Conference brings military, industry, academia together to discuss space, missile defense

U.S. Army

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (Aug. 21, 2012) -- The 15th annual Space and Missile Defense Conference and Exhibition conducted Aug. 13-16 at Huntsville's Von Braun Center saw more than 600 paid attendees, more than 6,000 receiving access badges for the conference, and more than 11,000 walking through the conference exhibit halls, according to committee organizers.

The line-up of speakers included Lt. Gen. Richard P. Formica, commanding general, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command; Air Force Lt. Gen. John Hyten, vice commander, U.S. Air Force Space Command; Brig. Gen. Timothy R. Coffin, deputy commanding general for operations, USASDMC/ARSTRAT; as well as a variety of various high-level speakers, including the Honorable Frank Kendall, undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics.

"Missile defense is definitely a part of the strategy," Kendall said during his remarks Aug. 14.

Kendall spoke about how defense officials have come up with a new strategy to create a smaller, agile, more "joint" force that retains key capabilities in part by leveraging technology. The strategy was crafted to avoid critical cuts in training programs, arms and supplies that followed the Vietnam conflict and Cold War that left the U.S. unprepared for other contingencies.

"I refer to this as more of a 'correction' than a reduction of force or the American industrial base," Kendall said. "There is a strong desire to not have a 'hollow' force.

"The defense budget submitted to Congress was built around this new strategy," he said. "And it's very tight."

"Today, we face numerous emerging threats from a combination of state and not-state actors spread across multiple regions, and that reality will drive our space and missile defense planning for the coming decades," said Robert Dowling, conference chairman.

Formica spoke on the last day of the conference offering an update on his "three hats" as the commanding general of USASMDC and ARSTRAT, and as commander of the Joint Functional Component Command for Integrated Missile Defense.

Gen. C. Robert Kehler, commander of the U.S. Strategic Command, could not attend the conference. As the senior leader of the Army Service Component Command to USSTRATCOM, Formica gave an update on the mission and campaign concept of the

USSTRATCOM's responsibilities, which include nuclear forces, space, cyber, joint electronic warfare, global strike, missile defense, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, conventional weapons of mass destruction and targeting and analysis.

"USSTRATCOM brings a menu of capabilities to support our nation and our geographic commanders and is organized in order to best deliver those with a focus on deterrence and assurance. General Kehler is also quick to say -- and he's been around the block a time or two -- that the operating environment in which we operate today and in which we'll operate in the future is like none other we've ever seen before," Formica said.

"It's different in time, distance, battle space and in USSSTRATCOM's area of responsibility because it really is a global command. The enemy threat doesn't limit itself to our geographical areas of responsibility or even necessarily to our national boundaries. And so we have new weapons -- both ours and theirs. Along with its other responsibilities, missile defense is a very high priority in General Kehler's USSTRATCOM," Formica continued.

Following Formica's presentation was a cyber panel of speakers who addressed the ongoing and future threats associated with cyberspace operations. That presentation preceded a closed and classified session at the Missile and Space Intelligence Center's auditorium on Redstone Arsenal in the afternoon bringing the conference to a close.

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