



## **Hearing on “China’s Nuclear Forces”**

### **Opening Statement of Commissioner Alex Wong**

**June 10, 2021**

**Washington, DC**

Thank you, Commissioner Fiedler. And thank you as well for being a consummate colleague and partner—together with our expert staff—in putting together today’s hearing. It’s my first hearing as a co-chair, and your wisdom and advice have been invaluable to me.

It’s been some 6 years since this Commission has squarely addressed in a hearing the status of China’s nuclear forces. And in that relatively short time period, we’ve seen a number of trends in China’s overall political and security development that casts China’s growing nuclear arsenal in a new—and concerning—light.

In recent years we have seen China’s ambition to revise the global order go from—in large part—conjecture to concrete reality. We’ve seen a sharp build-up and exponential improvement in China’s conventional military capabilities toward an expeditionary force capable of power projection. And we’ve seen heightened rhetoric from Communist Party leaders regarding the domestic political value of—and hence their risk tolerance toward—the regional flashpoints that pose the greatest risk of sparking great power conflict.

This is a markedly different context than we saw just a few short years ago. And it’s a new context that magnifies the specter of the Chinese nuclear arsenal.

We have before the Commission today a number of scholars and practitioners who are at the top of their field. Thank you all for being here—your knowledge and insights on the Chinese nuclear complex are greatly welcome.

But I should note you are working from a relative information deficit. There are five permanent members of the UN Security Council, all of which are exclusively recognized by the Non-Proliferation Treaty as nuclear weapons states. Four of those five states participate in exchange and confidence-building mechanisms to enhance transparency on nuclear capabilities, doctrine, and crisis communications. They do so for the security of their own people, but also for the security of the world. The one that doesn’t participate in those transparency measures is China.

That creates uncertainty. And uncertainty when it comes to nuclear weapons is dangerous. But that uncertainty makes our effort here today to explore this issue even more important.

I look forward to learning from all of you. And I look forward in particular to your recommendations for U.S. legislation and policy. Formulating those recommendations, after all, is this Commission's central mission. And in making your recommendations, I ask that you prize specificity and even boldness. The Commission for two decades has been a forum where ideas once considered premature, unrealistic, or even peculiar began their movement to the center of the U.S.-China policy discussion and into practice. I hope the ideas you put forth today will have similar significance down the road.

So let's begin.