



GLOBAL
STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2900

11 APR 2012

Danielle Brian
Executive Director
Project on Government Oversight
1100 G Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Brian,

Thank you for your letter to the Secretary of Defense of February 1, 2012, concerning the B61 Life Extension Program (LEP). I am grateful for your interest in this matter and for the opportunity to address questions you have raised about the cost and value of this program.

Let me begin by noting that the B61 supports both strategic and extended deterrence requirements. Your letter focuses on the role B61 in support of NATO's deterrence strategy but it overlooks the role that this bomb plays in the triad, as a weapon delivered by our strategic bomber force. This LEP is required to meet both requirements. Let me also note that the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) attests to the commitment of the Obama administration to retain the capability to forward-deploy nuclear weapons on tactical fighter-bombers in support of extended deterrence commitments globally (that is, not just in Europe). The fleet of dual-capable aircraft and associated nuclear bomb play an important role in regional deterrence architectures and the assurance of allies, in Europe and elsewhere.

On military efficacy, the NATO Alliance has set out some important markers in the 2010 Strategic Concept. Allies are committed to reducing the role and number of nuclear weapons in the Alliance's deterrence posture, but only if and as the conditions for safely doing so can be created. Until the role of forward-based non-strategic weapons can be eliminated, Allies are committed to maintaining a nuclear posture that is safe, secure, and effective in the context of an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities. This fully aligns with the objectives of the Obama administration as set out in the NPR. Toward that end, we are taking appropriate steps, including the completion of this LEP, to ensure the stockpile remains safe, secure, and effective.

You also raise an important question about burden sharing. One of the primary benefits of NATO's unique nuclear sharing arrangements is that it enables Allies to share the costs of maintaining the posture and the risks and burdens of nuclear deterrence. As the Strategic Concept attests, the sharing of roles and responsibilities in peacetime and in war is a clear priority.

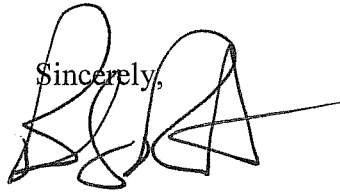
This brings us to the central question of cost. Yes, the life extension of the B61 is currently projected to come in at high cost. It is our assessment that the cost is justifiable given the factors set out above—the administration's commitment to effective deterrence, the



Alliance's commitment to a balanced deterrence posture, and the opportunity for equitable burden sharing. Accordingly, we have advocated for support of the program and requested support from Congress.

Thank you for your service to a well informed debate on these important matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BR', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Brad Roberts
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Nuclear and Missile Defense Policy)