

062515 National Defense Industrial Association, Reserve Officers Association and Air Force Association Capitol Hill Forum with Elbridge Colby, Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security; and Retired Major General William Chambers, Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analysis, on “A Resurgent Russia: Its Strategy and Strategic Posture, Implications for U.S. and NATO.” (For additional information on NDIA/AFA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at phuessy@afa.org).

[Note: This is an official, edited transcript provided by National Security Reports]

MR. PETER HUESSY: Good morning, everybody. Thank you for coming to this, the next in our series of seminars on “Nuclear Deterrence and Missile Defense, Arms Control and Proliferation.” On behalf of the Air Force Association’s Mitchell Institute, the Reserve Officers Association and the National Defense Industrial Association, I want to welcome you.

For those of you who are interested, the Mitchell Institute web site is almost done. There you will also find our schedule. Those of you looking for transcripts, they’re on the current AFA web site next to the speaker’s name. Underneath it will say transcript, and they have been approved. We have a whole batch of ones that have just come in that have been approved that I need to post, and we’ll get those to you.

Congress has cancelled all votes for tomorrow, and a lot of the members are going to be down in South Carolina, including Congressman Cramer who was going to speak tomorrow. He is going to be rescheduled, if you’ll make a note of that. July 1st, and our last event before the July 4th recess, Steve Pifer and my good friend Rebeccah Heinrichs are going to speak about Russia, Ukraine, missile defense and NATO.

And then on July 8th, Mike Rogers, who is Chairman of the Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, will address us. At the end of all his remarks, as you know, he will say Roll Tide, in a way that only an Alabaman can say. I’m convinced that the Russians and Chinese think that’s a new military technology, so I’m urging him to say it two or three times.

July 10th is our next Space Power breakfast. We also will have one on July 30th. Those of you who are interested, in September, on the 17th, we’re having our triad event here in this club on the 17th. For those of you who either don’t have an invitation or would like one, please let me know. If you have one, please respond. We’re up to about 100 guests and we’ll have this entire floor, so we’ll have room for about 200 people.

I want to thank our guests who are here and our sponsors as well. For those of you who are interested in energy issues, we do an energy series which I am now co-sponsoring, talking about the export of natural gas and oil from the United States to our Eastern Europe compatriots, particularly Ukraine and the Baltics. As part of that we had the three Baltic ambassadors here last week to speak. One of their comments was they wanted to turn the Russians from bullies into supplicants in terms of selling oil and gas.

All the natural gas currently being produced is basically spoken for, but we have tons of natural gas. Our good friends in North Dakota would love to export through the Great Lakes over to Europe. And if you're interested in attending that, it is an extraordinary series. One of my best friends is running that, Fred Hutchison. It's actually a two part series, so let me know if you would like to get on the invitation list there.

We have two wonderful speakers this morning. We have Elbridge Colby, who is the Robert M. Gates Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security. Prior to that, between 2010 and 2013, he was at the Center for Naval Analyses.

Our first speaker, however, will be Major General William Chambers, retired. He was the Assistant to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration in the Headquarters of the U.S. Air Force. He is currently a full-time staffer at the Institute for Defense Analysis.

With that, would you please welcome our first speaker, Major General William Chambers?

(Applause).

MR. WILLIAM CHAMBERS: It's great to be here. Thanks, Peter. Bridge and I decided to tag team this, and we chose a title that's long but important. "A Resurgent Russia: It's Strategy and Strategic Posture and the Implications for the U.S. and NATO. This audience probably finds that title fairly intuitive, because some of you probably believe that the strategy and posture of Russia is obvious. What may not be so obvious is what to do about it, and we're going to talk about that today.

Before we get to the implications of Russia's strategy, or their behavior, let's talk about how they've been behaving. Indeed, the term "resurgent" applied to Russia may only characterize a very narrow U.S. perception. I'm reminded during my time in Europe over my last few tours, my conversations -- probably over the past 10 years with senior members of the military in our newer allies, our Baltic: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in particular -- when asked about their view of Russia, they were unanimous.

And if they were here today they would say Russia's view of the world and their behavior toward their neighbors has not changed. It is deeply rooted. And no matter who is in charge: a czar, a party leader, or an elected official; their perspective of the world and their behavior toward their neighbors remains the same.

To Americans, it clearly appears that Russia is resurgent in how they're behaving on the global stage. So what is the case about their behavior and what does it tell us about their strategy. First of all, let's talk about their actions, their recent behavior.

First of all, the self-declared annexation of Crimea, illegal and illegitimate by any

international standard. Forcible incursion and occupation by Russian forces in Eastern Ukraine, now engaged in ongoing conflict. Large combined armed exercises on NATO's borders, and finding ways to avoid the Vienna Document notification requirement for such exercises. Incursions of sovereign airspace around the globe by Russian aircraft, in violation of international standards, to the degree that by October 2014 the number of airspace incursions was triple that of the year prior. Continued economic coercion as an energy exporter, as Peter has mentioned. Frequent public statements of their status as a nuclear power and brandishing of nuclear weapons, which senior U.S. and NATO leaders have termed irresponsible.

