconstrained delivery systems and warheads that go with those, and a lot of people think of Russia and the United States as having parity, but that's just the constrained strategic nuclear weapons we're talking about. So is it possible that China is seeking parity with Russia, including their unconstrained theater nuclear weapons, and perhaps we're looking at it too, they're just trying to race to parity with us, but more concerning, maybe they're trying to race to parity with what the Russians have.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Rebecca, one, I mean, you very accurately assessed where we're constrained, which constrains the largest fraction of our available forces compared to Russia. It only constraints about half of what they

have and it constraints none of China, and you very accurately hit on a point. That's part of the dynamic in a three party problem that I don't think that we have done enough thinking all the way through, and so it's not only what they're doing relative to each other, but what do combinations look like? We probably need to go dust off our history and look at it. There is at least one historic example where the Soviet Union somewhat unexpectedly provided an extended deterrence guaranteed to China in the middle of the 1958 Taiwan crisis, and so there are history things that we need to be going to look at, over.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

And I liked that you touched on the point that you had made previous living here in Huntsville about how you had said it doesn't really matter why they're building out, but operationally, it just matters that they are and we have to respond to that, and then I liked how you just said that it does to a degree because matters if they're using it coercively or purely a minimum deterrence, which you said they're no longer doing, which then brings me to my question. What would you say to those who would say they're responding to what we've done and that we have actually behaved in ways with our missile defense deployments, conventional deployments, and they're merely just responding and haven't really shifted in their overall approach to how they think about nuclear weapons?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

So one, and I'll touch on, I think it is always very, missile defense seems to be the biggest reason I see. Is there others? I think it's important to remember one, that the United States' strategic nuclear capabilities haven't done anything for 30 years except to get older and smaller. We haven't done anything to change and it's very interesting to me that China was perfectly fine with their posture for a big chunk of that, and only in the last couple of years do they decide now we need to do something different.

That's very interesting to me. The second piece is you mentioned missile defense and I think this is a part of the conversation that gets left out because both Russia and China love to point to US missile defense as a, I would call it the duty excuse for anything that they want to do, they will attribute it to US missile defense. We leave out that Russia actually has better missile defense than the United States does. That seemingly never comes into the conversation. They have more of it. Theirs is nuclear tipped. Ours is not, and then on top of that, the most cursory examination of the US missile defense architecture.

It's not like you can hide a beam used radar. If you were to look at our architecture and our capacity, you would see that our system is designed to do exactly what we say it's designed to do. It's designed to protect against a rogue threat, and they know that. They can do math just as well as we can. So then calls into question why would you attribute your action to this when in fact, I think there may be other reasons, and I think the reason in the case of China is they've got a military that is now capable of coercion, that they have correctly figured out that you can't coerce from a minimum deterrent posture. It is not flexible enough to allow that and that's where they're headed.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Yeah. And with their own national aims that we know about from what Xi Jinping announced, we know what they say that they intend to do and what they want to do. Thank you for that, sir. I'm going to swing back to missile defense here in a minute. I want to finish going through nuclear posture issues first. You just touched on missile defense so I'm anxious to get there. We've heard you, sir, give your

best military advice on the sole purpose and no first use. We've heard General Millie and others give their best military advice as well.

And other Europeans are pressing the Congress and the administration hard against no first use, against United States adopting a no first use for a sole purpose. Are you hearing anything you can share with us from Japanese, our Korean allies, the French, others on the issue of sole purpose and adopting a no first use and how that might impact assurance and the effectiveness of deterrence as it concerns our allies?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

So what I am very proud that the United States is doing in this nuclear posture review, likely have done in all nuclear posture reviews is soliciting the input of our allies. I was just over in the Indo-Pacific. I had calls on senior Japanese leadership, senior South Korean leadership, and those mechanisms are working. Those nations, others of our allies through our department of state are providing their views to our nuclear posture review, and I think they will get full consideration inside, that they've made their positions very clear best I can tell.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

