U.S. Must Add Low-Yield Nuclear Arsenal to Counter Russian Upgrades, Joint Chiefs Vice Chairman Tells Conference

ARLINGTON, Virginia — The United States' ability to deter a strategic nuclear attack is being eroded by Russia's fielding of new types of weapons, and the U.S. must respond with new nuclear systems, which may include a sea-launched, nuclear-armed cruise missile, the country's second highest military officer said April 25.

"Our strategic deterrence is threatened by new classes of weapons. We have to address that," said Air Force Gen. Paul J. Selva, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

One of the weapons that must be matched is the arsenal of low-yield nuclear warheads that Russian President Vladimir Putin has mentioned in a several provocative speeches, Selva said.

Although Russia has had low-yield nuclear weapons for decades, what is new is Russia's recently stated strategy of using them early in a conflict to force the United States to capitulate rather than replying with the high-power strategic weapons, Selva said. "They call that escalate to de-escalate. That's inherently destabilizing."

"Until a few months ago, we didn't possess a similar low-yield nuclear weapon with which to match that threat. We could only respond with a big one," he said. That is why last year's Nuclear Posture Review advocated producing lower-yield warheads, the first of which were completed recently.

Production of lower-yield nuclear warheads, which were phased out of the U.S. inventory after the end of the Cold War, was strongly attacked by opponents of nuclear weapons, who argued that such weapons could make it easier for a president to turn to atomic arms in a conflict.

Selva said: “If any competitor attacks us with a low-yield weapon, we have the option to reply in kind, which is inherently de-escalatory.”

Asked how the new warheads would be used, Selva said the preference was a sea-launched cruise missile, like nuclear-armed Tomahawk land attack missiles (TLAM) that were deployed on U.S. attack submarines during the Cold War, rather than strategic weapons launched from Ohio-class ballistic missile subs.

“Right now, we don’t possess a sea-launched cruise missile that has a nuclear warhead. We have advocated for it and are working on how we might regain a sea-launched cruise missile,” he said. That weapon “provides the capability to extend our deterrent umbrella over some of our Asian allies that we now have to use intercontinental-range systems.”

Selva, who is a key player in nearly all aspects of strategic weapons development and employment, devoted much of his keynote address to the Strategic Deterrence Coalition conference at the Key Bridge Marriott to the massive program of modernizing all elements of the strategic deterrent triad, which consists of the 14 Ohio-class subs and their Polaris missiles, B-52 bombers and land-based Minuteman III ICBMs.

“What is our backstop to all types of nuclear threat? It is our strategic triad, forces that are capable of replying to any use of nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies?” Selva said.

“We must maintain a credible, safe, secure, reliable nuclear arsenal until we can negotiate” a global agreement “to rid the

world of nuclear weapons.”

But Selva said the military has “squeezed every bit of life out of” existing weapons and “left ourselves very little margin to be able to deliver the new systems to replace them.”

The Ohio-class submarines “will age out of the fleet by the time we bring in the Columbia class” that would replace them, the B-52s would be nearly 90 years old when replaced by the new B-21s and the Minuteman missiles may need a fourth life extension, when only two were planned, he said.

Although Selva said the total program is estimated to cost $320 billion over 10 years – a figure disputed by private and government analysts – at the peak the program would need “roughly 3.2 to 3.7 percent of the defense budget,” which he called “a bargain.”

U.S. Navy Supports Japanese-Led F-35A Search and Recovery Operations

OKINAWA, Japan – A U.S. Navy salvage team embarked a contracted vessel and departed Okinawa on April 24 to aid Japanese-led search-and-recovery operations for a downed Japan Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) F-35A Lightning II jet fighter, the U.S. 7th Fleet Public Affairs said in a release.

DSCV Van Gogh is a multipurpose diving support and construction vessel equipped with Navy remotely operated vehicles and a Navy towed-pinger locator (TPL-25) system.

The F-35A aircraft went missing about 85 miles east of Misawa

Air Base on April 9.

From April 9 to April 17, the U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Stethem (DDG 63) and P-8A Poseidon aircraft joined JASDF forces, searching about 5,000 square nautical miles. Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft flew 182 hours.

The missing Japanese F-35A was not located.

Navy to Christen High-Speed Transport Vessel Guam

WASHINGTON – The Navy will christen its newest high-speed transport vessel, the future USNS Guam (T-HST 1), during a 10 a.m. Japan Standard Time ceremony Saturday, April 27, in Okinawa, Japan, the Navy's Office of Information said in a release.

USNS Guam is named to honor the long-standing historical and military relationship between Guam and the United States. She will be the fourth ship to bear the name Guam.

Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Korea Harry B. Harris Jr. will be the principal speaker, and Bruni Bradley, a 25-year Navy veteran and wife of Harris, will serve as the ship's sponsor. In a time-honored Navy tradition, she will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow.

"This ship honors the island of Guam and the important contributions Guamanians have made to our nation and our Navy

and Marine Corps team," Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said. "For decades to come, USNS Guam and its crew will carry on the Guamanian tradition of service by providing our commanders with much needed high-speed sealift mobility and agility."

Long before Guam joined the U.S. as a territory, the island had a military relationship with the United States. The long-standing historical and military relationship began in 1898, when the U.S. acquired the island from Spain as a result of the Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-American War. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese captured Guam, and they occupied it until U.S. troops retook the island July 21, 1944, commemorated in Guam every year as "Liberation Day." Guam continues to host many critical U.S. military installations.

USNS Guam is an aluminum catamaran designed to be fast, flexible and maneuverable, even in austere port conditions, making the vessel ideal for transporting troops and equipment quickly. USNS Guam's 25,000-square-foot mission-bay areas can be quickly reconfigured for any cargo requirement, from supporting disaster relief to transporting troops and equipment.

The ship is preceded in service by the patrol gunboat USS Guam (PG 43), which was renamed Wake in 1941 and captured by the Japanese later that year, the Alaska-class large cruiser USS Guam (CB 2) in service 1944-1947, and the Iwo Jima-class amphibious assault ship USS Guam (LPH 9) in service 1965-1998.

Navy to Christen Guided-Missile Destroyer Lyndon B. Johnson

WASHINGTON (April 16, 2012) An artist rendering of the Zumwalt-class guided-missile destroyer USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002). (U.S. Navy photo illustration by Lt. Shawn Eklund/Released)

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Navy will christen its newest Zumwalt-class guided missile destroyer, the future USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002), during a 10 a.m. EST ceremony Saturday, April 27, at General Dynamics-Bath Iron Works shipyard in Bath, Maine, the Navy's Office of Information said in a release.

The third ship in the Zumwalt class, DDG 1002 is named in honor of late President Lyndon B. Johnson, who served in office from 1963 to 1969 and will be the first ship to bear his name.

Lynda Johnson Robb and Luci Johnson, the two daughters of the former president, will serve as the ship's sponsors. In a time-honored Navy tradition, the sisters will christen the ship by breaking a bottle of sparkling wine across the bow. Robb will also serve as the principal speaker.

"The future USS Lyndon B. Johnson will serve for decades as a reminder of President Johnson's service to our nation and support of a strong Navy and Marine Corps team," Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer said. "This ship honors not only President Johnson's service, but also the service of our industry partners who are vital in making the Navy the nation needs."

Johnson served as a U.S. Navy Reserve officer before being

called to active duty after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He requested a combat assignment and served in the Pacific theater. After returning from active duty, Johnson reported to Navy leaders and Congress what he believed were deplorable living conditions for the warfighters. He continued to fight for better standards for all military members.

Johnson's time as president was marked by the passage of programs that greatly influenced and affected education, health care and civil rights for generations to come. He signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, enacting comprehensive provisions protecting the right to vote and prohibiting racial discrimination by employers. His work on civil rights continued with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, which guaranteed voting rights for all people, regardless of race.

The multimission Zumwalt-class destroyers will be capable of performing a range of deterrence, power projection, sea control, and command and control missions while allowing the Navy to evolve with new systems and missions. Zumwalt ships are 610 feet long, have a beam of 80.7 feet, displace almost 16,000 tons and can reach 30 knots.

Lack of Well Deck Seen as a Wash for LHA USS America

PACIFIC OCEAN (Feb. 1, 2018) An MV-22 Osprey helicopter assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 161 (Reinforced) aboard the amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6) lands on the flight deck.
ARLINGTON, Va.— The transfer of the new amphibious assault

ship USS America to the Forward-Deployed Naval Force (FDNF) next fiscal year will bring a change in capabilities to the 7th Fleet's amphibious ready group, but the Marines that will go on patrol on America will be able to adjust to the changes and maintain a similar level of combat capability.

America (LHA 6) is scheduled to replace USS Wasp (LHD 1) as the "bog-deck" amphib deployed to Sasebo, Japan. The major difference in the two ships is that America lacks a well deck, a feature on all earlier LHAs and LHDs that can float landing craft and amphibious assault vehicles.

The America and its soon-to-be commissioned sister ship Tripoli were designed to be more aviation-centric. The trend was reversed with the third ship of the class, the future Bougainville, which will have a well deck.

The Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), the 31st MEU, which deploys on the ships of the Sasebo-based amphibious ships, differs from other MEUs in that it does not include M1A1 tanks in its load-out.

"I do not possess tanks, because we don't have tanks on Okinawa," said Col. Robert Brodie, commander of the 31st MEU, speaking April 23 to the Potomac Institute in Arlington of the 31st MEU's patrol in the Western Pacific in early 2019.

With somewhat of a lighter load, the 31st MEU will have less of a problem handling the unit's equipment of the America-centric amphibious ready group (ARG).

Brodie said his staff already is looking at the optimum way to configure the MEU's equipment load-out to best operate from the America. The ship's lack of a well deck means that three fewer landing craft – LCACs or LCUs – would be carried by the ships of the ARG.

Brodie is optimistic that the increased aviation capacity of the America could make up for the loss of a well deck. The

America would more easily accommodate 12 MV-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft rather than the 10 that the Wasp typically carried. The two additional Ospreys would add to the overall airlift capability that could make up for some of the loss of lift by landing craft, especially without the requirement to accommodate tanks.

The America's increased aviation capacity also would enable the America to deploy with perhaps as many as eight F-35C Lightning II strike fighters instead of six as on the Wasp. The additional MV-22Bs also would make the eventual installation of an aerial refueling hose on one or more of the MV-22Bs a plus for the range and endurance of the F-35.

The air combat element of the 31st MEU also normally deploys with four CH-53E Super Stallion heavy-lift helicopters on board the Wasp, in addition to the three Navy MH-60S armed helicopters. The four AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters and three UH-1Y Venom utility helicopters are normally staged on the amphibious platform dock ship and dock landing ship of the ARG.

Polar Security Cutter Contract Awarded to Replace Aging Icebreakers

Members of the Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star participate in various activities on the ice about 13 miles from McMurdo Station, Antarctica, Jan. 26, 2018. Stationed aboard the only U.S. heavy ice breaker, the crew is able to set foot in places few people ever experience. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Fireman

John Pelzel.
WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard and Navy have awarded VT Halter Marine Inc. of Pascagoula, Mississippi, a contract for the detail, design and construction of the Coast Guard's first polar security cutter (PSC), which will replace the nation's aging fleet of icebreakers.

The award is valued at $745.9 million and supports nonrecurring engineering and detail design of the PSC class as well as procurement of long lead-time materials and construction of the first ship, an April 23 Coast Guard release said.

The fixed price incentive (firm) contract also includes options for construction of two additional PSCs. If all options are exercised, the total contract value is $1.9 billion. PSCs support a range of Coast Guard missions such as search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, environmental response and national defense.

"Against the backdrop of 'Great Power Competition,' the [PSC] is key to our nation's presence in the polar regions," Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl L. Schultz said. "With the strong support of both the Trump administration and the United States Congress, this contract award marks an important step towards building the nation's full complement of six polar icebreakers to meet the unique mission demands that have emerged from increased commerce, tourism, research, and international activities in the Arctic and Antarctic."

The Naval Sea Systems Command is the lead contracting authority.

"This contract award reflects the great benefit achieved by integrating the incredible talents of Coast Guard and Navy acquisition and shipbuilding professionals to deliver best value at speed," said James Geurts, assistant secretary of the Navy for research, development and acquisition.

“Working with our industry partners, the team identified approximately $300 million in cost avoidances and accelerated the schedule for delivery of this capability to the nation by almost three years. This reflects the urgency in which we are operating to ensure we deliver capabilities necessary to support the Coast Guard and the nation’s missions in the polar regions.”

Construction on the first PSC is planned to begin in 2021 with delivery planned for 2024. However, the contract includes financial incentives for earlier delivery.

Marines to Rebuild WWII B-29 Airfield on Tinian for Training Use

ARLINGTON, Virginia – The airfield that launched the B-29 bombers that dropped the atomic bombs on Japan in World War II is being partially refurbished for use as a divert field and refueling point for Marine Corps aircraft in training events.

The United States has “opened up a long-term contract to be able to utilize the north [air]field” on Tinian, agreed to with a 40-year deal with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to use the north airfield on Tinian, said Col. Robert Brodie, commander of 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), speaking April 23 to the Potomac Institute in Arlington of the MEU’s recent patrol in the western Pacific in early 2019.

One of the coral runways of the airfield will be improved, Brodie said. That runway currently is in condition to receive

KC-130 aerial refueling/transport aircraft, but “it isn’t user-friendly for a lot of jet airplanes,” said Brodie, an F/A-18 Hornet pilot.

