

051316 Air Force Association, National Defense Industrial Association and Reserve Officers Association Capitol Hill Forum with Frank Miller, Principal at the Scowcroft Group, on “Does a Nuclear Deterrent Matter: The Case for Ballistic Missile Defense and Nuclear Forces.” (For additional information on NDIA/AFA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at phuessy@afa.org).

MR. PETER HUESSY: Good morning, everybody. Welcome to this, the next in our series of seminars from the Mitchell Institute of the Air Force Association, the National Defense Industrial Association and the Reserve Officers Association. I’m going to turn this mic off. Can everybody hear me? You’ll hear Frank.

(Laughter).

For those keeping a schedule, our next breakfast is with Congressman Bridenstine. It is a joint strategic nuclear and space event, even though he’s primarily going to talk about space issues, and that is the 19th. On the 23rd we’re hearing from the NASA Administrator, Mr. Bolden, who is going to be speaking here on the 23rd. A couple of days later we’re going to hear from Todd Harrison and Evan Montgomery about a budget analysis of the strategic programs of the United States, including nuclear as well as missile defense.

Our next one is June 10th with General Todorov and General Formica. We’re going to postpone that because General Formica has to be in Arlington at an internment at the cemetery on the 10th. It’s something he can’t miss, so we’re going to move that. But on June 10th, for those of you in the space area, we are hearing from Congressman Schiff and we’re going to do that over at the Reserve Officers Association of America at their headquarters, but we’re doing it at 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. It’s going to be stadium seating. There’s not going to be any breakfast, but we’re going to hear from Congressman Schiff who is a very important person in the space business. I’ll be sending out a number of notices. I’m going to be gone at the very end of May and the first few days of June. I’m going to be in Prague with my colleague Tom Krako. A number of us are going to give speeches on space issues at the Prague Security Institute.

With that, we have a wonderful speaker today. I always think of Frank as the mild mannered Clark Kent, and he comes to breakfast here and opens up his jacket and there’s a great big “S”. What he has to say today I think is very important. That is, what are the requirements for nuclear deterrence in terms of looking at the major criticisms that we get on the program about whether it’s affordable, is nuclear deterrence obsolete, and so forth? Frank is going to walk us through, in his way, on these issues.

As a Principal in the Scowcroft Group he has been a dear friend for many, many years. I want to also thank our colleagues and sponsors, as well as members of the foreign embassy folks who are here today as well, and want to thank you all for making this series possible with your support. Would you all give a warm welcome to Frank Miller?

(Applause).

MR. FRANK MILLER: Thank you, Peter. The way you started I through you were going to turn me into the Hulk, as opposed to Superman.

(Laughter).

If you can't hear me raise your hand and I'll speak up. Thanks to you for inviting me. Thanks to all of you for coming. I want to start by really acknowledging Peter's work in keeping this breakfast series going all these many years. I think he deserves a round of applause for that.

(Applause).

This is a really important series because it allows people to come before a knowledgeable audience and to express what they really believe. So you have done a national service and I thank you for that.

As I've said in the past, these events always afford me an opportunity to review the folly and the foolishness which has occurred in the wonderful world of arms control nuclear policy over the preceding 12 months and to reflect back on it and share it with you. Sadly, there is so much to talk about and so little time. It's difficult to know where to begin.

But there's always a place to start, so let's start with the New York Times. On April 2nd there was an op-ed about the president's arms control agenda. In the op-ed, which criticized the president for not fulfilling his agenda, there's the following sentence. I quote, "It will be up to the next American president to work to prevent another nuclear arms race," close-quote.

That same theme was repeated in a Times article three days ago on the president's upcoming visit to Hiroshima. A new nuclear arms race. I was a liberal arts major, but let's take a look at some number. Let's review the bidding.

As we sit here this morning, let's talk about the number of new types of ICBMs the Russian Federation is deploying this morning. Two new types, plus an SS-18 follow-on scheduled to be fielded in 2018, and a new rail-mobile ICBM coming down the road.

How many new types of ICBMs is China deploying right now? It's at least two. How many new types of ICBMs is the United States deploying right now?

MR. : Zero.

MR. MILLER: Thank you. What's the earliest deployment date for a Minuteman follow-on, a GBSD? The late 2020s. Okay, so we won't talk about ICBMs, we'll talk

about new types of SLBMs.