In comparison to U.S. and NATO, a widespread ongoing modernization of all existing Russian strategic weapons systems: ICBMs, ballistic missile submarines, bombers and cruise missiles. And development programs for new systems, such as a new mobile ICBM, a heavy MIRV'ed ICBM, a new stealthy bomber, and potentially new, more accurate, low-yield warheads. Operationalizing nuclear weapons employment during major combined arms exercises, and a doctrine which prepares them for the need to employ nuclear weapons early to quote-unquote "de-escalate" a burgeoning crisis to compensate for conventional force weakness.

Continued sustainment of thousands of tactical nuclear weapons and opacity regarding those weapons. Violation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. Agreements with Iran to support their nuclear power capability and sell advanced surface-to-air weapons systems timed in the midst of P5+1 negotiations with Iran. Leveraging bilateral links with other nations for influence, coercion or manipulation, both inside and outside of NATO, for example, with Greece, Hungary, Iran, and Syria, all in the midst of ongoing crises involving the West.

So many of us are well aware that these actions have a very different explanation from the perspective of Russian leaders. The pursuit of national interest is always viewed through the lens of the beholder and depends on where one sits. Bridge and I have been in forums during the past year where we heard the Russian version of ongoing events in Eastern Europe. I would commend you to peruse, for instance, the remarks made before the UN General Assembly last September by Foreign Minister Lavrov for just such a narrative.

Regarding Russia's role in the world, Lavrov said, "Russia is promoting a positive and unifying agenda." Or, perhaps the interview with President Putin in the Italian daily earlier this month, for more versions of the Russian narrative on what's going on in Eastern Europe. But if actions and narratives alone don't tell the story, perhaps public statements provide further evidence.

Russia's new military doctrine that came out this past December identified a global array of threats and in particular highlights the U.S. and NATO as top military risks, and indicates an increased Russian reliance on nuclear weapons at the strategic and operational levels. Regarding the annexation of Crimea, President Putin in March 2015 said, quote, "We were ready to put nuclear forces on alert. It was a frank and open

position. And that is why I think no one was in the mood to start a world war,” unquote.

In August of last year Putin said, quote, “I want to remind you that Russia is one of the most powerful nuclear nations. This is a reality, not just words. It’s best not to mess with us,” unquote.

More recently, President Putin privately threatened to invade Poland, Romania and the Baltic states, according to a record of a conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart. Quote, “If I wanted, in two days I could have Russian troops not only in Kiev, but also in Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn, Warsaw and Bucharest,” unquote.

According to the Russian ambassador to Denmark, Mikhail Vanin, in March, quote, “If Denmark joins the American-led missile defense shield, then Danish warships will be targets for Russian nuclear missiles,” unquote. Russian rhetoric continues accusations regarding U.S. ballistic missile defense in Europe, deliberately avoiding reference to U.S. and NATO commitments to transparency and assurance that such systems are not being deployed to counter Russian systems.

Such actions and words, when you tally them all up, add to a troubling trend characterized by a realpolitik pursuit of self-interest, centralized consolidation of power, silencing of opposing voices at home, continued aggressiveness abroad, apparent overwhelming domestic support, articulation of a world view diametrically opposite that of the West. You may remember that Chancellor Merkel, when reading back to President Obama her conversation with President Putin, is quoted as saying, “He was in another world,” unquote. All of this seems to demonstrate a carefully elaborated path to regain status and influence, to correct grievances and fulfill ambitions. So based on all this evidence, Russia appears to be following a strategy to regain stature on the world stage, increase manipulative influence in what they term their quote, “near-abroad,” build strategic depth, divide and weaken NATO, prevent further NATO expansion, and strengthen alliances and links to states opposed to the West. And, to pursue such strategic ends by rattling sabers, which includes at the core, nuclear weapons.

NATO, of course, has been clear in their view. The secretary-general, on the 27th of May at CSIS, described the alliance’s concern. Quote, “Russia’s recent use of nuclear rhetoric, exercises and operations, are deeply troubling. Russia’s nuclear saber rattling is unjustified, destabilizing and dangerous.” And regarding Russia’s announcement to base modern nuclear capable systems in Kaliningrad and their claim of its right to deploy nuclear forces in Crimea, the secretary-general said, quote, “This will fundamentally change the balance of security in Europe.”

Other astute observers of Russian behavior - the National Institute of Public Policy summed up the situation as such, “Russia’s statements on nuclear policy, its official doctrine, its extensive across the board modernization programs, its direct nuclear threats against others, its unprecedented level of Cold War-type strategic exercises, and its violations of arms control agreements, all suggest a troubling and dangerous move toward a more aggressive overall nuclear posture.” The implications of these actions,

coupled with Russia's increasingly belligerent behavior on the world stage and willingness to use military force, threatens the very foundations of peace and stability. Perhaps most telling is a statement by NATO's declaration coming out of the Wales Summit this past fall. Quote, "Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace."

