

050218 Air Force Association, National Defense Industrial Association and Reserve Officers Association Capitol Hill Seminar with Dave Trachtenberg, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, on “The Nuclear Policy Review Challenges” (For additional information on AFA/NDIA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at phuessy@afa.org).

MR. PETER HUESSY: Good morning, everybody. I want to thank you for being here for this next in our series of seminars on missile defense and nuclear deterrence issues. Tomorrow we have Bill Schneider. As you know, he’s on the Defense Science Board and a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a former official in three administrations, and I think one of the finest strategic thinkers we have in the country. He will be talking about where we are in terms of our relations with the world in terms of strategic thinking.

On Friday we have Steve Kitay, who will be the speaker for our Space Power to the Warfighter series. That will be on Friday. The June space event is not June 1st, it’s going to be June 8th with General Thompson.

The Strategic Deterrent Coalition is having its next conference in Barksdale on May 7th and 8th. One of the key themes of that event is going to be bringing along the next generation of nuclear people a very, very important issue. Then in Kings Bay, Georgia we will be having our Triad event on July 11 and 12. We will be having a submarine tour as well on an Ohio-class boat. If you’re interested in sponsoring it or attending, let me know. Sheila McNeil, the head of the Camden Partnership and former head of the Navy League, is my partner in this, along with the Mitchell Institute.

October 9th is when we’re going to do our annual Minot Task Force 21 conference here in Washington. On May 22nd my Reagan Legacy Project at the Heritage Foundation will have its second event from 10 to 12 in the morning. We’ll have a luncheon. We’re going to hear from one of our colleagues who is here, Susan Koch.

We’re also going to hear from Ty McCoy who spent eight years in the Air Force. Keith Payne will be one of our speakers, along with Frank Miller. And then Sven Kraemer, who worked for seven American presidents at the National Security Council, and I will be the moderator of that event. We’ll have a lunch with both our speakers and some of our guests afterwards at the Heritage Foundation.

I also want to thank our friends from Germany, Japan, Denmark and Belgium that are here today. I want to thank them for attending, and also our sponsors. Dave Trachtenberg has been a dear friend of mine for over three decades. He has spoken at this series both as a government official as well as a private individual. He’s here to talk to us about kind of an update on where we are in the Nuclear Posture Review.

With that, would you please give a very warm welcome to our friend and

colleague, Dave Trachtenberg?

(Applause).

SEC. DAVID TRACHTENBERG: Good morning, everyone. Thanks, Peter, I appreciate that introduction, and very much appreciate the very gracious invitation to come speak to you again today. I see some old friends in the room, and some new friends as well. It's always a pleasure and a privilege to have the opportunity to come to these breakfast seminars, Peter. I think you've been doing this for like 35 years or so, and it has been a tremendous, tremendous success.

Of course there's no better topic to talk about over breakfast than the nuclear posture and policy, right? It just sort of rolls right off the tongue. But it is always challenging to talk before a group that knows more about the subject than you do. And of course those of you who are regular attendees at this seminar certainly fall into that category.

Nevertheless I appreciate the opportunity to spend a little time explaining what we did in the Nuclear Posture Review and why, a little bit of the background. Of course president Trump's first national security presidential memorandum, which was issued only one week into the new administration, directed the Department of Defense to undertake a review of U.S. nuclear policy, posture and programs. It was the fourth such review since the end of the Cold War. Prior reviews were done during the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations.

Our review was conducted along with the Departments of State and Energy, and in consultation with allies and experts from both inside and outside the government. So it was a rather broad-based review. The resulting 2018 Nuclear Posture Review is consistent with and serves to advance the objectives set forth in the 2017 National Security Strategy and the 2018 National Defense Strategy. The NPR is the third in a series of four strategy documents with the Missile Defense Review being the last, which we expect will be released very shortly.

