

051013 NATIONAL DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION, RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION AND AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION CAPITOL HILL BREAKFAST FORUM WITH MARK SCHNEIDER, SENIOR ANALYST, NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY, AND STEPHEN BLANK, RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, ARMY WAR COLLEGE, ON "FUTURE RUSSIAN STRATEGIC CHALLENGES." (For additional information on NDIA/AFA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at phuessy@afa.org).

[This is a rush, unofficial transcript provided by National Security Reports.]

MR. PETER HUESSY: I want to thank you all for being here at the next in our seminar series on nuclear deterrence and missile defense. We're honored today to have two wonderful speakers. Our first speaker is going to be Mark Schneider, who is the senior analyst with the National Institute for Public Policy. And as you know, he and I wrote a piece on Russian missile defense that appeared in Gatestone Institute about six weeks ago. Steve Blank is our other speaker, and he is research professor of national security affairs at the Army War College. And he's been a speaker previously and – can I say where you're now going? Steve's going to be here in Washington with the American Foreign Policy Council in August.

So in the interest of time, on behalf of ROA and AFA and NDIA, I want to thank you two gentlemen for coming down to talk to us about what I think is a very serious issue. And that is – I remember Dr. Kissinger once quipped that the reason we have arms control in the United States is so we can argue about what American military nuclear forces to kill, as opposed to what Russian forces might do. So we're going through that today, but I thought it was very important for us to have two who I think are the finest thinkers in this business on Russian strategic nuclear forces and what they're up to. So would you please welcome our friend from NIPP Mark Schneider?

(Applause).

MR. MARK SCHNEIDER: Thank you. I'm going to speak today about the strategic challenge that Russia poses to the United States, and it's a quite serious one. Russia is increasingly anti-democratic and hostile to the United States. Xenophobia is widespread in Russia. The Kremlin is currently encouraging nationalism and militarizing the country. It constantly attacks the West. And a sizable number of the Russian population see neighboring countries as part of the Russian zone of influence.

Now this is not me speaking, this is taken from a recent statement by Alexei Kudrin, who until September of 2011 was the finance minister of Russia, and who has just been publicly been offered a cabinet position by Vladimir Putin. The most serious aspect of the Russian

threat to the United States is their nuclear use doctrine. They have the lowest nuclear use threshold in the world. Russia reserves the right to introduce nuclear weapons into conventional warfare, and they characterize this, amazingly, as de-escalation of the conflict.

In December 2012 the U.S. National Intelligence Council in a report stated, quote, “Nuclear ambitions in the United States and Russia over the last 20 years have evolved in opposite directions. Reducing the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security strategy is the U.S. objective, while Russia is pursuing new concepts and capabilities for expanding the role of nuclear weapons in its security strategy.” In 2009 the then-commander of the strategic missile force, Lieutenant General Andrey Shvaichenko, outlined what Russian nuclear targeting was about. And actually, there were two or three similar statements made by other generals in roughly the same time period.

What he said was, in peacetime they – and he means the strategic nuclear missiles – are intended to assure deterrence of large-scale non-nuclear and nuclear aggression against Russia and its allies. In a conventional war they ensure that the opponent is forced to cease hostilities on advantageous conditions for Russia by means of single or multiple preventive strikes against the aggressors’ most important facilities. In a nuclear war, they ensure the destruction of facilities of the opponent’s military and economic potential by means of an initial massive nuclear missile strike and subsequent multiple or single nuclear missile strikes.

According to then-chief of the general staff General Nikolai Makarov in 2009, quote, “The strategic nuclear force is for us a sacred issue,” unquote. And he said they will provide them whatever level of funding is necessary. Senior Russian officials, including both military and civilian, routinely make nuclear threats, including direct targeting threats against the United States and our allies and threats of preventive or preemptive nuclear attack. That’s very common. Indeed, Putin has done that on several occasions when he was president.

There are only two countries in the world that make these types of nuclear threats routinely, and they are Russia and North Korea. In this regard, China is a poor third, but it’s apparently catching up because it has just dropped no first use from its white paper on national security that was released in the last couple of weeks.

Russia routinely exercises its strategic nuclear forces very openly against the United States in a variety of conflicts, scenarios ranging from strategic nuclear exchanges to theater nuclear exchanges. Russian strategic nuclear forces engaged in a major exercise two weeks before the U.S. presidential election in 2012, when the Kremlin announced a strategic nuclear exercise in which Putin personally directed the nuclear missile launches. Russia has virtually eliminated its reduction of legacy nuclear forces. Information that was released by the State Department – this is Russian data – in April of 2013 indicates that the number of Russian delivery

vehicles actually increased in the two years that New START has been in effect. The number of warheads has declined by 57, but that's apparently just the result of different counting rules that were used in New START compared to the original START Treaty which didn't count in New START submarines going into overhaul.