What then are the military implications for the U.S. and NATO? The current military commander in Europe, and my good friend, General Phil Breedlove is beginning to answer that question. During recent media engagements in the Pentagon and during testimony before Congress, General Breedlove has made clear that we need to increase our deterrent posture against Mr. Putin. He is displaying, quote, "Ambitious strategic intent." General Breedlove went on to say, "We know Putin only responds to strength and seeks opportunities in weakness." And, quote, "We must strengthen our deterrent in order to manage his opportunistic confidence."

Having served with General Breedlove in Europe, I cannot help but agree with his final conclusion. "The forces in Europe over the last 20 years have been sized for a situation where we were looking at Russia as a partner. What we see now is that Russia has demonstrated it is not a partner." And I can tell you that having been part of or having executed over the past 25 years the majority of the reductions of U.S. forces in Europe, I can say with some authority that those reductions, using any measure, have been drastic.

Anybody who has served in Europe knows what the height of our presence was during the height of the Cold War. I would not argue for such a presence, but we now have one dedicated brigade's worth of Army power in Europe. We are down to seven fighter squadrons, all told, on the continent. Most telling is that the actual local balance of forces, by any measure, along the eastern border of the alliance, is clearly not in NATO's favor.

What are, then, the implications? U.S. and NATO leaders have called for a good list of actions, and you can commend the alliance for acting so quickly. Anybody who has worked with NATO knows that they don't always act with much alacrity. But they are united in some very important actions and their leadership has exhorted, for starters, a full reconsideration of force presence, basing and posture, including a plan for pre-positioning heavy military equipment in the Baltic states and possibly Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, and a logistics mechanisms to move NATO power east.

The list goes on:

Visible assurance steps by U.S. and other NATO forces to eastern allies, such as the recent Dragoon Ride and other parts of Operation Atlantic Resolve, continue to execute the European Reassurance Initiative, including increased rotational presence.

Enhancing the NATO response force. Secretary Carter this week during his trip to Europe outlined U.S. contributions toward that force, another good step.

Progress on the member nation's reaching their two percent goal for defense spending. A tall order, perhaps, but lots of talk about it, which is good.

Deliberate strategic signaling, such as the recent B-2 and B-52 deployments to Europe.

Support for Ukraine as a partner in many dimensions.

Support for the Baltics and the southeastern perimeter allies, such as with air policing and contributions to ongoing NATO exercises like BALTOPS and Saber Strike.

Affirmation of the importance of NATO and the importance of NATO as a nuclear alliance, especially in light of the U.S.'s quote-unquote "rebalance" to the Pacific.

Strengthening of NATO and U.S. policies, plans and postures in order to operationally deter and assure on a day-to-day basis. These are all things that are now at the forefront of NATO discussions.

There's a whole list of other military implications that can and should be considered, to include:

The continued strengthening of NATO's nuclear mission, the readiness and modernization of the dual-capable aircraft fleet and the stewardship of U.S. nuclear weapons on the continent.

Continued examination and expansion of contributions to that deterrent mission by more member nations.

Advocacy here in the U.S. and in Congress for required resources for the B-61 life extension program to keep it on track year after year, budget cycle to budget cycle.

Continued focus on production of the F-35 and Block 4 spiral, which will contain the software for that jet to have nuclear capability.

NATO's military headquarters putting emphasis on the next level of detail for NATO's deliberate plans.

NATO emphasis on training and infrastructure for the dual-capable aircraft mission.

CONUS-based long-range strike platforms rotating to Europe and continued sustainment of the standby bases that support those operations.

Continued building of eastern allies capacity and capability, such as air capability for the Baltic nations. Counter information warfare for our eastern allies, for example.

And continued focus on the plans for U.S. ballistic missile defense capabilities in Europe, especially for assurance purposes.

Underscore the overdue need for recapitalization of U.S. and allied strategic forces: the Ohio-class replacement, Ground Based Strategic Deterrent, long range strike, long range standoff, nuclear command and control, the UK Trident continuous at-sea deterrence posture, French air and missile platforms; all in the context of their role in support of NATO's deterrence and assurance posture.

Certainly war-games are another aspect that must be taken on to examine the scenarios that might play out in the regions on the eastern border of NATO.

So beyond these considerations we should ask ourselves (and it's clear that Secretary Carter is asking these questions and perhaps answering them during this week's engagements in Europe), can we put fresh policies, plans and capabilities in place to fulfill what's required to operationally deter and assure on a day-to-day basis? While casting our eye on the importance of the Asia Pacific and rebalancing there as necessary, we cannot afford to take our eye off of Europe nor our focus on the trans-Atlantic bond. This bond was uniquely illustrated by remarks by President Obama in Tallinn this past September.

It's important to highlight one excerpt of his speech. Speaking directly to the people of Estonia, in Estonia, the president said, "During the long Soviet occupation the great Estonian poet, Marie Under, wrote a poem in which she cried to the world, "Who will come to help, right here, at present, now?"

The president said, to the people of Estonia and the people of the Baltics, "Today we are bound by our treaty. We have a solemn duty to each other. Article V is crystal clear. An attack on one is an attack on all.