All right. And let's go, hop over then in talking about missile defense a little bit more. So we're still seeking to deploy a robust missile defense, a layered missile defense system, but of the United States primarily to defend the US Homeland against the rogue state threat, and North Korea has been relatively quiet, at least from in the public reporting, but there was earlier reporting that though they may have stopped ICBM testing for some time and nuclear testing, that they may have still continued to increase in number their number of missiles. Are we deploying enough interceptors of the Homeland to stay ahead of the North Korean threat, knowing the shot doctrine that we're not going to talk about, but are we staying ahead of that threat?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

One, right now, Rebecca, I am confident that in the least now, that we have paced the threat, but I think you hit on a key point, which is that's what's essential is to be able to pace the threat and to be able to provide capability fast enough such that it inserts doubt in an aggressor's mind that their plan is going to go work, and I got two other attributes of this that I think are important and I do think the missile defense review and nuclear posture reviews are converging down this line. One is the first thing that I think we need to address is warning, our ability to warn birth to death track such that we can re-posture, or if we don't think we can, can we re-posture such that we account for that? Again, our history is important here. We had a time where we didn't have warning at all, right? And we compensated for that by the way we deployed sack basis. And I'm certainly not suggesting we go do that. My point being is warning and posture are related, the more you have a one allows changes in the other and vice versa. And I don't want us to lose that lesson of history.

The second piece gets back to integration. In terms of our ability to recognize that nuclear is not separate from space, it's not separate from cyber, it's not separate from conventional, it's not separate from missile defense, along with allies and partners information and all instruments of national power. So how do we put this framework together in a way that not all missile defense requires active missile defense? There is a broader class of things you can do inside a missile defeat construct that then has to be integrated with the other pieces that you're doing. I see a lot of work on various pieces of integrated deterrence, seemingly without recognition that this is a part of a larger whole. And so getting a good, common understanding of what the larger whole looks like, which commander is responsible for what,

and then what is the optimum arrangement inside that to achieve our defensive objectives if the lowest total resource commitment, I think is one where we're headed, but we have work to do.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

If I can ask another one about homeland defense, I know this is north comm commander is really working on this, but it certainly impacts everything you just said in strategic deterrence. And also I would add the stronger homeland defense is for the North Korean threat, this stronger our assurance is would, the credibility of our assurance is for our South Korean allies, for example, and our Japanese allies as well. What improvements or enhancements should we be thinking about for homeland defense as we pursue the next generation interceptor? It's going to be a more capable interceptor, but it's going to be part of the GMD system, as I understand it, complimenting the fleet of ground-based interceptors. What kind of advice and counsel are you giving or are you pushing for to ensure that in the interim, as we build into that next capability, that we are still sufficiently protected?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

So, Rebecca, I think that's a very important point, in terms of what has changed in the current strategic environment. One I'm directly for, that maintaining strategic deterrence is an assumption that underpins everything else that we're doing. But there's a second assumption that underpins everything that we're doing and that's the homeland is secure. So I'm highly aligned with General VanHerck, fundamentally in the end, the purpose for doing strategic deterrence is to defend the homeland. And Glen and I will talk about how we combine what our capabilities are to achieve that effect.

And so having a secure homeland is necessary to enable us to do everything else that we're doing. It is threatened in ways that we haven't seen before. And then that's where I go back to the idea of integrated deterrence. What piece of this is best accomplished from an active missile defense standpoint? What part of this needs to be accomplished with your strategic deterrent forces? What pieces can be done inside the other domains? And I am optimistic that we're going to get to the pieces of those inside the missile defense review, nuclear posture review and national defense strategy review. And Rebecca, I come back to step one in my mind of making sure your homeland is defended is the ability to understand the threat that it faces, IE I come back to warning.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Great. Thank you, sir. And if I could follow up there too, I like one of the points that we already discussed, the China Russia context and how both China and Russia like to accuse US missile defense as being the reason that they're responding. Russia has been doing it for years, and it looks to me like China's copying what the Russians have done. In the past it's actually kind of worked, the United States has made some different changes to what it wants to do at different times. The political leaders have made those decisions in part at least, to accommodate the concerns the at least purported concerns of the Russians, and now the Chinese are doing it.