Russian nuclear modernization programs are amazingly broad by post-Cold War standards. Russia has actually announced the complete modernization of its strategic missile force, both submarines and ICBMs by 2021. Putin, in April 2012 announced the procurement of 400 new ICBMs by 2020. The Obama administration has said that they are in the process of developing and deploying several new MIRV'ed strategic missiles, both ICBMs and SLBMs, including a new heavy bomber. And they're currently deploying a new long-range nuclear ALCM.

Reportedly, the new Russian heavy ICBM will carry 10 to 15 warheads. In May 2012 Russia announced the testing of a new ICBM. This is apparently the Yar-M, which the commander of the Strategic Missile Forces has just announced will be deployed this year.

The Russians are also talking about something called the Avangard. Now this may or may not be the same missile as the Yar-M, or it may be a further development of the Yar-M. The title of the missile, or the name of the missile, Yar-M, translates into a major modernization or improvement of the MIRV'ed version of the SS-27, which the Russians initially deployed in 2010. So they're already modernizing a missile that's three years old, which is kind of amazing.

They've announced that they're going to develop and deploy a new heavy bomber, a stealthy B-2-like bomber. Recent press reports suggest that the first one will be available in 2020. Now we don't really know whether that's the first prototype or the first production airplane, but in any event in the 2020s they're going to be introducing a major new bomber.

They're in the process of introducing the new Bulava SLBM and the new Borei-class submarine. This year they announced that the fifth and sixth of these submarines will be laid down this year. And that's literally the first time since the end of the Cold War that more than one ballistic missile submarine has been laid down in a single year.

They've also announced there will be a new what they call fifth generation missile submarine carrying both ballistic and cruise missiles that will be available by 2020. And the Russians have announced the development – and press reports say the decision has been made to deploy – a rail mobile ICBM, apparently the Spofoloy (ph) a version of the 27. The problem is that the New START Treaty doesn't say a word about rail mobile ICBMs and this is clearly, at least in the Russian view, in my view as well, not limited by the New START Treaty.

So we are seeing a major modernization program. In comparison, Acting Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Rose Gottemoeller, summed up what we are doing. And this is a direct quote.

“We are not modernizing. We are not modernizing. That is one of the basic – basics I would say -- principles and rules that have been part of our nuclear posture review and part of our policy.”

And that’s a remarkably candid description of current policy, which basically at best only partially modernizes our force and replaces systems when they’re 40 to 80 years of age, literally. And we have not yet committed to continuing the ICBM force beyond 2030. And none of this takes into account the impact of sequestration, which has got to hurt the possibility of actually implementing the program, such as it is.

What is the administration’s reaction to this unprecedented in the post-Cold War period enhancement of Russian nuclear capabilities? Basically, it’s more nuclear reductions. We’re making nuclear reductions, according to the information released by the State department, much faster than is necessary to comply with the New START Treaty.

We are pursuing minimum modernization programs and we’re going to do more arms control. Well, what is this new arms control known to be about? Well, the administration describes it as an intent to negotiate with the Russians further reductions in deployed strategic nuclear systems and limits on both non-deployed nuclear weapons of all types and tactical nuclear weapons.

According to press reports, they are considering numbers in the 300 to 1,100 range for deployed nuclear warhead. Recent reports have suggested about 1,000. The State department advisory committee said 700.

And there are press reports, including in the New York Times, that they intend to evade advice and consent, that they are going to propose to the Russians a political commitment, non-legally binding. And I think the obvious reason for this is they don’t expect a good outcome in this negotiation of something that could get serious Congressional support.

And I suspect they will have big problems with the Russians in doing this. The Russians have repeatedly announced they have no interest in post-New START nuclear arms control. This includes Sergei Lavrov, the Foreign Minister, who said this three times during the Russian ratification procedures relating to the New START Treaty. He said also that they intend to increase their number of delivery vehicles and deployed nuclear warheads. And he gave dates for those developments.

Now assuming the Obama administration somehow or other gets the Russians to agree to anything like near-term nuclear negotiations, the question is can they come up with anything that meets their objectives or anything that is remotely verifiable? I'm very pessimistic on both of those issues. Their reported desire to evade Congressional oversight suggests that they don't expect to come out with something that's any good or in any real sense of the word verifiable.