So, if in such a moment you ever ask again, who will come to help, you'll know the answer: the NATO alliance, including the Armed Forces of the United States of America, right here, at present, now. We'll be here for Estonia. We'll be here for Latvia. We'll be here for Lithuania. You lost your independence once before, with NATO you will never lose it again," unquote.

Military leaders now have the duty to make sure that the U.S. and NATO have the deterrent and war fighting capability to back up that clear commitment made by the commander in chief. To continue the discussion, I'll pass it on to Bridge.

(Applause).

MR. ELBRIDGE COLBY: Thanks very much to Peter and the organizers of this for having me. It's a privilege in particular to speak again with General Chambers, a real honor. He's a true expert and deeply experienced authority on the matter, so it's a delight to be here with him.

I think General Chambers has very expertly laid out the kind of broad problem that's posed by Russia's political intent and military capabilities in Europe. I'd just add that whatever one's view of the justice or the merits of the various cases, the fact remains that there is a possibility of conflict in Europe. And there are significant differences of intent, of perception and of interests in Eastern Europe in particular.

Russia wants to regain its regional hegemony, or something like it. It appears to want to split NATO. If I were putting it in Moscow's terms, it fears encroachment by the West. And so there is, just looking at it from a kind of analytical point of view, there is a substantial difference of political interest which is at sort of the root of a potential conflict. And I say this to basically say, people who say Europe is no longer -- there's no possibility of significant conflict -- I think that's not really an accurate assessment.

I think something in Ukraine or Georgia is probably the least implausible kind of further scenario -- or further conflict involving Ukraine or Georgia. But I think we have to be realistic and say that a conflict scenario involving a NATO member, particularly in the Baltics but also possibly in the southeast like Romania, is also possible. And this could come about through a variety of scenarios: differences over internal political developments, disputes about sovereignty, disputes about orientation, escalation of existing conflicts. And again, leaving aside the merits of a particular posture towards a given scenario, I think we have to face the reality that there are conflict scenarios that could arise. And in such a case I think we get to -- if it involves a NATO member -- we get to a real question about the survivability and the fundamental purpose of NATO.

And I'm of the view that fundamentally NATO is not a political institution in the sense of something that's designed to deepen political reform. It's fundamentally a military and a security alliance. It's designed to consolidate and guarantee the security of its member states. Rightly or wrongly, we included the Baltic states and the Eastern European states into that alliance. And therefore, we need to accept and deal with that commitment and that reality.

I've been really kind of reinforced in the view, over the last few years talking to Europeans, that NATO's word is its bond. And I think there's really not sort of an old NATO and a new NATO, fundamentally, if the alliance is going to persist. Fundamentally, I think that we in the United States and throughout the alliance need to be prepared to deal with security threats and ultimately to defend any of the member states that are threatened in a way that's covered by the alliance.

What are these kinds of plausible scenarios that could emerge from the political context that General Chambers has described? I think most of the attention thus far has focused on the so-called "hybrid threat," quote-unquote. If you talk to responsible NATO officials they understand that the Russians look at hybrid as part of a spectrum leading from so-called little green men and various kinds of covert action types of activities, information warfare, all the way up to nuclear forces. But I think a lot of the outside conversations tend to focus on low-level kinds of provocations or aggression or

coercion. Again, sort of the little green men such as in Crimea.

But I think that public discussion is missing the crucial point, which is that what's really worrisome about Russia's hybrid warfare is the potential for escalation; and not just any kind of escalation, but potentially decisive escalation. What's really scary about the little green men is that behind the little green men are potentially 40,000 Russian troops, their artillery, their air defenses, other kinds of capabilities, that can be mobilized quite rapidly and efficaciously. And I think we've seen that repeatedly in Russian exercises over the last year.

Thinking in that context, there's been a lot of talk about the NATO reassurance initiatives. But Russian exercises have 40,000 men involved. I think the largest NATO exercise I've seen mentioned is 15,000. So numbers matter.

The Baltic air policing mission is a couple of F-16s, which by the way are vulnerable to advanced Russian SAM systems. Meanwhile the Russians are practicing shooting down cruise missiles and so forth. So number matter. The bottom line is that there is potentially a very significant Russian force that can be resorted to in the context of one of these scenarios.

If we look at a little green men scenario -- let's take something like what's often mentioned, a dispute over a Russophone or Russophile population in a Baltic state like Estonia, where there's a large Russophone population in Narva. My friend and colleague Wess Mitchell, the president of the Center for European Policy Analysis, often points to the potential for the Russians to try to exploit their land bridge to Kaliningrad through Lithuania. For instance, if they simply just sat -- if they brought forces in and just sat on that land bridge or rail bridge, they could create a new kind of fait accompli. If NATO or the member state responded vigorously and vehemently, and the Russians didn't like it and they could paint it in a politically advantageous way, they initially could resort to their readily mobilizable conventional forces.

Now I think it's important to mention that the Russians appear to have local conventional superiority in the Baltics, or they certainly think they do. As Bill pointed out, Putin has said that they could be in one of the Baltic capitals in two days. I don't know about getting to Romania or Poland, but it doesn't strike me as wholly implausible that they could do so in the Baltics. I commend a New York Times article yesterday that includes some remarks by David Ochmanek that references some RAND work that is very illustrative and sobering on this matter.