The National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy, make it clear that to advance U.S. security we have to strengthen existing alliances. Central to that effort is assuring allies by maintaining stable extended deterrence and assisting in the defense of allies and partners from aggression and coercion. So the 2018 NPR lays out the path to ensure that the United States' nuclear deterrent is modern, robust, flexible, resilient, ready and appropriately tailored to deter 21st century threats and reassure allies. The tailored aspect is key here.

In many respects, I will say that the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review reaffirms long-standing principles of U.S. nuclear policy. If you're familiar with some of the previous NPRs that have been done and if you've studied the history and the evolution of U.S. nuclear posture and policy, you can see quite a number of continuities between U.S. traditional nuclear policy and what is included in the 2018 NPR.

Unfortunately, you might not know that or realize that if you paid attention to some of the initial commentary on the NPR that came out shortly before and after its release. In some cases I would argue some of the commentary has not only been misleading, it has been almost hyperbolic, at least in terms of some of the headlines that you've seen.

I would argue that in each of these commentaries, there's a significant mischaracterization of the NPR and its recommendation on U.S. nuclear posture. The 2018 NPR's analysis and recommendations are grounded in a realistic assessment of today's strategic environment, and that is one that recognizes that a much more challenging nuclear threat environment has emerged since the last Nuclear Posture Review was conducted in 2010. Eight years ago the 2010 NPR made several assumptions about the nature of the strategic environment. Those assumptions served as the foundation for its conclusions and the vision of achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

Most if not all of those assumptions that formed the basis of the 2010 NPR have unfortunately failed to pan out. For example, the 2010 NPR argued that U.S. relations with Russia and China had, quote, "changed fundamentally since the days of the Cold War," end-quote, and it assumed that the prospects for military confrontation had declined dramatically. Looking back at that in today's environment, one might be excused for questioning the validity of that particular assumption today. In addition, the 2010 NPR asserted that engagement could result in greater Russian and Chinese restraint in their nuclear postures and programs, which would reassure and stabilize their regions. It stated that if the United States reduced the role and numbers of U.S. nuclear weapons, that the rest of the world would move in the same direction, quote, "reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in international affairs."

We all hoped that in fact the world would become a more benign place and would move in that direction. Unfortunately, I would argue, that those particular assumptions have not been borne out by developments since 2010. In fact, the threat environment has moved in a contrary, and I would argue, more challenging directions. It is these new threat realities that drove the need to adjust U.S. nuclear posture, even while remaining consistent with many of the long-standing principles of U.S. nuclear policy as they have evolved over the decades.

The National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy both characterize the strategic environment as being defined by the re-emergence of great power competition, revisionist behavior from China and Russia, and provocations from rogue states like North Korea and Iran. This environment is not a return to the bipolar Cold War world, but reflects the emergence of unprecedented new great power and rogue threats, including nuclear ones. I don't need to tell this group or walk through the litany of strategic modernization programs that other countries have, but I will say clearly when we look at Russia today, what do we see?

Russia is modernizing and expanding its nuclear weapons stockpiles and capabilities. Russian officials, including President Putin, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerimasov (ph), have declared that nearly 80 percent of Russia's strategic nuclear forces have now been modernized, the goal being 100 percent in the near term. But it is not just the fact of Russia's advanced nuclear modernization program that is of concern.

Equally concerning, and dangerous, are destabilizing Russian views on the role of nuclear weapons. General Philip Breedlove, the former commander of Supreme Allied Powers in Europe, noted not long ago, and I'll quote, "NATO policymakers and planners must recognize that their Russian counterparts view nuclear weapons as practical tools for gaining tactical advantage on the battlefield, escalation control, and for intimidation during conflict termination." This is where you see concepts like what has been referred to as "escalate to de-escalate" and things like that emerging.