You have two basic problems here with verification of the type of agreement the administration has announced that it has been trying to achieve. The first one is the old problems, how do you count deployed nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles? You have a very poor base for this in the New START Treaty because everything is degraded that was in the original START Treaty, which in turn was never designed to deal with numbers this low. And the cheating potential is significant as you have with what is apparently going to be proposed to the Russians.

The number of inspections has been reduced considerably. The types of inspections have been reduced. The number of notifications have been considerably reduced. Almost the entire mobile ICBM verification regime that was in the START Treaty is gone in New START. And the telemetry regime is virtually gone in the New START Treaty.

So for the old problems, you have a seriously degraded verification potential and there's no indication the administration will seek to try to fix any of these problems. One of the biggest traditional problems is the administration – as Paula DeSutter, the former Assistant Secretary of State for Verification and Compliance pointed out – you've got the same regime as in the old START Treaty despite the fact that the Russians violated it from day one in the START period to the end of the expiration of the START Treaty.

On top of this you have the much more difficult problem of counting nuclear weapons or tactical nuclear weapons. And that problem is really two-fold. First, we don't really know how many nuclear weapons or tactical nuclear weapons the Russians have. Estimates are – including the administration's estimates – are ten-to-one Russian advantage in this area. And Undersecretary of Defense for Policy James Miller says they have between 2,000 to 4,000 tactical nuclear weapons. Now the problem with that is that Russian sources very frequently have much higher numbers.

So we start out by not really knowing what they have. And another big problem is, how small have they gotten? We know what they were in the 1980s. We were really doing a lot of work on Russia in the 1980s. We knew they had very small nuclear weapons, 155-mm nuclear shells, nuclear backpacks, small strategic nuclear weapons.

We have pretty good information from Russian statements and Russian press sources that they've gotten smaller since the end of the Cold War, but we don't really know how much smaller. But let's assume best case they're as big as they were in the 1980s. Well, you're starting out with the problem of trying to monitor and control things which are one to two orders of magnitude smaller and lighter than anything that has been subject to strategic arms control monitoring under any previous treaty. And worse than that, we have no experience whatsoever in doing this sort of things, completely because of the fact that Russia has rejected every proposal that we've every made to establish any form of transparency or verification regime relating to nuclear weapons. So we've got a real problem.

And how is the administration setting about to deal with this? Well, we do know, if you track their statements, that they very rarely talk about verification. They talk about transparency. Now transparency is a much lower standard because almost anything can be deemed to be transparent whether or not it has any serious effect on giving you a verification capability.

And you hear some really goofy statements out of the senior levels of the State department verification bureau about verifying nuclear weapons numbers by social media. Now I don't think that's a particularly effective way to do this. So basically, I think they're going to fail in their efforts with the Russians. I don't even think that it's technically possible to do some of the things that they claim they're going to do, and that they expect to fail and that's why they're talking – at least that's what their friends are saying – about evading Senate oversight.

Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. STEPHEN BLANK: I'm going to give you the bad news.

(Laughter).

Thank you very much, Peter, for having me again. This might be the last time in Washington that I say I'm not speaking on behalf of the Army, the Defense Department or the government. These are my personal views. And it's difficult to add much to what Mark has said because it's been a remarkably thorough and incisive performance. But I hope I can answer some more questions of relevance to these issues for us today.

First of all, I want to talk about the Russian mindset going into these things, not just what they're doing but what they're thinking, to the extent that they reveal that, and then talk about some current issues. For example, the March 15 decision to – well essentially it's going

to mean the termination, at least under this administration, of the fourth phase of the EPAA. What happens after 2017 when we have a new government is anybody's guess.

After you've heard what Mark had to say, you might want to ask yourself, why? Why is a country, who when the deputy foreign minister gave an interview in 2011 saying luckily we have no major enemies, building so many nuclear weapons? Neither are they only building all these nuclear weapons and installations? We are currently witnessing a 33 trillion ruble overall rearming of the Russian military by 2020. That's about \$800 billion, depending on the exchange rate.

Now there is no doubt that between 1990 and 2008 essentially there was a procurement holiday, for all intensive purposes, in the Russian military. The military was busted. They need to recapitalize their military, and that's an unarguable proposition.

But to the extent that they are building this kind of military, it is clearly intended to take on, on the one hand, the U.S. and NATO; and secondly, the enemy that they will never speak about in public but which does preoccupy a lot of military thinking, namely China. Now if you look at a map, the Russian Far East, which directly adjoins China, is what we call an economy of force theater. It is a theater that can only survive by self-sustaining itself.