So Russia could escalate from a kind of hybrid conflict involving little green men and various kinds of provocations, to the deployment of conventional force -- conventional forces that could really hold the upper hand over present or readily mobilizeable Baltic and Alliance forces. Russia could actually potentially create a kind of fait accompli in this kind of a context, where it might gain a lodgment in the Baltics. And this new position that Russia could attain, with its fairly significant conventional forces that it has been focused on building up for the last 10 or 15 years, would actually

be very, very difficult, as I understand it, for the alliance and even for the United States to deal with.

One of my little hobby horses these days is that I think there's still -- not so much in this audience -- but still in the general policy discussion a sense that American military power can't really be contested, even by the Russians or Chinese. I think that that's erroneous. In a context like this, the United States would have real difficulty dealing with an established Russian position.

We can tick off some of the components of this challenge. One would be the very sophisticated and developing Russian integrated air defense system, looking at the double digit SAMs, the SA-20 I think, and the SA-21 in particular, which can hold at risk pretty much all -- and there are people in the audience that know a lot more about this than I -- but all U.S. aircraft. Now, something like the B-2 would obviously be the response of choice for the United States, but there are 20 B-2s in the inventory. And we can talk about some of the specifics there.

There's also the Russian anti-ship cruise missile capability. There's anti-space capabilities. There's pretty sophisticated cyber capabilities. And then there's land attack options, both ballistic and cruise: the Iskander, of course. And now with the INF violations we may be seeing a longer range accurate conventional missile on its way, or missiles on their way, to deployment.

So this is just to say this is not something that's necessarily -- that NATO, if it had sufficient resolve, couldn't deal with. But let's not be mistaken. It would be a bitter fight. It would be nasty. It would probably be pretty wide in nature. So already we're dealing with a pretty significant difficulty in getting the alliance to agree to something like this, which I think the general rightly pointed out. NATO has difficulty getting any kind of agreement. So getting even an agreement to fight this conventional fight would be difficult, and then it would operationally and militarily be difficult.

But I think that's not the last of the problem. Another kind of hobby horse of mine is there's a tendency among even serious defense planners and policy people to say that could happen and it might be a tough fight, but we'd deal with it conventionally. If we put in sufficient forces and we could protect the flow of forces to the Baltics or wherever the attack or provocation was, that ultimately we'd be able to wear down the Russians.

They don't have the sustainment. They don't have the economy to replace forces and ammunition and so forth. Leaving aside what our ammunition stocks and so forth are on that front, I think there's a sanguinity there that's unjustified not just on its face, but also because it ignores the Russian potential for escalation further; and not just escalation in a kind of crazy man way, but actually an intelligent, more of a stiletto-like escalation.

General Chambers mentioned this briefly. This is the sort of escalate to de-escalate doctrine which pertains not just to nuclear forces but also to what you might call

strategic conventional forces. Basically what the Russians appear to be talking about in their military journals and strategic analysis is the ability to use nuclear weapons or strategic conventional capabilities in ways that are designed to spook, if you will, and ultimately force the alliance and the United States, ultimately, to back down, to say it's not worth escalating further.

Now we can talk about how much the Russians have gone -- Hans Kristensen is here, so I'd be interested to hear what he has to say -- how far the Russians have gone in this direction. In their last military doctrine released late last year, they indicated that they would cabin the potential use of this sort of doctrine to scenarios involving the survival of the state. I, for one, am a bit skeptical in putting too much weight on that public doctrine.

There is evidence that has been written about in Steve Blank's book and elsewhere that there is maybe a classified annex that differs on this. Fundamentally, without being too nasty to our friends in Russia, I'm not sure I take their word at face value on this kind of thing. I think there's reason to think they can't -- and it wouldn't really be justified to trust them. So my recommendation is that prudence indicates that we should be prepared for this kind of doctrine to be unveiled in scenarios that are quite, quite far from really jeopardizing the survival of the state as a normal person would take it.

Look, as General Chambers put it, intent is one thing but the Russians have been exercising this for 15 years, since at least 1999. We've seen nuclear use across Russian exercises over many years. So I think this is not something that they're simply talking about in journals. This is something that they're actually thinking about and responsible people, including those wearing uniforms, are working on how they can put it in practice.

So I think if we are already in the midst of a very tough and nasty altercation with the Russians, I think the point of this kind of use, say a pointed or series of pointed conventional strikes at vulnerable targets, including potentially in the Atlantic area, or even nuclear strikes potentially in the Atlantic area but also used in the actual battlefield context to favorably affect the course of the fight, could put us in a very difficult position, and not simply just as a challenge to our resolve to use nuclear forces in response. One thing the Russians might do is not necessarily just say we're going to use nuclear weapons or you need to back down. They might say, you are unduly escalating in the way that you're responding. We were responding to a local problem or controversy in the Baltics.

And frankly, because of the way that we would need to fight to dislodge them, we might actually need to expand the war. And the Russians could say, you're expanding the war and if you continue in this fashion we may resort to strategic escalation. And if we did not have an adequate response to this, if we were not prepared for this, they could in effect limit the war in a way that we would not be able to prevail. We would not be able to achieve our objectives.