The runway refurbishment is expected to cost $20 million.

The Mariana Islands and Guam are becoming increasingly important to the upcoming move of thousands of Marines and Sailors from Okinawa to Guam, forces who will need combat training sites for maintaining readiness.

Brodie took the opportunity to look at potential beach landing sites and live-fire training sites. He noted that two new hangars for aircraft have been built at Andersen Air Force Base on Guam for Marine Corps aircraft.

The 31st MEU was heavily involved in relief efforts in Tinian after Typhoon Mangkhut swept through the Marianas in mid-September 2018, when the rooves of most buildings on Tinian were destroyed. The MEU’s Marines and the Sailors spent a month on Tinian rebuilding and relieving the suffering of the island’s 2,500 residents.

Brodie said the Marines and Sailors were gratified by the opportunity to help fellow American citizens, telling the islanders, “We’re here to support America!”

He said Tinian’s mayor has asked for a Marine Corps recruiter to come to the island to “focus their high school kids” on considering service in the Corps.

“I can’t tell you what a good feeling it is to have a great relationship with the leadership of the Northern Marianas,” Brodie said. “What I think that is going to directly contribute to the Marine Corps in our path forward as we start to move forces down there.”

Marine Corps Plans to Replace LAV with New, 'Transformational' ARV

Light Armored Reconnaissance Vehicles with Weapons Co., Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, finish a 379 mile movement into the Australian outback here, Aug. 31.

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Virginia –The Marine Corps plans to begin replacing its legacy Light Armored Vehicle with a modern Armored Reconnaissance Vehicle late in the next decade, Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) said in a release.

The ARV will be highly mobile, networked, transportable, protected and lethal. The capability will provide, sensors, communication systems and lethality options to overmatch threats that have historically been addressed with more heavily armored systems.

"The ARV will be an advanced combat vehicle system, capable of fighting for information that balances competing capability demands to sense, shoot, move, communicate and remain transportable as part of the naval expeditionary force," said John "Steve" Myers, program manager for MCSC's LAV portfolio.

Since the 1980s, the LAV has supported Marine Air-Ground Task Force missions on the battlefield. While the LAV remains operationally effective, the life cycle of this system is set to expire in the mid-2030s. The Corps aims to replace the vehicle before then.

Marine Corps Systems Command has been tasked with replacing

the vehicle with a next-generation, more capable ground combat vehicle system. In June 2016, the Corps established an LAV Way-Ahead, which included the option to initiate an LAV Replacement Program to field a next-generation capability in the 2030s.

Preliminary planning, successful resourcing in the program objectives memorandum and the creation of an Office of Naval Research science and technology program have set the conditions to begin replacing the legacy LAV with the ARV in the late-2020s.

“The Marine Corps is examining different threats,” said Kimberly Bowen, deputy program manager of Light Armored Vehicles. “The ARV helps the Corps maintain an overmatched peer-to-peer capability.”

The Office of Naval Research (ONR) has begun researching advanced technologies to inform requirements, technology readiness assessments and competitive prototyping efforts for the next-generation ARV.

The office is amid a science and technology phase that allows them to conduct advanced technology research and development, modeling and simulation, whole system trade studies and a full-scale technology demonstrator fabrication and evaluation.

These efforts will inform the requirements development process, jump-start industry and reduce risk in the acquisition program.

The office is also supporting the Ground Combat Element Division of the Capabilities Development Directorate by performing a trade study through the U.S. Army Ground Vehicle Systems Center in Michigan. This work will help to ensure ARV requirements are feasible and to highlight the capability trade space.

ONR has partnered with industry to build two technology

demonstrator vehicles for evaluation. The first is a base platform that will be made up of current and state-of-the-art technologies and standard weapons systems designed around a notional price point. The second is an “at-the-edge” vehicle that demonstrates advanced capabilities.

“The purpose of those vehicles is to understand the technology and the trades,” Myers said.

In support of acquisition activities, PM LAV anticipates the release of an acquisition program Request for Information in May 2019 and an Industry Day later in the year to support a competitive prototyping effort. The Corps expects a Material Development Decision before fiscal year 2020.

“We will take what we’ve learned in competitive prototyping,” Myers said. “Prior to a Milestone B decision, we’ll be working to inform trade space, inform requirements and reduce risk.”

The Corps believes the ARV will support the capability demands of the next generation of armored reconnaissance.

“This vehicle will equip the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion within the Marine Divisions to perform combined arms, all-weather, sustained reconnaissance and security missions in support of the ground combat element,” Myers said. “It’s expected to be a transformational capability for the Marine Corps.”