If a war broke out between Russia and China, and now and then Russian military and political officials actually allude to the possibility of a Chinese threat, within a day the Chinese could take out the Trans-Siberian Railway and essentially isolate the area from the rest of continental Russia. Therefore, the only recourse that the Russian military has in a contingency with China is nuclear.

Now because of its conventional nuclear inferiority to NATO and the United States, despite this enormous conventional rearmament program, nukes are the priority. And given the fact that as we know in the Russian military 20 to 40 – if not more – 20 to 40 percent of the budget is stolen -- last year they fired the defense minister who himself was in on it, some of the graft -- it is more than likely that the conventional goals will not be completely met and that the reliance on nuclear weapons will therefore continue to a greater degree than other nuclear powers of a comparable nations, namely the U.S. and China, rely on nuclear weapons for their defense programs. That's pretty obvious.

Now, beyond that, we have reasonably good evidence – I was just in Helsinki two weeks ago and talked to a Finnish analyst who does this – we have reasonably good evidence that short-range nuclear weapons are deployed with the Russian army in the west strategic direction. That's basically facing Poland and the Baltic states. We have been told that tactical nuclear weapons are going to be deployed with cruise missile on ships. That was stated openly

a few years ago. We don't know a lot about tactical nuclear weapons as Mark said, but that's an example.

Again, why? Fundamentally, this is a government that has what the German philosopher Carl Schmidt called "a presupposition of conflict." It sees itself as threatened on all sides. I have, in a study that's coming out, an article I've written. And you can see this if you go the Russian foreign policy concept. It's in English on the foreign ministry's web site, maybe on the president's web site as well, a threat assessment that essentially NATO and the U.S. are advancing, are creating threats to strategic stability – that's missile defenses – and that the likelihood of war in and around Russia's frontiers is growing.

And they've been saying this kind of thing for about five or six years now. It's not just a new wrinkle in Russian thinking. Putin, on February 27 speaking to a Ministry of Defense colloquium, quote, "We see instability and conflict spreading around the world today. Armed conflicts continue in the Middle East and Asia, and the danger of the export of radicalism and chaos continues to grow even in our neighboring regions"

Note that Syria is a neighboring region. That's a Soviet border, not the Russian Federation's border. In other words, Russian defense planning starts with the idea that the Soviet border is still our frontier and therefore we do not fully accept the sovereignty and territorial integrity and independence of the post-Soviet states.

Later, Putin said, "At the same time we see methodical attempts to undermine the strategic balance in various ways and forms," missile defense. "The United States' has essentially launched the second phase of its global missile defense system. There are attempts to sound out possibilities for expanding NATO further eastward."

That tells me that they have bought an intelligence assessment that doesn't exist, that is basically fabricated. There's nobody in this town or in Brussels talking about expanding NATO. It's not going to happen anytime soon. Yet Russian intelligence and the government obviously believe this, and that's already a sign of something dangerous.

"There is also the danger of the militarization in the Arctic. All these challenges, and they're just a few of the many that we face, are a direct concern to our national interest and therefore also determine our priorities." And you get dozens of such statements from Russian officials of this kind.

And the foreign policy concept is also essentially one that talks about the decline of the United States, the rise of Asia, economic chaos as a result of the current global crisis, the scramble for resources and so forth. If you read the foreign policy concept, you will understand – and especially if you've studied Russian history, and one of my sins is I did – this is essentially

a threat assessment that derives from Lenin's 1916 book "Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism." What we are dealing with, even though we are no longer (in a Soviet state ?) and this is not a Soviet government, is a government that still has a Leninist mentality with regard to national security stripped of the Marxism.

There are internal enemies, i.e. those who want reform; and there are external enemies, and they're the same people. Not only that, the external enemy, the United States, is threatening us militarily. And as a result, we have to be able to deter the United States. We cannot have a relationship of cooperation, with cooperative security, with one of deterrence. Deterrence presupposes hostility.

The same is true with regard to China, even though China is our closest friend and so forth. Nonetheless, the nukes are there and the Chinese know it. And when the Chinese say something or do something that's antithetical to Russian interests, they remind them.

For example, in 2010 the Chinese government got up and said basically the Arctic belongs to mankind and not to any particular state. The Russian commander-in-chief of the navy at that time, Admiral (Vysotsky ?), reminded the Chinese that the Arctic is indeed Russian, so they claimed, and that the navy was prepared to enforce that claim. And when the prime minister Wen Jiabao came to Moscow they took him to visit the nuclear command complex, just in case.