Forrest Morgan has written a very good study about this called "Dancing with the Bear," basically pointing out that a lot of Russian air defense systems, theater command and control, land attack capabilities, might be well beyond -- or might be on Russian sovereign territory which the Russians might try to say that might be the survival of the state, or well into Russian territory. The problem here is not simply just in a vacuum, but also that there would be a contest between the two sides as to who seemed more legitimate. Who seemed to be fighting the war in a way that was kind of managing escalation?

There would obviously be intense pressure to say, my God the American and the Russians are actually fighting. So who is being the responsible party? And the Russians, I think, would be working hard to try to say, it's the Americans who are escalating, basically trying to put the onus of escalation and irresponsibility on us.

So fundamentally, I think this would actually pose a really, really difficult problem just from a military perspective and a defense perspective, looking at NATO's will and capabilities, as General Chambers has illustrated. There's not a lot of capability in Europe, particularly for quick response. So I think the kind of take-away here -- mine are not really any different from General Chambers in the specifics.

I think the point is to be able to have a posture of the alliance and for the United States that shows Russia that it can't escalate its way to a point where we don't have a reasonable or realistic response that seems like it would be something that we would actually implement in the event that we were challenged. The way I like to think about it is, we would be better at fighting, or as adequate at fighting, a limited war as Russia would be. It's something I'm thinking about a lot and working on an article on this.

I mean, in terms of some of the concrete things, and General Chambers mentioned a number of them: prepositioning, heavy equipment in particular, defensive equipment in the Baltics would help a lot because a part of this is preventing the Russians from being able to create a fait accompli in the vulnerable areas, as mentioned by General Chambers. The Baltics are the one area in the world where the United States has local conventional inferiority to a nuclear-armed adversary over the territory of an ally. That just seems like it's not a situation we want to be voluntarily putting ourselves in.

We want to make it as difficult as possible for the Russians to create a situation in which they can seem to use their nuclear forces, which in some ways are our equal and in some respect our superior, in a way that seems more defensive or reasonable. We also want the kind of counter A2AD capabilities that we can use in a way that's not excessively escalatory, that doesn't involve fighting every war the way that we fought the wars with Iraq. I mean, we're not going to go to downtown Moscow and take out the Kremlin, right?

So we need to be able to have the kinds of capabilities to fight a war that's perceptibly limited but that's also enough to really take down an adversary A2AD network, the IADS, the anti-ship, anti-land and anti-air capabilities. And I commend to

you -- I think CSBA is releasing a new report on this today or yesterday. They're always good, but I think they're going to be thinking practically about this.

And for the nuclear level, we want options -- and this is kind of usual for those of you who know me, this is my usual thing -- we want flexible, discriminate and plausibly controllable options. That's what the Russians are going to have. That's the kind of nuclear use that they're going to either employ or threaten to employ. And if our only option is to go to this massive kind of apocalyptic level, then it's not going to be credible and it's certainly not going to be reasonable. And this becomes increasingly important as the B-2 has increasing challenges in light of Russian air defense capabilities.

The concrete capabilities and the military capabilities are crucial. But a big part of this is the doctrine and the strategy and getting people to actually think about this and think about this as a plausible scenario and how we might grapple with the Russians up the escalatory ladder. I was talking to a reporter yesterday about some of the NATO strategy stuff. We're not talking about re-creating, as General Chamber said, the Cold War posture. But we've got to get people's brains thinking about these kinds of scenarios as plausible, and dealing with them and thinking about the kind of deliberate planning and the adaptive planning as well to confront them.

Look, the ultimate point of this, I think we all would agree here, is to deter war and to deter aggression and coercion, by showing Russia that it can't put us in an impossible position where we have no real good, credible, but also sensible response. I think the basic logic here, and I think General Chambers agrees, is that peace and stability in Europe are most likely to come about from a position of strength, a defensive one, but nonetheless a position of strength that shows Russia that it can't get away with putting us into a situation where it can shift the onus of escalation onto us in a way that we don't have a good response. And if that's not the point of the North Atlantic alliance, I don't know what is.

Thank you.

(Applause).

MS. MICHAELA DODGE: Michaela Dodge with Heritage. There is an emerging narrative that whatever the United States might do in response to Russian actions, be it INF, be it modernization, is going to start this vicious cycle of action-reaction dynamic. And so the implication is, we should not do some of the things that you're suggesting because it's going to feed into the action-reaction dynamics, even though the Russians seem to be doing whatever they want anyway, regardless of whether we do A, B or C. How would you -- is there a trick to it? How would you go about understanding the mechanics of action-reaction? How do you go about trying to strengthen deterrence without -- you know?

MR. CHAMBERS: Just to start off, I would say 25 years of context is important. We have restrained ourselves in the interest of not provoking Russia. That, apparently,

has not worked. So we need to move away from that and prepare ourselves to be able to respond, as Bridge described. Now, there are a whole bevy of political and arms control levers that are also part of the solution.