While Russia has declared that it has met the New START limitations on strategic forces that took effect in February, it is widening the sizable gap between its deployed non-strategic nuclear arsenal and our own. In doing so, Russia developed, tested and fielded what is called the SS-C8 ground launched cruise missile system in violation of the Intermediate- range Nuclear Forces, INF, Treaty, and continues to violate the Open Skies and Conventional Forces in Europe treaties. So rather than reducing the salience of nuclear weapons, the Russian leadership has made explicit nuclear threats brandishing their nuclear weapons in a way we arguably have not seen in a generation, including against some of our NATO allies and even some of our non-NATO strategic partners.

China also continues to expand its nuclear capabilities in both quantity and quality. Since 2010 China has announced the development of, or fielded, new road-mobile and MIRV-capable ICBMs, intercontinental ballistic missiles, theater range ballistic missiles, a new SLBM, a new ballistic missile submarine, and the H-6K (ph) strategic bomber. China's lack of transparency regarding the scope and scale of its nuclear modernization leaves the international community with understandable concerns about its future intent.

Then, of course, at the same time rogue states have repeatedly made explicit nuclear threats to the United States and our allies in the region. I remember when Kim Jong-un assumed power in North Korea in 2011. He rapidly increased the pace of North Korea's development and testing of nuclear devices and of theater, intercontinental and submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

That said, we are all aiming for successful denuclearization of North Korea during what may be an historic window of opportunity. But we must, nevertheless, proceed soberly given North Korea's history of non-compliance with negotiated agreements. We are certainly approaching our discussions with North Korea with eyes wide open. There is a history here.

Of course while Iran's nuclear future remains uncertain, its ballistic missile tests

in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, its malign activities throughout the region, and its hegemonic aspirations in the Middle East, are not uncertain. In short, since the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Russia, China and North Korea have increased the numbers, capabilities and salience of their nuclear weapons. The prior administration's attempt to lead by example in reducing the numbers and salience of nuclear weapons in the world was, unfortunately, not reciprocated. That is the reality that the Trump administration brought to the forefront in looking at the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review.

I would tell you, it's not a unique conclusion of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. It's not a unique conclusion of this administration. That conclusion is shared by allies with whom we consulted extensively during the course of the NPR, as well as by some senior figures in the previous administration.

In contrast to the actions of potential adversaries or opponents, the United States has not built any new nuclear weapons or delivery systems, other than the F-35, for the past two decades. In fact, the United States has reduced its nuclear arsenal by more than 85 percent since its Cold War peak. In fact, I think it was the Department of Energy or Department of State just recently put out some unclassified figures and graphs showing the decline in the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile since the Cold War. It has been quite substantial.

Instead, we have sustained our nuclear deterrent with life extension programs, keeping systems and platforms literally decades beyond their originally designed service life. Former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter rightly observed that if there is an arms race underway, the United States is clearly not a participant.

So I would say the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review is actually a realistic and a measured response to the deterioration in the threat environment that we face today. The 2018 NPR does not change long-standing tenets of U.S. nuclear policy that have bipartisan support, and have enjoyed bipartisan support for many decades, such as support for maintenance of the nuclear triad, the modernization and recapitalization, the program of record, commitment to our arms control treaty obligations, and an openness to further arms control reductions with partners that would act in good faith. It takes two to tango and it takes two good faith partners willing to commit and to actually abide by agreements that are made, to be successful in that endeavor.

Instead, the policy and posture recommendations in the NPR contribute to the effective deterrence of potential adversaries and the assurance of allies, which is key, in the more challenging threat environment that we currently face today. So given what I think is some rather extensive continuity with mainstream U.S. nuclear policy, how does the 2018 NPR address the new strategic environment and the increase in nuclear threats that we face today?

First, it reprioritizes and clarifies our nuclear policy. Second, it also recommends some supplemental capabilities, nuclear capabilities, which we believe are needed to

correct adversary miscalculations and thereby effectively bolster the efficacy of our overall nuclear deterrent. The NPR re-establishes deterrence of nuclear attack against us, our allies, and partners, as the top priority of U.S. nuclear policy. There is nothing more important than re-establishing deterrence and preventing nuclear attack on us or our allies and partners.

