

Strategic Systems Programs Promotes Workforce Modernization At Nuclear Triad Symposium



By Shelby Thompson, 26 June 2024

SHREVEPORT, La. – SHREVEPORT, La. – Strategic Systems Programs (SSP) represented the Navy’s leg of the nuclear triad during the 25th Annual Nuclear Triad Symposium held on the Louisiana State University (LSU) Shreveport campus June 20th.

Representatives from across the nuclear triad, including Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) and industry partners, advocated for increased focus on workforce needs, small business collaboration, and mentorship programs throughout the nuclear enterprise.

SSP's Director of Plans and Programs Kelly Lee—also a member of the Senior Executive Service—addressed areas SSP is modernizing in order to maintain the reliability, accuracy, and safety of the current sea-based strategic weapon system — known as Trident II D5 Life Extension (D5LE), while concurrently developing the future strategic weapon system.

“In order to achieve Sea-Based Strategic Deterrence 2084, SSP has developed a strategic plan that outlines our program priorities and the key enablers to support the modernization of the strategic weapons system to counter emerging and future threats,” said Ms. Lee, who oversees the development and execution of the program plans and budget for the strategic weapons system.

Modernization touches every inch of the nuclear enterprise; however, Ms. Lee narrowed that scope into three discreet themes: modernizing SSP's workforce, modernizing industry and infrastructure, and modernizing the nuclear triad through collaboration across the services.

Aligning with the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review's call to action to develop a “capable, motivate [nuclear enterprise] workforce,” Ms. Lee zeroed in on people as the real strategic assets for both the Navy and Air Force.

“We need a good talent pipeline to support sustainment and modernization,” she said.

“Without people, there are no weapons systems.”

“We are at an inflection point for industry and government as we modernize,” added Jeffrey Duncan, Vice President of Systems Engineering at JRC Integrated Systems, Inc., advocating for industry to invest in bringing in employees new to the nuclear enterprise.

“We need to introduce new people into the ecosystem.”

LSU Shreveport’s selection for these annual gatherings is not a coincidence. Barksdale Air Force Base, home of AFGSC, is located right next door and maintains close ties with the Shreveport-Bossier City community. This close proximity is a daily reminder that strategic deterrence is a local, as well as a national, endeavor.

Shreveport Mayor Tom Arceneaux, kicked off the symposium by reminding attendees how important the nuclear triad is to the nation and the close-knit local community.

“You are here to make sure we keep peace in the world,” he said.

AFGSC’s responsibility for two of the three legs of the nuclear triad – the strategic bomber force and [Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles](#) - makes it a crucial pillar of the nation’s national security strategy. SSP, the Navy command that provides cradle-to-grave lifecycle support for the sea-based leg of the nation’s nuclear triad, collaborates closely with the Air Force to manage the increased demands of modernization and development that both services face.

“Strategic deterrence is a team sport, and all three legs are needed to win,” said Ms. Lee.

“The entire team must work together to leverage each other’s strengths and apply lessons learned.”

Hosted by LSU’s Strategy Alternatives Consortium (SAC), the Nuclear Triad Symposium’s mission is “to advance national policies, plans, strategies, resources, and professionals” in the realm of strategic deterrence, specifically through

exploring the role of the U.S. Air Forces' strategic deterrent history and present-day mission.

A credible, effective nuclear deterrent is essential to our national security and the security of U.S. allies. Deterrence remains a cornerstone of national security policy in the 21st century.

Strategic Systems Programs provides training, systems, equipment, facilities and personnel responsible for ensuring the safety, security, and effectiveness of the nation's [Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile \(SLBM\) Trident II \(D5LE\) Strategic Weapon System](#).

SLBMs are one leg of the nation's strategic nuclear deterrent Triad that also includes the U.S. Air Force's intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and nuclear-capable bombers. Each part of the Triad provides unique capabilities and advantages.

SLBMs make up the majority – approximately 70 percent – of the U.S.'s deployed strategic nuclear deterrent Triad. The SLBM is the most survivable, provides persistent presence, and allows flexible concept of operations.