MR. COLBY: I mean, absolutely, we haven't been doing much -- I mean, we've been going in the opposite direction. You see this in the China context, it's action-reaction. Well the Chinese have had 10 percent a year increases in their defense budget for the last twenty years. And the Russians have been ballooning their defense budget, too. So that's, I think, important to mention, the political context.

Politically there's a fundamental problem. But I think there is actually a genuine issue at root here, which is that we don't want our military deployments and the strengthening of our deterrent to worsen the problem. So one of the things I'm thinking about -- well, a friend of mine who you probably all know and I are working on an op-ed together basically saying that we should strengthen our deterrent in Eastern Europe, but at the same time couple that with a concurrent proposal for an arms control regime, a conventional arms control regime, that's basically modeled on the INF dual-track approach which basically says we are in a position in the Baltics where we have local conventional inferiority that is not acceptable and we're going to try to rectify this.

Russia, if you're actually interested in a verifiable, meaningful arms control agreement to basically make the problem go away, we're ready to talk. But if not, then we're going to continue to do it and then it looks like you're the politically irresponsible one. Three things happen, either the Russians accept it, not particularly likely, in which case the problem in effect goes away. Or, the Russians reject it, in which case we can say we tried and then we can go forward. Or, there's some engagement and back and forth, and in that case you need to keep pushing the deployment forward so the Russians can't stall you.

The other thing we can do is to say our deployments in the Baltics will be defensive in nature. As General Chambers knows better than I, the line between offense and defense in modern warfare is not clear. It has never been clear.

But, look, things like anti-armor, anti-infantry, anti-air, these kinds of things, those are the kinds of capabilities we should be putting in the Baltics. We're not putting in maneuver forces, mobile forces, forces designed to attack St. Petersburg. And if we make reasonable efforts to do that, and then energetically advertise that fact, that should also take some of the edge off of the deployment and make it clear we're just defending our territory. This is alliance territory so we're going to defend it.

MR. ROBERT GARD: Rob Gard, retired military. Thank you for a very candid description of the problem. I was disturbed recently to read that the majority of our NATO allies, as far as the public is concerned, and we pride ourselves on the fact that NATO is an alliance of democracies, would oppose sending their military forces in the event of Russian aggression in the Baltics or in other places. What are the implications of that for doing something sensible with NATO?

MR. CHAMBERS: Thanks for the question. You're referring to a recent Pew poll, I believe, that polled the populations of our allies in Europe. It's not an unusual or unexpected problem. We have the problem in our own country.

It is important to remember that the treaty that binds the alliance is clear. Each member of the alliance has their own domestic challenge to marshal their domestic narrative to help and support their contributions to the alliance. I think if you took a poll of any alliance at any point in history there would be a wide variety of levels of domestic support. As a military guy who is used to giving military advice to policymaking, I'd say that's an important factor to keep in mind.

But at the end of the day, it is what the alliance binds together, which is the security capability of 28 members together, to be able to react to an Article V violation. The reason I quoted the president's speech in Tallinn is you could not have a more clear statement of commitment by one ally, that's us. That has to be backed up. And backing it up includes domestic support and that's each individual member's responsibility.

MR. COLBY: Yeah, I think that's an excellent point. That poll was disturbing on a number of levels. One of the others was that I think there were more people in favor of bringing the Ukraine into NATO than of sending arms to the Ukrainians, which is sort of like -- one of these you end up going to war for them and the other one you (supply ?) them, which didn't make much sense.

I think this has always been a problem for NATO, obviously, INF deployments and these kinds of things. Under the alliance arrangement each state has to use its constitutional and internal deliberations to make its own decision. Without sounding manipulative, I think each government will make its own decision. Each government has to decide how it brings its population along. But I think there's going to be -- fundamentally this gets to the political leadership in these countries do need to explain more clearly than they have in the last quarter century what the nature of the challenge is and what the need for military spending is. And unfortunately, that doesn't really seem to be going in the right direction.

The other thing is -- and I think this is something the Russians should and I'm sure do understand -- we are not going to be hamstrung by alliance inaction. If the alliance is not able to come to agreements sufficiently expeditiously, the United States and others might take action on our own, and should, so that it doesn't create windows of vulnerability and failures of deterrence.

MR. GARD: I note that the NATO rapid reaction force is going to be all of 5,000 people, a brigade, sometime maybe by the end of the year. That does not look very encouraging.

MR. COLBY: No, it's not. And that's why I mentioned the numbers and the exercises. I was over at a NATO conference a few months ago and a senior NATO

official was kind of showing this, the view from Moscow, AWACS and the Baltic air police. And I thought, that's two planes, one plane, maybe. I mean not to make light of these, they're real capabilities, but numbers matter. I don't need to tell you guys, especially in conventional warfare, numbers and distance and speed matter.

And so that's why -- I think there's been a lot of hitting the side of the piano that's on resolve: the Tallinn speech, Carter's there talking about these various exercises. But a little more on the capability side would be -- I mean, Putin and the Russian leadership, these are guys, they did the science of military, whatever the Russian-Soviets used to do. They crunch the numbers.

