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As Delivered Remarks General John E. Hyten

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As Delivered Remarks

Gen John E. Hyten

On 23 April 2019, Gen Hyten, commander of USSTRATCOM, visited the Air Force Academy to give the annual Ira C. Eaker lecture on National Defense Policy. Before soon to be graduates and officers, Gen Hyten discussed how several Air Force career fields, particularly those involving missiles and space, contribute to successful deterrence in the 21st century. -Editor

Location: U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado

Event: Eaker Lecture on National Defense Policy (Edited Transcript for Clarity)

...I always thought, many times as I look back, if life would have been different if I'd gone to the Air Force Academy because one of the big advantages you guys are about to experience as you go into the world, into the United States Air Force, is that you will have a support structure built in from the day you come into the service. You will have this group of people that you had a common experience with for your four years. As you go through that structure you will have that common bond that will pull you together. It's an amazing thing. I didn't have that.

I was the first class back into Harvard after the Vietnam riots. We had nine students that were in ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] that cross-enrolled in MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] when I first started. A month into the program there were only five because we got kicked, cursed, spat at, assaulted, all on the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts, just because we were wearing the uniform of our nation's country. Four of my classmates decided they'd figure out some other way to pay, but I couldn't afford Harvard unless the Air Force paid for it. So we stayed, the five of us stayed. Now, the other four are gone as well, and none served 20 years. So, I don't have any

classmates still serving. You guys will have classmates all the way through that you get to deal with.

...And it's a special place that you're about to join. Whether you're '22, '21, 2019, wherever you are, you're about to join the United States Air Force and I hope you enjoyed some of the pictures that were in that video you just looked through. Pictures of the most powerful combatant command in the world, my command, U.S. Strategic Command. It is simply the most powerful command that's ever been created. Some of my friends don't like it when I say that, but it's simply the fact. It's true. That's who we are.

But, I want you to think back just a short period of time in our history when just over a decade ago that command with all the capability you just saw was dying on a vine. It had huge problems. It had morale problems across the entire force. It got to be so bad, we loaded a nuclear weapon on a B-52 and flew it from North Dakota to Louisiana, and until it got to Louisiana nobody even knew we did it. We sent missile parts from Hill Air Force Base in Utah to Taiwan, and didn't even know we did it – nuclear missile parts. We had huge cheating scandals in the nuclear force on the Navy side as well as the Air Force side.

How could that happen? How could the most powerful command in the United States end up with those kinds of problems? It did because we took our eye off of what the most

important thing in our country is, and the most important thing in our country is our nation's security. Our nation's security is guaranteed by the capabilities of U.S. Strategic Command.

We had senior leadership at a northern-tier missile base who stood up in front of a bunch of ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] operators, a bunch of missileers, a bunch of the finest people that the nation's ever produced, and said you guys need to get out of the missile business and get into the space business because the missile business is dying and the space business is where it's going to be happening. That's not a great way to deal with the most important mission in the United States Air Force, to tell the people that actually do it that they're a dying mission.

It's not a dying mission. It's the most important mission that we have. Nuclear deterrence is what this nation's defense is based on. From beginning to end, that's where it starts. And if you don't understand that, you don't understand the concept of military power; you don't understand the concept of deterrence. Nuclear capabilities are essential to our nation's security. And a lot of people still question that. But you're about to enter an Air Force where that nuclear business is critical to everything that we do, and you need to understand what that is.

One of the questions that I get more often than any other question is can you, me, imagine a world without nuclear weapons? And the answer is yes. I can imagine a world without nuclear weapons and everybody in this room can imagine a world without nuclear weapons as well. Because you know what that world looks like? The world before August of 1945. Somewhere in high school history or here at the academy you've studied a little bit about World War II. So let's just

think about the numbers of World War II for a second.

Between the years 1939 and 1945 the world killed somewhere between 60 and 80 million people in World War II. Think about those numbers. Sixty to 80 million people killed in a war.

If you do the math, that's about 33,000 people a day being killed in World War II. If you think about this nation's horrible experience in Vietnam, and all the heroes that we sent, our nation's greatest treasure, our sons and daughters into Vietnam to fight for our freedoms, in that horrible experience we lost 58,000 Americans – 58,000 of our sons and daughters. That's two days of violence in World War II. Two days. Imagine every day that goes by and it's the entire destruction of the Vietnam War. Ever since nuclear weapons were invented that level of destruction went away. It went away because the nations that had those nuclear capabilities always had to be worried about whether they were going to cross the line that would cause their adversary to want to use nuclear weapons back against them. That's the basis of deterrence.