Given this dynamically changing security environment, re-emphasizing deterrence as the top objective of our policy, is a prudent, realistic and necessary action. The NPR also emphasizes that U.S. nuclear policy will contribute to our nonproliferation goals by maintaining support for the nuclear NonProliferation Treaty, and by sustaining the extended deterrent for allies, which actually promotes nonproliferation by reducing the need or incentive for allies to seek to obtain their own nuclear arsenals.

Second, the 2018 NPR clarifies U.S. declaratory policy. The declaratory policy makes clear that the United States would consider the use of nuclear weapons only in response to extreme circumstances that threaten our vital interests. Extreme circumstances is not a new term. It's the same term that was used in the 2010 NPR. So in that respect, there is consistency in our declaratory policy as well.

What the 2018 NPR does is it clarifies that a significant strategic attack could be nuclear or non-nuclear, but there is nothing automatic about a prospective U.S. nuclear response. There is nothing that says, if we or our allies are attacked a certain way, the United States will automatically respond with a nuclear retaliatory strike. Obviously, in all cases, that is a decision to be made by the president and after weighing all of the circumstances. We always maintain the option of responding to any aggression at a time and place and with the means of our choosing.

So, any response will be shaped by the context. The extreme circumstances and strategic effect of an adversary attack will govern, and help shape, our choice of responses. As adversary non-nuclear capabilities continue to advance, U.S. policy must make it clear that non-nuclear strategic attacks that would have catastrophic effects on the American people and our allies, will also be deterred. That's the point of our declaratory policy.

This clarification does not expand the circumstances for nuclear use, as some have argued. Nor does it lower the nuclear threshold, as some commentators have suggested. Rather, it is intended to enhance deterrence and raise the nuclear threshold by reducing the potential for adversary miscalculation. So here we're not talking about lowering our threshold for nuclear use, what we are talking about is raising the threshold for others to contemplate nuclear use. This policy, again, is consistent with the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, which acknowledged a role for nuclear weapons in deterring select non-nuclear attacks, and I would argue, is broadly consistent with the policy of every U.S. administration from President Truman forward.

The third point I would note is that the 2018 NPR recommends two supplemental nuclear programs to strengthen U.S. capabilities to deter attack and assure allies. Neither

of these capabilities is new, and neither requires nuclear testing. The first is altering a small number of submarine-launched ballistic missiles to include a low yield option. This can be achieved in the relative near term with a low cost modification to an existing warhead. So again, what we're talking about here is not developing or building a new nuclear weapon, but modifying an existing one.

The second supplemental capability called for in the NPR is the pursuit of a nuclear sea-launched cruise missile. That is, as I'm sure many of you recall, a capability that the United States possessed for decades until it was recently retired. Both of these additional capabilities are fully consistent with our treaty obligations. The goal of the 2018 NPR's capability recommendations is to tailor U.S. deterrence strategy to shape potential adversaries calculations, ensuring that they do not see the employment of nuclear weapons as a useful option under any circumstances.

If an adversary believes it can achieve its objectives through the limited use of nuclear weapons, then we risk a failure of deterrence. It is preventing the failure of deterrence that is the ultimate goal behind the recommendations in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review. Given what we've observed in the doctrine, in the exercises, in the statements and the threats of other nuclear states since 2010, the challenge for our 2018 NPR was to determine how best to convince potential adversaries that the United States and its allies will not be coerced or paralyzed by their nuclear first use threats, or actual use of nuclear weapons.

So if you'll permit me, let me just spend a few minutes discussing how these two recommended capabilities will enhance our ability to flexibly tailor the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Russia's doctrine and military exercises include the use of limited nuclear strikes to quickly end the conflict on terms favorable to them. Moscow may mistakenly believe that we lack a credible deterrent to a limited low yield threat.