We do the same thing. I mean, that's a kind of psyop. Just remember who you're dealing with here, sir.

The point is, this is a government with a Leninist threat assessment and cast of mind regarding the outside world. This defense buildup, part of which Mark described – the convention one has been published essentially and is available in various articles and statements -- was suppose to last until 2020. But now, the government is talking about achieving a breakthrough comparable to that of the 1930s. In other words, Stalin's five-year plans.

And as the Deputy Minister of Defense Rogozin jokingly said, he sent the defense industries that aren't keeping up with requirements a copy of a letter that Stalin wrote to the defense industry in the 1940 basically saying that if you don't shape up we'll shoot you. Now thankfully we are beyond those days, but this is the kind of people we are dealing with.

What is essential here to understand is that therefore we have a (skewed ?) threat assessment -- we have a Stalinist, not a Stalinist, a semi-Stalinist or wanna-be Stalinist industrialization drive -- is that nuclear war is not unthinkable. If you read enough Russian military literature, Mark knows this very well, Russian commanders now and then are perfectly

frank in talking about nuclear – not only exercises, but operations. As I said, short-range nuclear weapons – the Iskander, and the Iskander missile comes both as a conventional ballistic missile or it can be converted from conventional to nuclear. And if you fly it at low trajectory it can become a missile under the INF category in distance. Those are probably – those are deployed in the western strategic direction opposite Poland and the Baltic states and Finland as well.

We just had an incursion into Swedish airspace two weeks ago, which the Swedes did not pickup. NATO did, but the Swedes didn't and it was very embarrassing. We have a new base being built in Belarus which the Poles say will be used for offensive purposes.

We have continuing nuclear exercises. The Zapad 2013 exercise with Belarus – Zapad means west in Russian – there will probably be a nuclear component, just as Zapad 2009 was. And that ended with a simulated nuclear strike on Warsaw. Vostok 2010 – vostok is east – ended with a simulated tactical nuclear strike against a Chinese army group in the Far East.

We have an administration that, as Mark said, has an ostrich-like policy. Or, if you like the three monkeys: hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil. We have the abiding belief in many quarters in town, which is a belief that we would all, I think, like to share – going back to Robert McNamara if not before – that nuclear weapons serve no useful military, strategic or political purpose. You can't use them.

Now that has become an article of faith in many quarters and it's a wonderful idea. It would be nice if the world were so constituted that we could believe it. But if you look at the facts, it ain't so.

Now this is not to say that I am going around advocating nuclear use or that other states are. So far, we haven't gotten that. But, everybody who has nuclear weapons, if they have not taken a holiday from reason, understand perfectly well what the benefits are to them in both the political and military sense.

And it is imperative for us, if we're going to understand how to deal with Russia -- and for that matter any nuclear power whether it's Pakistan, North Korea, Israel if they have nukes, and so on -- that we understand the way they think about it. This kind of idealistic ethnocentrism distorts policy. It distorts strategy and undermines our efforts to achieve our goals because it not only corrodes our ability to get arms control agreements and defend the interest of the United States and its allies, it undermines our ability to secure our regional security interests as well.

The reset with Russia, for example, aimed not only to alleviate tensions in a general sense with Russia, but in the belief that the Russians could contribute to issues that are

important to us if we understood issues important to them. We buried NATO enlargement. Now, NATO enlargement wasn't going to happen even if John McCain had been elected president because Germany and France were dead set against it. And there's nothing anybody here could do to change that opinion. Nevertheless, we shelved it.

On human rights – and I think to our everlasting shame -- we have been basically silent. And I'm old enough to remember when that was not the case. On regional security issues, this administration has basically neglected Eastern Europe, as East Europeans will tell you. We really do not have much of a policy in the Caucasus, except essentially waiting on events.

And in central Asia we talk about the so-called Silk Road, and so far the money isn't there. It's a bluff. And what we got out of Afghanistan – we're going to be out of Afghanistan and have basically lost a lot of leverage with regard to Central Asia – and we don't have the money to invest there the way Russia and China do.

On Syria, we have an administration that appears to be paralyzed in the face of a true disaster: 70,000 people killed, over two million, maybe 2.5 million refugees. The alternative to doing absolutely nothing is not necessarily sending in the U.S. army. There's an array, a spectrum of things that could be done and none of them have been.

And as a result, we have paralysis here because everybody is bewitched by the Iraq example. Syria is not Iraq. That doesn't mean we just blindly send in the troops, but again, you have to understand what you're dealing with, and we don't. We are paralyzed by this example and we have no clarity of what we want or whom we want to support to get whatever it is that we might want.