The basis of deterrence is having a capability that is so fearful that the adversary won't cross that line and won't ever walk down that path. That's what we want to have happen. But in order for deterrence to work, we have to be ready to fight that nuclear war each and every day and that's the pictures you saw on the screen. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines of U.S. Strategic Command practicing that mission every day so that our adversaries see it and they know it and they won't walk down that line. That's what nuclear weapons mean in the world of the 21st century.

But we took our eye off it because 9/11 happened. And most of the people in this

room have no memories of the world before 9/11/2001 because you are not old enough. And because you don't have those memories your entire experience has been focused on the Global War on Terror. And as we walk into the future, that global war on terror is not going to go away. We've had great success on the battlefield in Syria. Great success on the battlefields of Iraq. Afghanistan is reaching a place where we're talking peace with the Taliban. All those things are looking good, but I tell you what, terrorism is not going away. Terrorism is at least a generational thing. Terrorism is something that you're going to have to deal with your entire time in the military whether it's a four-year plan like I had or a 42-year plan like I ended up. Whatever that plan is, you're going to be dealing with terrorism that entire time.

But here's an interesting thing about the terrorists that want to attack the United States. They will never be able to defeat the United States of America. Ever. We have to protect our citizens, we have to protect our capabilities, and they want to terrorize us, they want to damage us. They're going to do those things and we're going to fight and defeat them wherever they happen to be. But they are not an existential threat to this country.

There's only two nations on the planet right now that bring that existential threat who have a stated purpose of defeating the United States. The stated purpose to change the world, to change the entire world order, put their model on the world order, and not the United States model, not the Western model, not our ally model, not the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] model, and that's Russia and China. Russia and China are once again recognized as potential adversaries of the United States.

Russia all of a sudden became that adversary again in 2014 when they invaded Crimea. In 2014 they invaded Crimea. They were our adversaries then. Somehow that was news. If you actually read what the President of Russia has said multiple times, as early as 2000. ... Vladimir Putin was elected President of Russia in March of 2000. In April of 2000 he gave a speech. In that speech he said they'd been watching the United States. They'd been watching NATO.

They've been watching what we've been doing in the first Gulf War, in Allied Force. Now, this was before 9/11. They hadn't yet seen how we fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. But they understood that we had built this unbelievably powerful conventional force. And because of that powerful conventional force they were going to have to change their doctrine and focus on their nuclear and strategic capabilities. They were going to modernize their nuclear capabilities, and build a large number of low-yield nuclear weapons as well. They would also reserve the right to deploy those low-yield nuclear weapons on a battlefield in Europe should Russia be challenged. That doctrine began in April of 2000.

In 2006, Putin announced the full modernization of the nuclear force, saying the modernization would be done by 2020. I won't tell you the classified numbers, but they're going to be pretty close to being done by 2020. They've made multiple speeches over the time – Putin and the other leadership of Russia – that this would be their strategy. But somehow they were our friend. They were our friend all the way up to 2014 when suddenly they became a potential adversary again when they invaded Crimea. That was just the same part of the strategy they've announced for the 14 years prior to that ever since Putin was elected.

This is an adversary we're going to have to deal with, and this is an adversary you're going to have to deal with. And you better study your adversary. You better understand the way they think, why they think that way, what they're doing. Look at them as an adversary.

Look at China. China's suddenly an adversary of the United States again as well. Somehow that's news as well. The first time I wrote about China was 1998, and I'll give you warning, if you ever write when you're going to graduate school, you go on to a fellowship, or you write a thesis, you better be aware that somebody's actually going to read that someday and hold you accountable for what you write down.

But, I wrote down in a paper in 1998 what I thought China was going to be doing in space and what China was going to be doing as far as their overall strategy. And you know where I got that? I got that from the Chinese publications that had been already written. I got that from the Chinese students at the University of Illinois I was going to school with. They stated exactly what they were going to do and they've been doing it for the last 20-plus years without fail on that same strategy. You can find everything that they're doing right now in the strategy that was written in the 1990s, and we just ignored it as a nation. And we helped China build their power. Now, China wants to become the regional power in the Pacific, and now they've started to write about being the global power by the end of the century.

That's the world that we live in. Why are they building islands in the South China Sea? It's part of that same strategy. Why are they building space weapons? It's part of the same strategy. Why are they building aggressive cyber capabilities? It's part of the same

strategy. And they wrote it down over 20 years ago. But nobody read it.

So, you better study your adversaries and understand the way they think, the way they are organized, the way they are trained, and the way they're equipped, because someday we may have to deal with them.

The other piece of the puzzle is to somehow make sure we never have to deal with them, which brings us back to deterrence. The last thing we want to do in this world is go to war with Russia and China. That's the last thing we want to see happen. If anybody thinks that that's a good thing for the world you don't live in the same world I do. We have to make sure that never happens, and you do that with deterrence.