So the NPR recommends a low yield ballistic missile because we think it will help preclude any potential adversary from believing that its use of low yield nuclear weapons would enable it to essentially escalate its way out of a failed conventional conflict. Critics argue that we already have low yield nuclear weapons in our arsenal today, and we do have low yield nuclear weapons in our arsenal today. But they are exclusively air delivered, and a low yield sea-launched ballistic missile is survivable, prompt, and enhances deterrence by holding at risk targets that may in the future be beyond reach with our current air-delivered low yield options. So it presents us with an additional option that an adversary needs to take into account before contemplating any aggression. This measured modification to our deterrent will help dispel any adversary expectation of advantage by a nuclear first use, based on a mistaken belief that the only U.S. response options are not credible. That is the challenge we face.

Importantly, these low yield warheads -- because they would be modifications to existing weapons -- would not add to our overall number of strategic ballistic missiles or nuclear arsenal, which will stay within the New START limits. Whereas the low yield ballistic missile is a relatively near-term economical enhancement of our deterrent, the

sea-launched cruise missile will allow us broader flexibility over the longer term to tailor our deterrent to the threat context. So the 2018 NPR recommends the pursuit of a nuclear-armed SLCM, sea-launched cruise missile, because its characteristics will help us to meet emerging deterrence requirements without having to match Russian non-strategic nuclear capabilities weapon for weapon. Again, we have no intention of matching Russian nuclear capabilities weapon for weapon. So the notion that we are sparking an arms race is really incongruent with what we are proposing in the NPR.

Russia maintains an arsenal of non-strategic weapons that by some unclassified estimates is as much as 10 times the size of our own. And although NATO's 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review reiterated our willingness to pursue reciprocal non-strategic nuclear weapons reductions, Russia has been unwilling to do so. Instead of engaging in arms control in this area of asymmetry, Russia is increasing the total numbers of such weapons and has continued to advance its capabilities.

The SLCM is a treaty compliant assured response capability that can enhance our assurance of European allies in the face of the ground-launched cruise missile that Russia has recently deployed in violation of the INF Treaty. Japan and South Korea, who have reacted strongly to North Korea's nuclear tests and missile launches, would likewise value a more tangible U.S. nuclear presence in the region, when needed, as a signal of U.S. resolve. So bringing back a modern sea-launched cruise missile will allow the United States to provide a treaty compliant regional deterrent presence without requiring allies to field U.S. nuclear weapons on their territory. Some of us are old enough to remember the debate in the 1980s over the fielding of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe in order to counter the Soviet SS-20 deployments. The sea-launched cruise missile avoids the need for that kind of a debate.

So in sum, these two capabilities, the low yield ballistic missile and the sea-launched cruise missile, that are recommended by the 2018 NPR, we recommend as ways of helping strengthen the deterrence of war and the assurance of allies, thereby helping to ensure that nuclear weapons are not employed or proliferated. These capabilities are tailored to the strategic environment that we now face in order to raise the threshold for nuclear use, but to do so with minimal changes to the overall U.S. nuclear posture.

Let me be clear here, the goal of our recommendations in the NPR is to deter war, not to fight one. That is the objective. If nuclear weapons are employed in conflict it's because deterrence failed. The goal of the 2018 NPR, and the conclusions and the recommendations it makes, is to make sure -- doing the best job we can to make sure -- that deterrence simply will not fail.

Strengthening deterrence is not simply a matter of nuclear capabilities. Just as we did throughout the review process we will continue to work closely with allies and partners, and this cooperation will help ensure that potential adversaries have no doubt about the cohesion, determination and alliance capabilities we possess to deter and maintain our common security.

Importantly, the 2018 NPR helps ensure, as Secretary Mattis has said, that our diplomats speak from a position of strength. After years of increasing tensions and provocations, North Korea now wants to come to the negotiating table. While it is too early to know if current developments will lead to the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization goal that we seek, it seems reasonably clear that the maximum pressure campaign, backed by military options and an ironclad commitment to our allies' security, has changed North Korea's calculus.