As a result, Russian obduracy has prevailed. This horrendous decision to arrange for a conference, which probably will hopefully never come off because the rebels and Assad won't sit down with each other, is another example of a unilateral and unreciprocated concession to Russia. So is, in my view, the decision on March 15 to terminate the fourth phase in Europe and relocate much of the missile defense structure and infrastructure to the Asia Pacific to deal with the North Korean threat.

Whether or not North Korea actually has the means to threaten U.S. territories, let alone CONUS, the continental United States, I can't say. The Pentagon says yes, and we can go with that. They certainly can threaten Japan and South Korea, and they always need to be reassured.

Nevertheless, and even if you take the argument that both the Bush and the Obama administration have made, that the missile defense system is not intended against Russia and that it can't be intended against Russia if you know elementary geography and physics and

because of the size and diversity of the Russian nuclear arsenal, the termination of the fourth phase was a most unfortunate decision. Now again, if we were aiming to stop Russian missiles, the interceptors that are going to be on the fourth phase or were supposed to be on the fourth phase of the EPAA, would have had to travel 50 percent faster than they can, traveling six kilometers a second rather than four. That's 50 percent faster, to intercept Russian missiles, and they won't be able to do that.

So there's no threat to Russia. There never has been a threat to Russia. We have said this to the Russians going back to Bob Gates and Condi Rice and maybe even before that. And yet, the Russians continue to insist and believe otherwise.

As I mentioned to you, we have a system in Russia where the intelligence apparatus is out of control. And we know from Russian history, innumerable times, where these guys deliberately inflate the threat. If the military says it's a threat, it's a threat.

Now in this country that kind of stuff wouldn't be allowed for a minute. Part of my job is to contribute to the gathering of intelligence – not intelligence, but information and research as to what constitutes the threat. And all of us know that every day in this town and throughout the country the nature of the threat assessment confronting the United States is a matter of public debate. And we don't simply take the Pentagon's assessment for granted or the NIC's assessment for granted and accept it. And then the Congress has its say and the academic and expert community and private industry, all those people contribute to this.

In Russia, if the intelligence community says it's a threat, and they obviously are going to make it a threat, it's a threat. So you have a (government ?) threat assessment, a lack of democratic control over the means of force, a presupposition of hostility to the West, an attempt to create a quasi-Stalinist military buildup, in the belief that Russia is facing greater threats than it ever has, which is the exact opposite of the truth, and greater reliance on nuclear weapons. In the face of that, unreciprocated concessions, such as the withdrawal of the EPAA fourth phase.

While the things that Mark talked about in his discussion should fill us with foreboding because, as Donald Kagan memorably wrote, peace does not preserve itself. If we have the illusion that nuclear weapons have no useful strategic military or political purpose – even though, god forbid they should ever be used, and that we are going to essentially unilaterally disarm in a kind of graceful glide path – we are creating a condition where peace cannot be preserved, whether it be at the regional or, god forbid, at the global level.

And when we have an administration that has made it clear that intends to make promises to Congress and then go back on them, as has been the case, that's also troubling. As you all know, regardless of who the president is and which party dominates the White House or

Congress, if the president writes a letter to Congress saying I'm going to do X and I promise you that, it's not smart or good politics to go back on that. But that's what's happening, as Mark talked about.

So I think this is a time when we should be increasingly anxious strategically; not panicked, but we should begin to get up there and start saying, exactly where do you intend to take us and why and how, to the White House and demand explanations. Not only do we have the right as citizens, we have the obligation to do so. And what's more, we need to bring back the strategic community in this country in all of its components to the ability to think like the other guy thinks.

Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: I'd like to ask you both the same question. Some of my colleagues in the arms control community they walk through the modernization program of the Russians and their response is, so what? What are they going to do with it? They're not going to attack us. Could you address that, both of you?

MR. BLANK: The so what question. The presupposition underlying their response, Peter, is that nuclear weapons really don't matter. Strategic weapons have no utility. I mean, they're toys for boys.

I don't believe that the Russians are looking to start a nuclear war. I don't think anybody thinks that. But they will continue to obstruct U.S. and our allies' interests globally, in Europe and elsewhere. And as Mark pointed out, they will consistently make threats, even of a preemptive nuclear strike against European states. And that essentially means a perpetuation of the geopolitical situation of the Cold War.

Let's remember what the Cold War in geopolitical terms, leaving the ideological context out. There was essentially at the strategic level of nuclear weapons, the Russians could have at any time they wanted, destroyed all of Europe. In return, we threatened to destroy all of the Soviet Union. That was basically the mutual hostage relationship.