So, deterrence in the 21st century has been a fascinating discussion. A fascinating discussion because of the lack of discussion. So, somehow deterrence in the 21st century is looked at as STRATCOM's job. General Hyten, you're the STRATCOM commander, deterrence is your job. And if you read the Unified Command Plan you'll find that. That's my number one job, strategic deterrence.

Somehow people think that just because we have 1,550 deployed nuclear weapons and comply with the New START [Strategic Arms Reduction] Treaty we deter all our adversaries, and all you have to do is pick up a newspaper and read just the beginnings of that to understand that's not true. We don't deter all behavior because of the existence of nuclear weapons.

So, what is strategic deterrence in the 21st century? When I came into command in 2016 we started asking that question. We built an academic alliance with 35 colleges and universities to start looking at what is

deterrence in the 21st century. And we intentionally didn't give anybody any answers when I started just asking the question. What is deterrence in the 21st century? Just to try to create a debate. And I would go to places that fundamentally disagree with the way I think about nuclear weapons. I would go to Stanford and Yale and Harvard, and I would debate the facts with them. I would debate with people that have differences of opinion to me about what deterrence is in the 21st century to try to gather that broader discussion of what goes on.

If you want to know where the strategic deterrent theory began, it began in colleges and universities and the think tanks in this country like RAND, in the early 1960s with Herman Kahn and Thomas Schelling, Bernard Brodie, many of the folks that you've read in your classes here in this institution came from that. And when you start thinking about deterrence, you go back and read them, because there hasn't really been anybody in the 21st century that is of their element. But we are starting to see that change. We're starting to see the beginnings of a new debate at Georgetown and Stanford and elsewhere, about different perspectives of what deterrence is in the 21st century.

And here are the elements. Deterrence now is a multi-polar problem. Because, you just can't focus on Russia and say New START is a global arms reduction treaty. It's not. It's just two nations. But everything we do with Russia impacts China. Everything we do with North Korea impacts Russia. Everything we do with Russia impacts China. It just goes all the way around. So we have to think about everything that we do in this multi-polar world.

The second piece, it is multi-domain. It is all domains. All the domains have to come into fruition. And you've heard the Air Force

concept of Multi-Domain Command and Control. The Army has a concept called Multi-Domain Operations. The Navy is working fleet command and control issues. All trying to get at the same issue.

But here's where the challenge really is as we go forward. The challenge is how do we integrate global capabilities? How do we integrate what the Chairman calls global fires? Because if we ever get into a conflict with an adversary, there's going to be non-kinetic and kinetic shooting happening in space, cyber, air, land and sea all at the same time, and we have to figure out how with multiple commanders involved we integrate all those capabilities together.

So, you want to know what you have to do in order to become a great joint officer? Just become a great Airman. This institution is not building great joint warriors. That will happen down the road. We're getting you ready to be Airmen.

Now, there are other services in this room that are going as exchange programs in here. When you go back to your service, whatever service you came from, become a great Soldier, a great Sailor, a great Airman, a great Marine, because what I want as a joint commander is I want to pull the best domain expertise I can from every domain that we operate in, put them all together in a room and then figure out how to fight together effectively in all those domains. But what I don't want, is I don't want somebody that knows a little bit about every domain. I want a room full of people that know everything about each domain and then we'll figure out how to pull those pieces together.

So, the first thing you've got to do is become an expert in whatever career field you're going into. If you're going to be a pilot, become the best pilot in the United States Air

Force. And if you're going to be a pilot, that should be your goal. Not just be a good pilot, but be the best pilot in the United States Air Force. The best pilot in the United States military. If you're going into space, become the best space warrior there is. If you're going into cyber, become a cyber killer. If you're going into intel, become the best intel operator there is. If you're going into acquisition, if you're going into engineering, become the best. Learn that. That's what you have to do for the next 10 years. Then when the time comes we're going to take that expertise and we're going to put it to use. But you should never lose that expertise because that will define who you are. And in your soul, in your heart as you go forward into the future, you need to resonate those values. Because when I look at myself in the mirror, even though I'm a joint commander, even though I command Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, my professional identity is an Airman, and it always will be. That's the way it's got to be.

And yes, I have a deep space background. And a couple of weeks ago, the day after I was supposed to be here the last time when I left because of the storm that came in, I was testifying with my bosses, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Secretary of the Air Force, in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee on the future of space, and I know that subject well. I have a vision of what that future's going to be. We're going to make space a real warfighting domain because it basically already is. The rest of the world just doesn't understand it. We're going to walk into it.