Conversely, countries like Russia have little incentive to negotiate seriously about nuclear reductions without a robust and ongoing U.S. modernization program. Again, as Secretary Mattis testified, Russia is unlikely to give up something for nothing. Critics who favor eliminating U.S. nuclear systems in the face of what is clearly an expansive Russian nuclear modernization effort, I think run the risk of undermining America's greatest bargaining leverage for future arms agreements.

After the slaughter of two world wars, an effective and tailored U.S. deterrent has prevented large-scale great power conflict for more than seven decades. This is not a trivial outcome. And in an era of renewed great power competition, adversaries, allies and the American people should know that the United States has the will and the flexible, resilient nuclear forces needed to protect the peace. The NPR's changes to U.S. nuclear policy, posture and capabilities will ensure that peace through strength.

Let me stop here. I'd like once again to thank all of you here today for the opportunity to talk about these issues. I hope I haven't ruined your breakfast by discussing such serious issues, but they are serious issues vital to our nation's security.

I appreciate your kind attention. I'm happy to take questions. Thank you all.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: David, let me ask you a question about the nuclear cruise missile. What are the arguments you're hearing against doing it that you think are most probabilistic?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: The arguments against the nuclear sea-launched cruise missile that I think are most prevalent? One is the argument that it's a new capability that is unnecessary. It's not really a new capability. We've done this before.

As far as its necessity, I think again I would put the argument it's not necessary because we have so many nuclear weapons today in the context of what I outlined in terms of the dynamic security environment and the changes in that security environment, what others are doing, what other actors are doing, as well as not just from a deterrence standpoint, but from an assurance standpoint as well. I think there is value and I think allies see value in having that additional option there. Remember, what we're trying to do is we are trying to convince adversaries and opponents. We are trying to influence their decision calculus.

This has nothing to do with our desire or willingness to use these capabilities. It has everything to do with how we can influence the decision-making calculus of a potential adversary in a way that reduces their desire or willingness to use these capabilities. So having a flexible set of options, to include a sea-launched cruise missile, provides some additional flexibility, and hopefully additional impetus towards making sure that opponents don't misperceive our overall resolve in trying to prevent aggression.

There are all kinds of other arguments. There are cost arguments. There are arguments, as I mentioned, about the fact that we have other types of capabilities to use. But again, I would look at these specific capabilities, including the sea-launched cruise missile, in the context of the broader changes in the strategic threat that we face.

MR. : You started out speaking about the threat environment we face globally. I want to sort of bring your mind to the fiscal environment we now face here in Washington that the folks across the street will wrestle with. The total price tag of modernizing the nuclear arsenal has been tagged at around \$1.2 trillion. Is there anything in your mind that will actually deliver that entire sum over the period of time the Defense Department needs it. Or, will actual cuts have to be made at some point, the actual tough choices people keep talking about but nobody ever seems ready to execute?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: Certainly far be it for me to speak for Congress in terms of what Congress may do. In a former life I used to be an authorization staffer on the Hill. I will tell you this, we have had discussions with members of Congress, with staff. We have briefed the NPR. We've made no secret of what we're proposing and why we're proposing it and why we believe it's important to go forward with the kinds of capabilities that we're talking about, including the recapitalization of the existing nuclear triad, which as I said has enjoyed bipartisan support. In fact, the value of the triad, is one of those things that since the triad was basically created has enjoyed strong bipartisan support throughout.

Yes, of course there's a cost to the modernization program that we are talking about here. I would argue there's a greater cost of failing to prevent the kind of catastrophe that we're talking about. So I certainly think the costs are affordable. Secretary Mattis has said repeatedly when he has testified on Capitol Hill, he said of course we can afford survival. Indeed we can. So while people tend to focus on sort of the dollar figures, what we're talking about here is a relatively small percentage of overall defense spending.