How many new types of SLBMs is Russia deploying today? The answer is two. China, one. How many types of SLBMs are we deploying today? None.

Numbers hurt. How many new SSBNs were commissioned, put in the water, in the last few years? Three from Russia, four from China. The United States, zero. The SSBN-X program's earliest deployment, first boat, is 2028.

All of this brings to mind that wonderful, wonderful line used by former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown many, many years ago. "When we build, the Russians build. When we stop, the Russians build."

(Laughter).

So somebody here, I can't do it, somebody here please call the Times and let them know how to do arithmetic and let them know what race means. There's another set of similarly wretched arguments coming out of our very own Washington-based and D.C.-centric arms control community. They're attacking the administration because it has not killed off one or more of the planned modernization programs of the U.S. strategic triad. Let's first look at the broad argument.

The broad argument is modernizing the U.S. nuclear force is antithetical to the administration's policies and indeed it is antithetical to the president's own beliefs. Well, first of all, terribly inconveniently for this argument, we have the letter from President Barack Obama to the Senate on February 2, 2011 in which he president, responding to the Senate's resolution on providing advice and consent to the New START Treaty writes, and I quote, "I intend to modernize or replace the triad of strategic nuclear delivery systems, a heavy bomber and air-launched cruise missile, an ICBM and a nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine SSBN, and SLBM," close-quote.

Everybody in this room knows that without that certification there would not be a New START Treaty. Indeed, everybody in this room knows that without prior promises to modernize the triad there would have been no resolution of advice and consent. And finally, everybody in this room knows that without the commitment to modernization, the commander of U.S. Strategic Command would not have testified in support of the treaty, and there would have been even less of a chance that there would have been a resolution of advice and consent.

The dishonest assertion, and I use that word strongly, the dishonest assertion by the arms control community that they never agreed to modernization as the price for New START, and are therefore open to attack it, that assertion is belied by the fact that senior representatives of the arms control community attended White House strategy sessions where-in the modernization for ratification deal was agreed to, and they never voiced objections. Nor did they do so during the ratification debates. So that's the broad argument.

And then there are the wholly spurious arguments, so-called strategic arguments they make, against specific elements of the modernization program. I find the arguments against the LRSO, the Long Range Standoff weapon, the new ALCM replacement, especially interesting and intriguing. The first argument is it isn't needed because the old one is good enough. Okay, so we'll take a vote. Does anybody in this room that a cruise missile designed in the mid-70s, first deployed in the early 1980s will still be capable of penetrating advanced air defenses for the next many decades? That's a rhetorical question, but if you feel like raising your hand, if you believe that's true, go ahead.

(Laughter).

The second argument is that it isn't needed because we have too many weapons as it is. Well, I must say, that is a statement born of both ignorance and arrogance. Ignorance because they don't know what the actual target base is, but they assume they can imagine it. Arrogance because they believe they can do that better than those assigned the task of managing it. Ignorance because they do not understand how to posture a force and operate a force. And arrogance because at heart, at heart, they believe that their theory of minimum deterrence is superior to what has successfully served as U.S. policy since the early 1960s.

A corollary to this argument is that the Pentagon in 2013 agreed that it could potentially accept a follow-on to New START which would cut the U.S. and Russian strategic forces by an additional one-third, 500 weapons. In doing so in 2013, however, the STRATCOM Commander, General Kehler, made very clear his view that such a cut could only be envisioned if the New START bomber counting rule was maintained, which of course meant that the U.S. would have to have air-launched cruise missiles with which to exploit that counting rule. And I would also note for you, the conclusions of a deterrence requirements study carried out today in a world significantly more threatening than the world of 2011-2012 when the previous study was undertaken, might end up with very different results.

A third argument is relatively new, and I've got to admit a very creative argument, is that dual-capable cruise missiles, those that are capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear warheads, are destabilizing. They're destabilizing because a conventional ALCM could lead a potential enemy to assume a nuclear round had been fired when a conventional round had been fired. No one ever made that argument during the Cold War, when we did have dual-capable ALCMs and SLCMs, but never mind.

The question you have to ask when you hear this argument is, in whose eyes would it be seen to be destabilizing? Logically, it would be the Russians. But Moscow is busily deploying dual-capable ALCMs and SLCMs, and do so with abandon. So would somebody please tell the community this is not a very useful line of attack and to please take that out of their arsenal?