But, I was challenged about my background as an Airman, whether the Air Force was the right place for space. I said, you understand that when I bleed, I bleed blue because I am an Airman through and through. But I know we have also reached the point where space

has to be treated as its own domain, just like the air was, just like the maritime domain was, because it is a place where we're going to fight and it's a place we're going to have to win, an Air Force that we're going to build around it, and I believe the fact that it's still going to be in the United States Air Force is exactly right.

We're going to get into Q&A in a minute, and that's my favorite part, so we're going to have plenty of time for Q&A. But I would ask you to identify yourself. I'm going to ask you some questions here and I don't want you to raise your hand, I don't want you to embarrass yourself, I don't want you do anything stupid. But I'm just going to ask you some basic questions that every Airman should know the answer to. This is our history. This is our history as a United States Air Force and you should know these names off the back of your hand. And if we're not teaching you these names at the Air Force Academy we're doing something wrong. But this is the basics of who we are.

I'm going to ask you the easy question first. That is, who is the father of space and missiles in the United States Air Force? That's the easy one. That's Gen. Bernard Schriever.

Gen. Bernard Schriever basically invented the ICBM. He invented the spy satellite. He invented the rocket inside the military. He's the guy that was there. One of my great experiences of my life was as a young major to be told by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. [Merrill] Tony McPeak – I was the idiot major in that story, by the way, but I don't need to go into that. But going to Andrews get a C-21, taking off to California, pick up Gen. Schriever and take him to places X, Y, and Z and show him what we're doing in space in the United States Air Force. General Schriever was criticizing the Air

Force and General McPeak. I got to sit in the back of that C-21 and receive a lecture from Gen. Schriever that I'll never forget because he told me how we were screwing up in the Air Force, not treating space the way it should be treated. So he was the father of space and missiles.

Here's a second question. I'm going to make you raise your hand real quick. How many in here are aerospace engineers? A bunch of you. Who invented the term aerospace?
<pause>

Gen. Thomas D. White, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, fourth chief of staff, 1959. A hearing in front of Congress. Eight times during the hearing he used the term 'aerospace,' as the indivisible spectrum of operations from air to space that has to happen for the United States Air Force to control the high ground of the future.

A funny story-- Gen. [Dwight] Beach, an Army general testifying a short time later. They asked General Beach, General White keeps using this term aerospace. What do you think about that term? And seriously, you can look it up in the Congressional Record, General Beach goes, "I always heard of armospace."

Armospace didn't stick. Aerospace stuck. Because air and space are the areas we have to control.

Who is the general most responsible for creating Air Force Space Command? The command I commanded until 2016. Gen. [Jerome] Jerry O'Malley, commander of Tactical Air Command. The fighter pilot's fighter pilot. When he was a wing commander at Beale, he flew the SR-71, the U-2, he got read into these classified space programs, and he looked at it and said there's all this space stuff going on but none of it gets to the

warfighter. So, when he became the XO [director for operations] of the Air Force, now the A3 of the Air Force, he started working with the chiefs of staff, one of them being [Gen.] Lew Allen, and said we need to create a command that is focused on the operational application of space to the battlefield. That would be Air Force Space Command.

Here's the thing about those three people – General Schriever, General White, General O'Malley – they were all fighter pilots. They were all pilots. And somehow the popular culture has reached the point where somehow the world doesn't think that pilots care about space and that's so untrue. Not only do they care about space, our chief of staff cares about space as much as anybody I know; the general officers I work with care about space as much as anybody I know. But it was actually invented by pilots because that was the future of the United States Air Force. That's where we're going to go. And everyone in this room should be able to tell that story.

And what is it all about? It's all about our nation's most important mission. It's all about strategic deterrence in the 21st century, because strategic deterrence is going to come from being able to control the air, control space, control cyberspace, having a nuclear deterrent that is ready and able to respond to any threat. That is the structure that we're going to have. That's where it all comes together. And that's what you need to know when you go into the Air Force and you become second lieutenants. And you're not going to think about it for a while. You're just going to think about flying planes, and operating satellites and operating in cyberspace, and providing intel and building stuff. That's what you're going to think about for the next decade and that's great.

But if you remember nothing else from today, remember that we have adversaries in this

world that we don't want to go to war with. The only way to avoid that war is be ready to go to war and to defeat them in a war on any day that the nation requires us to. That's what we're supposed to do in the United States Air Force. That's what we're supposed to do at STRATCOM. That's what we're supposed to do in the United States military, and we need to be ready to do that.

I will stop there and just say thanks for the decision that you've made to come to this institution. Thanks for what you're about to do as you go forward into whatever service, whatever nation, whatever structure you're going into. But if you're going into the Air Force, understand that we just want you to be great Airmen, because great Airmen and great Soldiers, great Sailors, great Marines are what makes a great joint force – not great joint warriors.