So we're looking at roughly three to four percent of the overall defense budget in terms of modernizing the strategic triad and going forward with those capabilities. At its max, the estimates, to include supplemental capabilities, is probably about maybe six to seven percent of the overall defense budget, which historically is not very much. During prior periods of modernization, as a percentage of the defense budget, we have spent much more in percentage terms on nuclear systems.

So it really is a question of how one assesses affordability, and I do think the programs are affordable. What we need to do is we need to lay out the rationale behind the recommendations that we are making, and make it clear as to why we think it's important to go forward with these programs. That's the purpose of meetings like this. It's the purpose of engagements on Capitol Hill. It's the purpose of our interaction with friends and allies and strategic partners. I think there's a case to be made, and if one considers the potential impact of failing to succeed in this endeavor I think one can understand the perspective that we have as to the importance of going forward with funding the necessary capabilities we need.

MR. : Sir, thank you for doing this. I'm wondering, could you give a scenario to illustrate how you see the Russians viewing that idea of a tactical (use ?)?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: I think talking about scenarios --

MR. : It would be helpful.

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: There is ample evidence based on the statements of Russian leaders, based on what we've sort of seen in terms of how the Russians exercise and carry out their military exercises, based on how we view their military doctrine, that they do see the possibility of limited nuclear use in certain circumstances. It's interesting because some of the statements that some Russian officials have made, military and others that tend to suggest that, seem to be rather forward-leaning in ways that we would be hard pressed to imagine our leadership talking about, talking about the pre-emptive or preventive use of nuclear weapons.

I will tell you deterrence is an art, it's not a science. It's not something that we can reduce to a mathematical equation and say if we have A plus B therefore C. There are a host of threats out there, but deterrence is really in the mind of the deteree, more than the deterror.

We really need to consider what it is that an opponent believes would be sufficient to deter. We try to make the best estimates we can based on the available intelligence and information we have. When we look at Russia, for example, based on what we see them saying, based on what we see them writing, based on what we see them doing, it suggests to us a real possibility that they believe there are circumstances where the limited use of nuclear weapons would be in their favor.

That's what we are trying to wrestle with and adapt to in terms of adjusting our own posture. Really, what we think is sufficient to deter really doesn't matter if the other side that we're trying to deter doesn't believe that it's sufficient to deter them. That's really the dynamic that we're dealing with here.

MR. : Sir, you talked about the sea-launched options that will be out there, but for the time being the air-dropped low yield weapons will also have to play a role in deterrence. If you're not looking at, for example, Germany looking into replacing the

Tornado as a dual-capable aircraft, there are fourth generation options on the table. If Germany or other European nations end up with a fourth generation option for dual-capable aircraft, might that influence your view on deterrence as far as survivability and actual mission capability of those options are concerned in an A2AD environment towards Russia?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: We are very strongly focused and believe in the importance of the NATO nuclear mission and the need for interoperability with our NATO allies. So we want to make sure that the alliance is -- again, not just to quote Secretary Mattis too much, but when he talks about NATO being fit for our time, what he means is making sure that the alliance itself can adapt to the changed strategic circumstances and to be relevant. That includes the NATO nuclear mission. That includes a number of issues involving follow-on capabilities that our NATO allies are currently considering, and the like. All of that clearly is important and all of that factors into our consideration in terms of maintaining the overall deterrent capability in Europe. I hope that answers the question.

MR. : You talked about assurance of allies, and I'm wondering, without naming individual states, if you feel they share our threat perception and that the programs that we are recommending here would actually be assuring to them in the current setting?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: I do. That's a good question and I think at least in terms of our engagements with allies, both in Europe and in Asia, I will tell you that I've been very pleased with the reactions and the comments we've received in terms of allied reaction to the Nuclear Posture Review. I think there is a sort of common understanding in terms of the nature of the evolving threat picture, and a common understanding of the importance of dealing with that together as an alliance and as allies. So generally the reaction has been very positive and very supportive. I've been pleased with that.