But if they're going to be advancing their programs anyway, regardless of what the United States does, is it time that we rethink our US missile defenses as part of our strategic deterrent and perhaps start building greater credit capability or investing in certain things like boost phase intercept, directed energy, that kind of thing that might help us get at the more sophisticated missile threats that we're seeing come out of places like China and Russia?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Yeah, Rebeccah, one, I would absolutely applaud S and T and R and D efforts, designed to change the position of the cost curve that we're on, on a active missile defense. That would enable us to then rethink what is the piece of deterrence that you do by denial, particularly an active denial piece as to the post or the parts that you have to do relative to using your central strategic deterrent forces. So I'd applaud our efforts down those lines. And I think we've said that to Congress before, in terms of where we need to go with that. And again, it is recognition that the threats that we're facing are not static and that business as usual will not work, which means that we are going to have to accelerate our ability to introduce new capabilities in any number of places. Missile defense is a great example.

One of my basic, call it recommendations, with regards to our strategic forces is to not slow down. It is going to be long enough before I get any new modernized capability into the forces that I'm responsible for and we can ill afford, given the threats that we're facing, any further delays on that.

And then on top of that, the importance of making sure that our legacy systems are maintained, sustained all the way out to the end of their lifetimes. I'm fundamentally an engineer and the real world can be a very harsh place sometimes. And so I have advised that we put some error bars around what we think the decay curves are going to look like on our legacy capabilities. We're very good at predicting this stuff, but we're not perfect. And so we think we're going to have systems that will last to a certain date, and there've been just absolutely Herculean efforts on the part of the services to go do that. And even to this day, can we get a little more, can we buy a little bit more margin? I think that's to be applauded, but there's an equal chance as we're doing this, we're going to find out we're not going to get quite as much as what we thought.

And so Rebeccah, I'll tell you, I think this is an important point that in a lot of areas that I'm either directly responsible for or am the customer and what I mean by that is weapons complex is a very good example of that, we have delayed the recapitalization of the triad so long that we are at certain points that if we're wrong, if we make the wrong decision, we can't come back a couple of years later and buy it back. Normally in a bureaucracy, you can do that. Hey, I didn't buy enough torpedoes two years ago. So go buy some more. You don't like doing that. That costs a lot of money. We try to avoid that from an efficiency standpoint.

But we're at certain points, both on delivery, weapons, systems, really pieces of our infrastructure and pieces of our human talent, our talent base, that if we get it wrong, you can't buy it back for unlimited money for five years or longer because you're regenerating it from scratch basically. Bureaucracies don't normally face decisions like that. And we're trying awfully hard in our role inside these processes to identify that's the potential consequences of this decision unlike most of the other ones we make.

**Rebeccah Heinrichs:**

Thank you. And I think it's important to that the modernization plan that we're on really enjoys bipartisan consensus. That's really the Obama Trump plan for modernization. And then I would just note too, it's always good to keep in mind as the administration goes through this nuclear posture review, that the last nuclear posture review was even before the strategic breakout, or I guess the strategic breakout for China was just beginning. And we know a little bit more about that now with what we've been able to see with some of these commercial satellite images of what some of what China is doing. So I think it's important to keep in mind.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Rebeccah, that's an important point that the actual acquisition requirements that we're acquiring too, in the recapitalization of the triad, we're set in a much more benign strategic environment five, six years

ago, when the threat from Russia was not perceived what it is today and China truly was a lesser included case. And so those conditions have changed dramatically.