Then it began – the United States also became, as well, the target of advanced Soviet capabilities. If we are truly looking to build, quote, "a new world order," whatever that may be and get beyond the Cold War, then we should not be encouraging people to build more nuclear weapons and to remain frozen in this posture of hostility and thinking about first use scenarios. So that already is the utility of nuclear weapons. It confers enormous political capabilities as well as the strategic capability to wage conventional war.

I mean, if you have nukes you can make the world safer for conventional warfare -- and the famous stability-instability paradox of Glenn Snyder. And from that, the countries that have nuclear weapons can use them for conventional war. We see this in the Indo-Pakistani theater. All the terrorism that Pakistan has supported against India has been carried out secure in the knowledge that India cannot retaliate. If Pakistan had no nukes -- if there were nukes on the South Asian peninsula, India could retaliate and probably would. But their hands are stayed by the threat of nuclear war.

So letting the Russians do this essentially makes it safe for them to threaten all kinds of actors on their periphery in Europe and Asia. We could go on, but I think that's enough of an answer from my point of view.

MR. SCHNEIDER: I agree completely with what Steve has said. About the only thing I would add is this, they clearly want to reconstitute the Soviet Union. And, of course, you can't rule out the possibility that they will resort to force. I don't expect, obviously, a nuclear preemptive strike against Georgia or Ukraine, but if they do resort to force, and as in the case of Georgia, General Baluyevsky, Chief of Staff of the Russian military during the Georgia conflict, recently revealed that that was preplanned operation. It was not an ad hoc response.

MR. BLANK: It wasn't Baluyevsky, it was Putin.

MR. SCHNEIDER: It was both, because I do have Baluyevsky. He very clearly indicated that it was a pre-planned operation. Things can get out of hand.

Alexander Goff (ph), basically last month or so put it this way, any military contingency that can't be dealt with with two divisions of paratroopers goes nuclear in Russian doctrine. Now they don't say that, but I think that's very much what they actually plan on. And things can get out of hand.

You can have unintentional conflict. You've got the fog of battle. Things can escalate, particularly when you've got a mindset of nuclear weapons use as de-escalation of a conflict.

I regard that as the most remarkable statement in the post -- and this is not an isolated statement. It's actual Russian doctrine and it's crazy. It could have that effect, but it also could have completely different effects, like uncontrolled escalation. So it's really dangerous.

And nobody can predict the future. I'm not one of them, anyway. And things can get out of hand under some circumstances. And this is where the nuclear deterrent -- our lack of emphasis on it and their low nuclear use threshold, really comes into play in terms of threats.

MR. BLANK: Let me just add one more point to that. The fact that Putin and Baluyevsky admitted that they preplanned the war with Georgia, using separatists, confirms what Marx

said. And this is of the utmost importance and nobody here in this town picked it up. We have a state that deliberately planned a war against another state signatory to the Helsinki Final Act that recognizes the integrity and sovereignty of all the signatories.

In other words, you cannot take security in Europe for granted and we have states that are perfectly prepared to violate solemn international agreements to suit their interests. Under those circumstances, the need for deterrence of that state becomes paramount. And the failure in this town to say anything or do anything about it was shocking to me, maybe not to other people, but that's something you ought to keep in mind.

MS. : This is probably for Dr. Schneider, you described a massive nuclear weapons buildup, which implies a significant nuclear weapons infrastructure. Could you compare it to the situation with the United States and what are the implications, both strategic because it takes a long time to rebuild these capabilities, and also for arms control? Even if you cap the weapons at whatever the level might be, the Russians will have a significant infrastructure.

MR. SCHNEIDER: There are massive differences in the infrastructure for nuclear weapons production and in missile production. In both cases you have very active Russian programs underway and virtually minimal programs in the United States. One of the key differences is that – and I was able to get this declassified several years ago – the Russian nuclear weapons complex is capable of producing at least 2,000 nuclear weapons a year. And that's from a Russian source

And they have active production programs in both ICBMs, SLBMs. They have active design programs in nuclear weapons, and I didn't go into this in any detail but they are introducing new types of nuclear weapons. They've designed new types of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War. They're probably doing hydro-nuclear testing as part of the development program. So all these things are on the way and there are enormous differences.

On our side, we will soon have zero experienced nuclear weapons designers in our complex. The Russians have experienced nuclear weapons designers that have actually done small yield testing, in all probability. They are designing and producing new types of ICBMs. They've done that consistently after the end of communism in Russia.