The final argument against LRSO -- Tom, I told you I was going to talk about

LRSCO -- the final argument against LRSO is that our advanced conventional air-launched missiles are fully capable of destroying targets, thereby obviating the need for nuclear weapons. That's an important point, if your goal is to fight a conventional war with Russia or China. My goal is to deter both a conventional war and a nuclear war with either country. All of you are free to choose your goal, but I believe in deterring war between the great powers, not fighting wars with them.

I want to give some equal time to those who oppose modernizing the ICBM force because they believe it should be eliminated. That, of course, is an option. It's an option if you're comfortable allowing an adversary to be able to strike a mortal blow against the United States by attacking only six targets. You can count them. There's two SSBN bases, three bomber bases and Washington. On the other hand, maintaining a significant ICBM force requires an enemy contemplating attack on the United States to plan an unambiguously major pre-emptive strike. That itself, is part of deterrence.

And then there is the whole launch on warning issue, which comes up when people talk about keeping an ICBM force. Are we worried about the U.S. launching on warning or by accident, or are we worried about the Russians doing so? Does anybody here believe that if we eliminate the U.S. ICBM force Russia will also completely eliminate its ICBM force, and this problem of launch on warning, launch under attack would go away?

There's a whole series of questions on this issue, which I posed in a paper on de-alerting which I wrote for the 2009 Perry-Schlesinger Strategic Posture Commission, and no one has yet answered any of those questions in a manner which suggests eliminating our ICBM force resolves those worries for people who are concerned about LUA or launch on warning. That being the case, I think we'd better proceed with the GBSD program.

Then, of course, there are those who say we support the SSBN-X program, but we think that 12 new boats is kind of excessive, so why don't we cut the number to six or to eight? There are multiple answers as to why that's a really bad idea, including sizing the force sufficiently to maintain a continuous at-sea deterrent posture, plus training time at-sea, plus sufficient in-port time for pier side maintenance and crew rest. To the arms control community, those are unimportant details. In the real world that you live in and the Pentagon lives in and the forces live in and the Navy lives in, those are critically important issues.

A 12 SSBN force is important to maintaining economical two ocean basing, which is necessary for survivability and target coverage. A 12 boat force also provides upload potential, which a six to eight boat force would not. But these are just details, they're just pesky details, and I hate it when they crop up.

I'm conscious that the clock is running and I want to leave plenty of time for questions, so let me wrap up quickly by making a series of short observations. As you know, the president will be visiting Hiroshima later this month. In the run up to that trip

we will hear a number of ideas advanced, including some of the following.

Use the visit to promote a new round of arms reduction talks with Moscow. Well that's a really bad idea. It's a really bad idea because we should not enter into any discussions with Russia until Russia returns to compliance with the many arms control agreements it is currently violating. Offering new talks while blatant noncompliance continues sends a signal that we don't view those violations as meaningful.

Or, the president could use the visit to announce unilateral cuts in U.S. forces, on the grounds that nuclear weapons should cease to be a factor in international affairs. Well we all heard the Prague speech, and we have all seen how the leaders of every nuclear weapons state, except the United Kingdom, rejected its advice. The Russian government in particular has demonstrated that nuclear weapons are a key part of its global posture, and for that reason alone nuclear weapons are definitely not obsolete.

That self-same Russian government has also demonstrated that it is prepared to use conventional military force, the Big Lie, and little green men, to change borders in Europe. Accordingly, we need to maintain, and continue to maintain, a strong deterrent to both Russian nuclear blackmail and conventional aggression. All of this must have a credible nuclear component, and I believe that our NATO allies will reflect this view at the alliance's upcoming summit in Warsaw.

The president could use the visit to announce cuts to modernization on the grounds that we cannot afford to modernize both our conventional forces and our nuclear forces. And again, this would be a very, very bad idea. What people tend to forget in the debate in this country is that a modern and credible nuclear deterrent provides the essential and irreplaceable foundation -- I'll say it again, the essential and irreplaceable foundation -- for our conventional forces to operate safely in potential confrontations with other great powers.

And finally, there's the idea that the president, despite the recent ribbon cutting, could use the visit to make a gesture of goodwill to Mr. Putin by scaling back our European missile defense deployments. I actually think the air is going out of that balloon. Iran's determination to continuing, developing and improving its ballistic missile forces underscore the military and deterrent requirements for those deployments. And in a rare moment of candor, this past Tuesday General Sergei Karakayev, Commander of the Russian Strategic Missile Forces, told the press that the U.S. missile defense shield in Europe currently poses no critical threat to Russia. He said, and I quote, "Threats from the European segment of the missile defense system for the strategic missile forces are limited and don't critically reduce the combat capabilities of the SMF," close-quote.