And I think another important point is our strategy, our national strategy for strategic deterrence. I can trace the lineage of that strategy back to the Kennedy administration. It really hasn't changed all that much. It sits in the mid point, it's a tailored, flexible strategy that sits between a true minimum deterrent strategy and some attempt to achieve primacy, which may not even be theoretically possible. That strategy has served us well all the way back to the Kennedy administration. And it comes with a very carefully thought out package, I've used the term family before here, and people criticized me for it, but our policies, our postures, and our capabilities all fit together to execute that strategy. And that's why I'm pleased with the way the MPR is approaching it so that you go answer the strategy question first and then determine policy posture capability. And I just advise against making individual capability or policy decisions before you complete that overall look, lest you modify your strategy in ways you didn't anticipate.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Yeah. And in one of those changes too, of course, since that last review, as you've already mentioned a couple of different times, it's not just that we have China and Russia, but that they are increasingly cooperating militarily in some ways that are concerning. And we have to consider that as we think through strategy, and then what that might mean for our nuclear posture and response to that strategy.

Let's talk a little bit more about... really interested in integrated deterrence. I know, it sounds like a theoretical term you've mentioned. You've mentioned the spectrum of capabilities that are in there. There's been some speculating and guessing from the analyst side in the think tank world about what that might mean and what that might look like. Can we talk a little bit more in specifics about how diplomatic initiatives and economic tools, we're not thinking about those in lieu of military capabilities or the hard power piece, but in addition to. Can you put a little bit more color on that for us, about how that's being thought through and how we should or should not be thinking about that?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Well, so one, in the end, deterrence is about influencing the decision-making of someone else. I think that's a very important piece to keep in mind here. And I think another key thing to keep in mind is when you are talking about competitions and possible confrontation with a nuclear capable opponent, the conversation very quickly shifts from an order of battle comparison at the operational level of war and who could win the fight, and it very quickly becomes an issue of who judges the greater stake and who's willing to take more risks to pursue that. And you have to come up to that higher level to then think about the decisions you're trying to influence. And then what means you have at your disposal to do that. So, yes, true integrated deterrence is in all instruments of national power. It includes your allies and partners and it's everything a nation is capable of doing.

But I do like to deconstruct it. So start with the military piece, that it is how do you combine nuclear, conventional, space, cyber, special information allies and partners, to understand what that adds up to in totality. Because the person you're trying to influence is looking across all of that. If you'll forgive me, I go back to being an engineer. I think of it like a boundary condition. So the equation has to hold all across the boundary. If there's a place, a space where it's not holding, that's where the opponent will go to achieve their gains. So you have to get it to hold across. You have to be able to go across domain, which is something I'd like to see us improve on our ability to go do.

And in particular, I see some stuff that somehow thinks that integrated deterrence is separate from nuclear deterrence. Again, that somehow nuclear is off on its own little box off to the side. Nuclear is

just a piece of the broader whole that you have to have with integrated deterrence, but there is a key aspect of nuclear, which is because of its destructive potential, it is unique in its ability to influence someone's decision-making and that even unlimited conventional can't compensate for what you can do with a nuclear capability. You can have as many Arleigh Burke destroyers, F-35s and brigade combat teams as you want. And there's a certain point if the opponent is willing to go do there, that's not going to change their minds about anything.

And so, I applaud where we're going with this. I am looking forward to getting a good, common definition and understanding of integrated deterrence. We have work to do there. And then second, who's responsible for what inside of it and this common mental framework of the larger whole. Because again, I see a lot of effort that does a piece of it without alluding to, "This is where I fit into the whole mosaic required to achieve integrated deterrence."

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Great. It sounds to me too, as you try to influence the adversary, to train the adversary, you're trying to further complicate their calculations, which would seem to me, we're trying to expand our toolbox, not shrink it. So maybe we shouldn't be thinking about it in terms of replacing certain capabilities with other ways, but just sort of adding and expanding. But I look forward to understanding that more, as it becomes clear over the next weeks and months.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Rebecca, that's actually a very good point. I like describing my mission set, that to STRATCOM, victory looks like nothing happened. It is a very non-military concept. "Can we convince the other side not today? And we will get back to sort of our business and avoid use of force or threat of force to achieve a political aim." That's ultimately what we're trying to accomplish here.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

All right. And what might the role... Curious to know, we've got this new category of weapons that the United States is working really hard on or adversaries have been working on it for many, many years as well. And they're maybe further along in some ways, hypersonics, what might be the role of... I've tried to puzzle through this myself, hypersonics in strategic deterrence. So they're non-nuclear for the U.S. at least. They're non nuclear for us. These weapons will be relatively, compared to other things, fewer in number, but the target sets, what we might want to use them for, our key targets that undermined enemy command and controls sensing sustainment. So their role kind of is more of a way that we think about traditional strategic deterrence, though they themselves are non-nuclear. So it's more of a deterrent than it is a tactical weapon. How would you fit that into strategic deterrence?