Coast Guard Unit Returns Home Following Nine-Month

Deployment to Gitmo

Coast Guardsmen, who is assigned to Port Security Unit 311, holds his daughter upon arrival on March 11, 2019. Port Security Unit 311 returned to Long Beach, CA after being deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for nine months in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. PSUs are anti-terrorism force protection expeditionary units with boat crews and shore-side security teams capable of supporting port and waterway security anywhere the military operates. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Emaia Rise)

SAN PEDRO, California – Coast Guard members from San Pedro-based Port Security Unit 311 returned home April 11 following a nine-month deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Coast Guard Pacific Area said in a release.

During the deployment, PSU 311 members maintained a continuous maritime anti-terrorism and force protection presence in the Naval Defensive Sea Area of Guantanamo Bay, directly supporting the commander of Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

The unit coordinated operations and conducted joint training with elements of JTF Guantanamo, the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Harbor Protection Unit and the Marine Corps Security Force Company. The units are jointly responsible for providing anti-terrorism and force protection of Guantanamo Bay Naval reservation and adjoining waters.

"I am extraordinarily proud of the men and women of PSU 311 and their professionalism, diligence and devotion to duty while deployed to Guantanamo Bay," said Cmdr. Laila Grassley, PSU 311's commanding officer. "They gave their all to the mission at hand – standing a vigilant watch while conducting their maritime security and force protection mission."

Established in May 1995 as a Coast Guard Reserve unit, PSU 311

is an expeditionary warfare unit specializing in maritime anti-terrorism, force protection and port security in support of military or humanitarian operations worldwide. The unit has an operational heritage, including deployments to Bahrain, Kuwait and Iraq, providing force protection for critical infrastructure and U.S. and coalition vessels in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Coast Guard Releases New Arctic Strategic Outlook

ARLINGTON, Virginia – The U.S. Coast Guard has updated its Arctic strategic outlook for the first time since it published its strategy for the region in 2013 as it focuses more attention on an area of increasing interest regarding national defense, commercial shipping and natural resources exploration.

Released in an April 22 announcement, the new strategic outlook noted that as "the Arctic region continues to open, and strategic competition drives more actors to look to the Arctic for economic and geopolitical advantages, the demand for Coast Guard leadership and presence will continue to grow.

"Since the release of the Coast Guard Arctic Strategy in 2013, the resurgence of nation-state competition has coincided with dramatic changes in the physical environment of the Arctic, which has elevated the region's prominence as a strategically competitive space," the document said. "The United States is an Arctic nation, and the U.S. Coast Guard has served as the lead federal agency for homeland security, safety and environmental stewardship in the Arctic region for more than

150 years."

The shrinking and thinning of the Arctic Ocean ice pack in recent years has tempted Arctic nations – and some non-Arctic nations such as China – to expand their presence in the region and to build ships capable of navigating through the ice. The U.S. Coast Guard this year was funded by Congress to build a new class of icebreakers called polar security cutters. The service does not have any ports on the Arctic Ocean and has only one ship, USCGC Healy, that routinely operates in the Arctic.

"As the nation's primary maritime presence in the Polar Regions, the Coast Guard advances national interests through a unique blend of polar operational capability, regulatory authority and international leadership across the full spectrum of maritime governance," the announcement said. "The Coast Guard will continue to work with our allies and partners on the mutual goal of ensuring a safe, secure, and cooperative Arctic, even as our aspiring near-peer competitors maneuver for strategic advantage in the area."

"The Arctic Strategic Outlook reaffirms the Coast Guard's commitment to American leadership in the region through partnership, unity of effort and continuous innovation," said Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl L. Schultz. "We understand the significant investment required to secure the Arctic, and we appreciate and embrace the trust the American people have placed in the U.S. Coast Guard. We will remain vigilant in protecting our national interests in the Polar Regions."

The outlook is organized along three lines of effort, listed below:

• Enhance capability to operate effectively in a dynamic arctic – The Coast Guard has ample authorities and a robust network of strong and resilient partnerships, but there are critical gaps in capability and capacity that must be filled

in order to uphold American sovereignty and deliver mission excellence.

• Strengthen the rules-based order – The Coast Guard will lead institutions and cooperate with partners to promote rule of law and prevent malign influence in the Arctic.

• Innovate and adapt to promote resilience and prosperity – The sea service will collaborate with partners and stakeholders to develop innovative ways to deliver mission-critical services – including search and rescue, incident management, law enforcement and marine safety – to the region.