Speaking of missile defense, why don't we ever hear about the 68 ABM interceptors which ring Moscow, more than double the number of GBIs we deploy today? But let me leave those questions with you and turn to your questions and give you a shot at me. Thank you very much.

(Applause).

MR. DAVID CULP: David Culp with the Friends Committee on National Legislation. What would President Trump's program look like, if he were elected?

MR. MILLER: You'd have to ask President Trump, wouldn't you?

MR. KULP: Well I think you've been (reading ?) his statements.

MR. MILLER: I don't -- first of all, I have a wonderful position, as a retired civil servant, of having been identified by the Democrats as a Republican and vice-versa.

(Laughter).

I've got a letter at home from Jesse Helms to Dick Cheney saying "don't appoint Miller because he's a left-leaning communist-oriented individual." So that's number one. Number two, I have no connection with any political campaign. Number three, you know as much about President Trump's positions as I do. In fact, you probably know more because I haven't studied them. So I have no idea, nor do I believe -- someone please correct me -- if he's made any statements regarding U.S. nuclear forces. I have no idea.

MR. : He likes the devastation.

MR. MILLER: Devastation? It's a huge thing. I'm sorry I can't answer your question. I have absolutely no idea. But don't misunderstand, I'm not giving you a Trump point of view, I'm giving you a point of view that has served this country well since 1945, and I believe in it deeply.

MR. : Maybe in another line of thought, if there was going to be a Nuclear Posture Review in the future, what would you like to see accomplished?

MR. MILLER: Oh man, it's a set-up. If there's a Nuclear Posture Review, and I've testified to this in front of the Senate, I think it should be very, very different from the ones that we've had in the past. I don't believe in Congressionally mandated Nuclear Posture Reviews. The most successful Nuclear Posture Review that was ever held was held between 1989 and 1991 in the Defense Department, and it resulted -- it didn't go in with this intention, but it resulted in a much improved war plan and a 65 percent cut in our deployed weapons requirements.

When you have all the publicity and hoopla surrounding a Nuclear Posture Review, you create expectations that things have to change. In fact, if you go back and look historically, even though some administrations back in the '60s -- you know, we went from "strategic sufficiency" to "essential equivalence" and all that -- suggested that our policy changed each time a new administration came in, it didn't happen. U.S.

nuclear policy has been remarkably consistent. There's been some play on the margins with regard to which programs to have in it, but the policy has been consistent. And it's important that we demonstrate consistency and not raise expectations for change, unless of course radical change would be called for.

To the gentleman's question, I suspect President Sanders would have a very different view. But I think the Nuclear Posture Review, such as it is, ought to be conducted within the Pentagon by civilian and military officials. It ought to be briefed to the secretary of Defense and the secretary ought to take any recommendations coming from that to the president, vice president, the national security adviser, you can bring in the secretary of State. And then, and only then, once we've established what our nuclear deterrent requirements are, then you bring in the NSC and the State Department to talk about arms control.

I think that Nuclear Posture Reviews that start with the State Department and the NSC staff present, and whose primary objective is nonproliferation or arms reductions, start in exactly the wrong direction. The nuclear posture of the United States is supposed to ensure, to our best capability to understand it, what our nuclear deterrent posture is, and then we move on from there. So if I were advising anybody, I would say do it quietly, do it quickly, get it out of the way, brief it, and if there's something there to roll out, roll it out; and if there isn't, don't.

The '89' to '91 experience was dramatic. The only time it was rolled out was when George H. W. Bush said something in his State of the Union message in 1992 when he said, "we're going to propose to Gorbachev that we eliminate all land-based MIRVs." That review produced the biggest single cut in our weapons requirements, and it was a deterrence-based review.

MR. NICK WONDER (ph): Nick Wonder from the Department of Energy. Do you think that minimum deterrence and extended deterrence are mutually exclusive concepts, and if so to what extent?

MR. MILLER: Oh man, I love softball questions, thank you. Yes I do, I do. Look, I'm sorry, I've got to go back to the other question. If we're going to get out of NATO because it's a useless, obsolete, freeloading organization, and the Japanese and South Korean governments are going to have their own nuclear weapons, we don't have to worry about minimum deterrence. But if you don't like that world, you have to have extended deterrence.