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Well, first, this is a really good example where strategic deterrence and nuclear deterrence actually are two separate things. My fundamental responsibility is to do strategic deterrence and then separate from that I'm responsible for nuclear operations. And so, this is in the category. There are certain affects I need to achieve in order to strategically deter. They're not all nuclear.

STRATCOM has had a requirement for conventional prompt strike since 2016. We long ago recognized that if we have this capability, it would enable us to accomplish strategic deterrence better than what we can using the nuclear effect alone. Don't want to go into too much detail on that, but what I will say is STRATCOM will be ready to receive the first service hypersonic capability at intercontinental range the day they make it available. We are already working the concepts. I have the targeting. I have the

command and control. And so, we will not do a classic military thing, where you get the new capability and then spend two more years figuring out what to do with it. We will be ready to receive on day one and I will be able to put that to use, to better provide strategic deterrence because we have this capability.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

And again, I think that fits in really well with the previous conversation about affecting the enemy's calculations. And part of that is they have to believe it. And so, we have to have the spectrum of tools in our toolkit that we have that... It's one thing to threaten to use a particular weapon system, but it has to be believable to the enemy. And so, you need to have the spectrum and multiple options, I think, at your disposal.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Credibility is a key component of deterrence.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Yes, sir. Well, those are the questions that I had for you, sir. If there's anything else that you would like to leave us with that you think that we didn't touch on, I'd be happy to hear that, but that was incredibly enlightening, very helpful. And I think clarified some things, even since your last talk that you gave in Huntsville.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Well, I guess, Rebecca, it would be two final thoughts, that China's strategic breakout means that they are now additives to what it takes to deter Russia. That all throughout our history, once we sized our capabilities for the pacing threat and then put in margins for uncertainty and margins for situations that we couldn't adequately foresee so that we minimize the risk with our deterrent forces, then under any credible stack of scenarios, you had enough residual capacity that you could reasonably deter any third party. That's no longer true. The idea that we put in margins and hedges for things that not only we can foresee, but the things you can't reasonably foresee is an important point I wouldn't want us to lose.

A quick comment to give you an example of what that looks like in real life is nuclear command and control. The nuclear command and control system we have today had that design basis in it. So when we had a worldwide pandemic, which is a condition that no one foresaw coming, when we initially put this system together. And U.S. Strategic Command had to rapidly shift concepts of operation on all three legs of the triad into a number of remote distributed and isolated means of operating because we had to protect our people like everybody else did. The nuclear command and control system flexed to that and wasn't even breathing hard. I'm very appreciative of my predecessors who gave us a system with the margins built into it so we could address the threat we couldn't see coming. I think we need to make similar wise decisions moving into the future.

And the second piece is, particularly with China, a sense of urgency. The fact that we need to move quickly to understand and address this. This is not business as usual, and we are going to have to move much, much faster in any number of things that we do in order to pace this threat.

**Rebecca Heinrichs:**

Which then underscores the importance of having the hedge. We didn't know what we didn't know, and now we're kind of learning it as we go. And the problem seems to only be getting worse. Again, just to

put some point of the importance of having some humility, to make sure that you build in a hedge as you prepare for this.

Well, Admiral, thank you so much, just not only for your service, which we're so thankful for and your leadership on these issues, but for spending the time to talk with us today and providing some greater clarity on some things I know many people have been very curious about and wondering as they come up with their own analysis and writings and research. So thank you so much, sir, for your time today. For those of us who were watching today, please feel free to come to Hudson Events for other events we have forthcoming and for research that is on our website. Thank you so much.

**Admiral Charles Richard:**

Thank you very much, Rebecca.