Resolve is obviously a big issue. It's a particularly big issue these days for us. But capability matters and we don't want to put ourselves in a position where we're relying too much on resolve such that we put ourselves in a position where if our backs are against the wall we only have bad options. That's a less effective deterrent and if it actually gets called, we don't want a war with the Russians to be any worse than it's already going to be.

MR. JOSEPH WOLFSHEIMER: Joseph Wolfsheimer for Engility, where we help NATO largely with their nuclear posture. You mentioned, sir, that President Obama called Article V crystal clear. Earlier this week Secretary of Defense Carter called it iron clad.

But when you read through it -- and they both quoted it as being an attack on one is an attack on all -- which is actually the Three Musketeers (motto ?). It's not at all what Article V says. It doesn't even say an attack on, it says an attack against. It's a long sentence and if you parse it out, it does not have what the folk understanding is of Article V, that NATO members would come in a military fashion to the assistance of the nation that had been attacked. Given a proper reading of Article V, how would you see the decision playing out if a NATO member nation invoked Article V, or the same nation in the buildup invoked Article IV and/or regional neighbors invoked Article IV based on the attack that had already caused the Article V invocation?

MR. CHAMBERS: Well, there's two parts to that answer, briefly. Anybody who has been part of NATO or been in Brussels or been in the big room where there are 28 seats, knows that an alleged Article IV or Article V violation simply begins the discussion. The discussion will require -- in the scenario that Bridge lays out -- requires leadership. It's frustrating that that discussion goes on, but it is the strength of the alliance, at the end of the day.

I am heartened somewhat by watching the reaction of the 28 of the alliance in this past year. And many people have now documented, NATO has been more active in the last 15 months than they've been in 25 years. So that's a good sign, but that's not Article V. And so, it is a heavy, onerous infrastructure in Brussels, but with the right preparation and the right leadership and the right narrative about the real threat, I think that the alliance has the capability of reacting pretty quickly.

The last point I'll make is, it does require U.S. leadership, and that's U.S. leadership from here and from our senior reps in Brussels. I have been part of those discussions. You cannot let the discussion waver or get distracted. You've got to bring that 28 member body back to the core issue.

That's why resolve is important, but the narrative is important and the thinking ahead of time is really important. Things that galvanize that discussion ahead of time are things like war games. Play it out. See what happens. Bring that to the big room in Brussels and say look, here's the evidence.

MR. COLBY: That's a great question, Joe. I think the narrative is key here, and it's key not just in the advance but in actually how a conflict will play out. I think it gets back to your question, sir [referring to Mr. Gard]. Most people think the Russians are unlikely to just roll across the border with heavy tanks. I mean, it's possible and you want to protect against it, but it's neither likely nor would it be particularly attractive.

What is more dangerous is that they would seek to create situations under the Article V in particular level, and then try to exploit it in a way that splits NATO and makes a really effective response either impossible or extremely divisive within the alliance. And part of the appeal and part of the importance of forward deployment -- I'm actually not a sort of apostle of forward presence usually. I tend to be a little more skeptical. But one of the real values of forward presence here is you just make it a lot more difficult for the Russians to create and manipulate a situation that then later makes them look like the quasi-aggrieved party. We have to make it as hard for them as possible to create an ambiguous situation that they can exploit.

So having things like heavier defensive forces, working on Baltic civil security and internal security, these are important. Now if the Russians go and kidnap an Estonian intelligence officer, that's bad but that's manageable. They've already done that. But if the Russians can create a situation like in the Eastern Ukraine where it's sort of unclear and where it may appear to a couple of Italian guys, for instance -- you know, it's hard to say, there's two sides to the story. We want it to be as much one side of the story as possible. And that's why having that firmer deterrent presence there is, I think, so crucial.

MR. STEVE ZAVADIL: Steve Zavadil from Systems Planning and Analysis. On a relative basis, taking the sorts of actions that you've talked about from a conventional perspective is easy because there's no national policy against it. But getting to the flexible discriminate plausibly controllable nuclear options you talk about is much harder because there is a national policy against it. So the interesting question that has been stewing through my brain is since now there is some level of civilian leadership that's advocating ideas like that, who and what is the proper uniformed person to start talking about this?

MR. CHAMBERS: I can't tell you the number of similar questions that I've

asked in forums like this looking for that person. Anybody who has been to any level of professional military education knows how the system is supposed to work. We start with a statement of national objectives and national strategy, national military strategy, and it's supposed to all filter down to a budget. That whole system has not been in play for many years, however.

This should not be a budget driven exercise. This should be a thinking driven exercise. My view is it has to be here in this town and people like the Joint Staff have to be providing the military advice. And people like OSD policy have to be leading the charge with the thinking that lays out the broad parameters of responsive, flexible and plausible options below the massive apocalyptic exchange, and that hasn't happened yet. We're still waiting for that.

MR. HUESSY: Thank you, Elbridge. Thank you, General.

MR. COLBY: Thanks, Peter.

MR. CHAMBERS: Thanks very much.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: We will see you July 1st with Rebecca Heinrichs and Steve Pifer. Have a nice weekend.