Extended deterrence means that you have to do two things. You have to have sufficient forces and capabilities and plans to convince potential adversaries that attacking our allies is a very bad thing to do and that they will end up on the wrong end of history should they do so. And, you have to have sufficient forces, plans, capabilities and transparency -- transparency with our allies, so that they have confidence that we are in fact there to protect them.

You cannot do that with a minimum deterrent force. There are academic volumes this high on minimum deterrence, but at the end of the day it turns out to be reduced to city busting. I'm not comfortable with city busting. I don't think that's necessarily a good deterrent because it gets into the whole notion -- I'm sorry, I'm going to carry this question a lot further than you asked.

Deterrence is about getting into the mind of the potential enemy and saying, "no, don't do that because bad things will happen to you. Things will happen worse than what you have calculated you're willing to accept."

Traditionally, traditionally, autocratic leaders have valued above all their ability to stay in power, and the armed forces and security forces that keep them in power, and the military, economic potential that sustains their forces. Everybody in this room understands that our value system says we value our people. It has never been clear, when you get down to brass tacks confrontations with some of the potential enemies we have, that they view the world the same way we do. So you've got to be thinking about more than minimum deterrence, because I don't think minimum deterrence works except in our university environments. I just don't think it's a sound policy.

MR. : (Off mic) -- (with the OPNAV staff ?). Mr. Miller, you spoke of Russia and China. What's your viewpoint on how well deterrence is working towards other nuclear powers? What's also your standpoint on the aspect of mutual assured destruction? Is that a viable construct or has that gone by the wayside?

MR. MILLER: With respect to the deterrence of other nuclear powers, I think the other nuclear power that we have to worry about is North Korea. The question is, do we have sufficient combined nuclear and conventional capability to prevent Kim Jong-un from attacking our South Korean or Japanese allies? I think we do. But we need to consider -- we need to make a mental leap from saying North Korea is a bad actor which has violated its NPT commitments and we're going to bring them back into compliance with the NPT; to saying, excuse me, North Korea is a nuclear-armed state and we're going to have to deal with that. They're not going back, they're not going back.

So we have to try as best we can, as in any deterrent situation, to understand what motivates Kim Jong-un and his government, what his vital assets are, and how we convey to him that attacking our Japanese or South Korean allies will cause the end of his regime. I think that's a daunting problem. I think it's a daunting problem with respect to Russia and China, too, because in the '90s and '00s we systematically dismantled our capability to understand Russia. The intelligence community's Russian analysis branches were cut by huge percentages, double digit percentages.

So I think we need to spend a whole lot more time studying Kim Jon-un. And I would hope, and I don't know, that there is some channel whereby we can send him messages that are unambiguous that say, "just don't do that, just don't do that."

On the other point -- I mean, I love you guys, you're giving me lots of softballs.

Mutual assured destruction was never a strategy. Our academic community has so much to be ashamed of in promoting the idea that once upon a time it was either nuclear war fighting or assured destruction. It was counterforce or countervalue, which was never the case except from '47 to '50. We've always targeted military forces and industrial assets.

Assured destruction was a McNamara rule of thumb that was used to cap U.S. nuclear forces. It had what, someone will tell me, 30 percent of the population and 50 percent of the industrial capacity, or some figure like that, right? When the Russians had the capability to do the same thing to us, we then had mutual assured destruction. But it was a description of a situation, not a strategy.

The strategy was always, from 1961 on, flexible response, to give the president a variety of options to deal with unpredictable situations to prevent nuclear aggression and nuclear attack. Much of those dealt with, as I was saying earlier, the elements of state power. Our British friends used to call it the elements of Soviet state power, which is a pretty good description of what you look at when you're trying to deter a leadership calculating should we attack the United States or not. So thank you for that

MAD was never a strategy. It's popularly thought of as a strategy, but it's a description of a situation. It pertains today. If you want to describe the situation, could we and the Russian Federation destroy each other? Absolutely. That's why we have to find ways out of that, to convince Putin that if he crosses the line and attacks one of our allies, that the consequences are unpredictable and could lead to a mutual assured destruction situation.