We have not had an ICBM or SLBM design team operational since about 1990. That has an enormous potential asymmetrical impact. When we ever get around to designing a new missile – and right now the earliest date for that is 2042 IOC – we're going to face unprecedented problems because we will have no one, maybe a few people as elderly consultants, but nobody in terms of experience. There's no experienced ICBM designer or SLBM designer in the United States with any sort of recent design experience of any significance.

MR. : Can you talk a little bit about the kind of warheads that might be on Iskander? How small do you think – how low a yield do you think that the Russian warheads on tactical weapons are?

MR. BLANK: Are you talking about conventional or nuclear?

MR. : Nuclear.

MR. BLANK: Well, we know they have been experimenting with low-yield nuclear weapons. Mark and I have known this for what, at least 10 to 15 years?

MR. SCHNEIDER: Yeah.

MR. BLANK: Nothing has been published in open sources as to what they've achieved. There are some references. As far as the Iskander, I would refer you to a study – I don't have the exact figure in my head about the yield -- by Stefan Forss of the Finish National Defense University.

It's on their website. It's mpkk.fi, and then you scroll down. And, of course, you have to get it in English. But he wrote a paper on Iskander and he has all those details in there. I just don't remember what the actual charge is on the warhead, on the nuclear warhead.

But it does come in this unique format of being a missile that can be a conventional non-nuclear or a cruise or ballistic. It is intended to be the follow-on to the SS-23, of blessed memory, which the INF Treaty eliminated and which the Russian military was furious about. But it is essentially a short-range missile so that it exists within the framework of short-range nuclear missiles and therefore not covered by INF. But if you fly it at a low trajectory, it then becomes an INF missile. It is based in Kaliningrad and in the western strategic direction so it could take out Poland, northeastern Germany and much of Scandinavia.

MR. : It is also probable, I think, that that may have some other nuclear effects in it besides just low yield.

MR. BLANK: Right, but again, that would be classified.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Let me add just a little bit to that. General Vladimir Popovkin, who at the time was the third ranking defense ministry official, principal deputy secretary of defense for Russian in charge of procurement, acknowledged that the Iskander was nuclear capable. What you would expect, at a minimum for a nuclear warhead, is certainly variable yield, low-yield options. I'm talking not in terms of any specific information, but consistent with known Russian doctrine involving this.

There are two versions of the Iskander. The Iskander-M, which is the semi-ballistic; and the Iskander-K or R500, which is the long-range cruise missile. According to about 10 separate Russian press reports, the range on that missile is between 1,000 and 3,200 kilometers. So that would make it a clear INF violation. And I think you'd expect the same thing on that.

They are developing, clearly – and there's lots of sources for this – very advanced, low collateral damage nuclear warheads. And I would expect this to be on both versions of the system, although I'm not saying I have any specific report which says anything about the type of nuclear warhead. There are numerous reports of a nuclear warhead capability on the Iskander, but I haven't seen anything that's specific.

MR. HUESSY: With great thanks to you both for those wonderful, reassuring comments about our ally the Russian Federation, would you give a warm thank you to Mark and Stephen?

(Applause).

For those of you who use our system of signing up, when you get a re-confirmation, at the top it says "click" the little box. Otherwise you're not registered. So when you get a reconfirmation and it says Senator Tester next week and Frank Miller, please check the box at the top and then put your name and address in there so Sarah knows that you're actually registered.

So to remind you, we do have two breakfasts next week. Senator Tester will be at the ROA building headquarters across the Capitol building. And I'm sorry, there's no parking over there, but ask the sergeant at arms of the Senate to let you do that. The other thing is, Frank Miller will be speaking the day after Senator Tester from Montana, and please register if you haven't.

Again, Mark and Steve, thank you for those reassuring words. We will try to have them up on the web site as soon as you've approved them. And we will have – Clark Murdock's piece is done. Dr. Cook's is done. I think everybody has approved their remarks except for Admiral Burke, who is retiring soon, so he hasn't been able to get to it, but will.

We're also doing a conference in King Bay in October that the Navy will host. That is now tentative, but it's going to mirror the one we did at Minot last week and the one we did in September here in Washington. It will be on the strategic nuclear triad in Kings Bay hosted by the U.S. Navy. And if you have suggestions for speakers, I am willing to listen. And if you would like to come and participate, we would love to have you.

And again, thank you to our sponsors: AFA, NDIA and ROA, for their sponsorship of this. And again, Steve, thank you very much. And Mark, thank you very much for your remarks. And thank you all for being here.

Thanks.

(Applause).