No one is going to go into a war thinking that they're going to come out on the wrong side of mutual assured destruction. They go into a war thinking they can win a quick and easy victory at small cost. And we need to get inside the heads of those people who are planning military operations against us or our allies: in states, not terrorists, in states, and suggest that those calculations will always come out wrong.

MS. : (Off mic) -- you raised some excellent opposition about the Nuclear Posture Review and the NSC. I was wondering if it's because in that community they see a wider range of threats, whereas in the Pentagon they're more focused on the big powers. Specifically, I'd like to know why you think that that process is not working, although maybe I missed why you made that distinction?

MR. MILLER: Again, I think a Nuclear Posture Review is designed to determine what our deterrent requirements are, and that means what do we need to deter potential enemies? Once you've determined that, there are other aspects to our broader nuclear policy which include, can we engage in new arms reduction regimes? And again, I think the answer to that is, no, not until the Russians get back into compliance. Or does it affect nonproliferation, and how does our nonproliferation policy work?

Putting nonproliferation as the ingoing goal of a Nuclear Posture Review skews the process. Saying that "you guys in DOD can look at our deterrent requirements but

whatever your answers it has to come out at 500 weapons lower than where we are today,” skews the process. And I think that the link between our nuclear posture and potential proliferation is a false one.

Now having brought the wrath of the State Department and the NSC upon my head, and the arms control community, I’ll bring the nonproliferation community in. The linkage between U.S. nuclear forces and proliferation has never been established. It’s easy rhetoric. In fact, if you go back and look historically at levels of U.S. nuclear forces, which have gone down, and British nuclear forces, which have gone down, and French nuclear forces, which have gone down, and even Russian strategic forces, not their tactical one, which have gone down, and you graft that over about 20 to 30 years, and you look at Chinese weapons and Indian weapons and Pakistani weapons and North Korean weapons, there is no linkage. There is no linkage.

Countries don’t proliferate because -- I mean, they’re not going to spend blood and treasure and risk international opprobrium just because we have a nuclear weapon and they have to have one. These people are, in fact, rational actors. It’s insulting to suggest that they’re doing this just to ape us. They do that because they believe, whether I agree with it or not, that they have legitimate deterrent requirements. I suspect Kim Jong-un wants to continue his nuclear weapons program to prevent us from thinking about conventional attacks in response to things he does, and to be the regional hegemon to the degree that his Chinese masters allow him to do that.

The same thing would go for an Iranian nuclear program, to forestall U.S. conventional operations against Iran. But that’s not because of the size of our arsenal. We could go to zero, tomorrow, and North Korea would still have nuclear weapons.

Again, those who say our conventional capabilities are all we need, don’t understand that those in fact, if you go through a series of convoluted steps, help cause states which feel threatened, rightly or wrongly, to have their own nuclear arsenals. So again, a Nuclear Posture Review should look at what we need to defend ourselves and our allies. That means not only numbers, but it means how do you design the force? Smaller, lower, is not always better.

All of you can design a force of 1,000 U.S. weapons that is more vulnerable to Russian pre-emption than the current force. Pre-emption is a bad thing. Making yourself a target is a bad thing. So there’s a whole question about how you go lower, if you go lower, and when go lower, that needs to be taken into account.

Not pitching for my boss, but if you go back to April of 2012, I think it’s late in the month, Brent Scowcroft and Henry Kissinger have an op-ed in the Washington Post that sort of gives eight steps that you need to consider before going any lower. I highly recommend that to you.

Yes, sir, colonel?

COL. EDDIE FRESON (ph): Yes, sir, I'm Eddie Freson, secretary of the Air Force for (off mic). On a completely different subject than I normally work with, do you believe that the need for modernization of both our strategic nuclear weapons and our conventional forces make it a time to maybe switch our nuclear strategy from reliance on the strategic triad to more tactical nuclear weapons?

MR. MILLER: No, no, absolutely not, no. The triad is the foundation of everything we do around the world, particularly as we butt heads against Moscow and Beijing. It's the foundation. Without a strategic triad the credibility of our conventional forces would be dramatically undercut. At a March hearing in front of the full House Armed Services Committee the three service chiefs, particularly General Milley and Admiral Richardson, made that point. I hope that your chief to be strongly endorses the nuclear triad.

Shorter range weapons, which are principally designed -- not principally, exclusively -- designed to help us and extended deterrence, contribute to the overall effectiveness of our deterrent and give the president and the allies more options, but they don't substitute for the strategic weapons. Quite honestly, we have enough problems with our NATO allies now, than to open the idea of trying to deploy some new kind of theater capability. I mean, of all the neuralgic problems NATO has suffered through over decades, nuclear modernization has always been the most neuralgic. I mean, you need a whole jar of Bayer aspirin every day. So no, I would not do that.

MS. SUSAN KEATING: Susan Keating from the American Media Institute. If the administration put you in charge tomorrow over national defense and the policy for (nuclear weapons ?), is it even possible to turn the train around at this point? If so, how hard would it be?

MR. MILLER: Oh yeah, actually it's real easy. It's real easy. First of all, the president and secretary of State need to start picking up the kind of language that Secretary Carter is using so effectively. We need to talk about how unacceptable it is in the 21st century for Vladimir Putin to sound like Nikita Khrushchev. We need to say that. We need to say that publicly. One, stop talking like it's the 1960s.

Two, we need to say, Mr. Putin, do not think of limited nuclear war because it will end up in an unimaginable situation and Russia could be lost. So stop talking about escalate to de-escalate at the lower levels of his senior staff. Stop threatening Norway and Denmark and Sweden and Ukraine and other countries with nuclear weapons. Knock it off. That stuff belongs to the past. We're supposed to be smarter than that.

And three, we need to put our dollars and our energy behind our modernization programs to make that kind of declaratory policy credible. The modernization programs are there. Thank God for the Navy. And thank God for the SSBN-X program. I wish the Air Force would put the energy behind LRSO and GBSD to do that.

Then there's other little stuff -- it's not little, but it's details. I made fun of details

earlier, but it's the procurement process. Somebody correct me -- and I know times are a little more complicated -- we went from the idea of a Polaris SSBN to putting on in the water on its first deterrent patrol in five years.

MR. : Three years.

MR. MILLER: Three years? Okay. Minuteman, U-2 was one year from concept initiation to first flight. We can't do that today. So we spill it out and we do working groups and spend lots of money and milestones and all the rest. So we've got to fix the procurement process, but Senator McCain and Mr. Thornberry will figure that one out.

MR. HUESSY: Parenthetically, Frank, the first B-1B RDT&E was in fiscal year 1978.

MR. MILLER: Right. Well then there was the Carter administration hiatus.

MR. : (Off mic) -- in the context of enabling conventional forces, and I'm thinking also about the new emerging threats, the gray zone threats -- (off mic) -- conventional drones -- (off mic). How should we understand the spectrum of -- (off mic).

MR. MILLER: That's a great question, thank you. It centers me. I've been talking about nuclear deterrence, but the questioner makes a terribly important point.

Nuclear weapons are not now, never have been, never will be, an all-purpose deterrent. They can't be. It's not credible to say that we're going to respond to little green men with nuclear weapons. It ain't going to happen. No one is going to believe it.

We need a full spectrum of capabilities, and clearly in areas where the Russians have shown enormously skillful capabilities in the area of both information operations, little green men and all the rest, we need strong conventional forces. We need strong special operations capabilities. We need the ability to go after ISIS and hunt and kill ISIS.

But in the backdrop, when we talk about state-to-state relations with nuclear-armed powers, the nuclear deterrent serves to prevent people from going to war with one another. That's the huge value of the nuclear deterrent.

People get tired of me saying this, but the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 established the modern nation-state. In the 300 years that followed, from 1649 to 1945, the great powers of Europe go to war with each other on average five to seven times a century. That counts the Napoleonic Wars as one war and the Wars of Italian Independence as one war.

And then in 1945 everything stops. The United States and Russia move in as the surrogates for the great powers of Europe and there's no war. There are some tense times, but in those tense times it becomes clear that conventional war between the great

nuclear-armed powers is too dangerous to contemplate.

That is the value of the nuclear weapon. You need capabilities at lower levels to deal with other threats for which the nuclear threat is not credible. But at the end of the day, don't kid yourself, when you're dealing with the Russians or the Chinese, the nuclear forces in the background provide the essential foundation -- I think those were the words that Admiral Richardson used -- essential foundation of our national defense.

MR. HUESSY: You did beautifully.

MR. MILLER Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: Thank you, Frank. We'll have a transcript of this in a couple of days. We will see you next week for those of you who want to see Congressman Bridenstine. I want to thank all my friends and colleagues here for making this a successful event.

Again, have a good weekend.

(Applause).