MR. : Sir, in the NPR there's a lot of new language about NC3. Your comment on it is it getting the same priority as these other modernizations in funding, governance, etcetera?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: I will tell you NC3 is critical. I think General Weinstein was here yesterday and I think he may have talked about NC3 and the criticality of that issue. It is absolutely fundamental. NC3, I sort of consider it the glue that holds the rest of this together. Just like nuclear deterrence relies on more than the weapon, there's the weapon, there's the platform, there's the command and control, all those things are necessary. I can't stress enough the importance of making sure the NC3 system and architecture is up to the task of helping to ensure the effectiveness of the overall nuclear deterrent. It's absolutely critical.

MR. : I know there's not much you can say, but I was wondering if you could clarify the timeline on the Missile Defense Review? Are we looking at a couple of weeks or this month or next month?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: Yes.

(Laughter).

Yes we are. I think we're in the process of concluding the review. I expect it to be out very soon. I think we'll see it very soon.

From the very beginning we have set about to make sure that we get it right, rather than fast. We have taken the time to make sure that we get it right. So stay tuned, more to follow on that one, in a relatively short period of time.

MR. : On the topic of the MDR there has been some critique that the NPR and MDR were not one document, that they were split up, because there's certainly a relationship between the two. Russia might look at our missile defense capabilities as a threat and as a rationale for increasing their own stockpile. How did the administration come to the decision to look at these separately as opposed to in concert?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: I think the president from the very beginning asked us to do a Nuclear Posture Review and to look at our missile defense posture. It's not unprecedented that we considered them separately. The last administration had an NPR as well as a BMDR also. We did sort of change the terminology a little bit this time around, because we're now referring to it as a Missile Defense Review rather than a Ballistic Missile Defense Review, to reflect the fact that missile threats vary and include other types of missiles other than simply ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, hypersonic threat, what have you.

But I think what you've seen so far is that from the president's National Security Strategy document last year, to the National Defense Strategy to the Nuclear Posture Review, each one of those has sort of been nested in its predecessor. So there are pieces of the subsequent strategy reviews that feed from the prior strategy reviews. I think you'll see the same when the Missile Defense Review comes out, some of the continuities and the threads that tie it to what we said in the NPR and what we said in the National Defense Strategy as well. I don't think the fact that there are two separate documents, per se, will in any way sort of impact the continuity in thinking that you see from one to another.

MS. : I know we worked with our allies on the NPR. Did any of them stress -- (off mic).

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: I'm not going to characterize what particular allies said or didn't say about particular aspects of it. I will tell you, and let me re-emphasize here, that where we wound up -- and of course like all of these documents it's an iterative process and we work closely and collaborate closely with allies and partners as well as with the inter-agency. But where we wound up was very well received.

So I think we're in a good place. I think where we are is a realistic assessment of

where we need to be and the way we need to think of things. As I said in response to an earlier question, I think the allies are onboard and understand our thinking on this as well.

Susan.

MS. : (Off mic) -- focused on an integrated approach, the Russian security strategy in particular. Where is the United States on that approach, that integrated approach?

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: I think that's an excellent question. Where are we in terms of an integrated approach? I will tell you we think we understand where Russia and China are going in terms of their approach. But we also understand that these systems, capabilities, postures don't exist in a vacuum and that we also need to look at this sort of holistically. So we've got cyber, we've got space, we've got all those kinds of things.

I think we're very focused -- at least from a Department of Defense perspective -- we're very focused on trying to make sure that we understand better how to integrate those capabilities into our overall posture. I think we have some additional thinking to do on that, but I think we well understand the challenges of doing that and the importance of doing that. We can't afford now to just look at pieces of the overall puzzle, because technology advances, adversary capabilities advance, and we do need to look at these issues holistically. And the department is spending a lot of time trying to do just that.

MR. HUESSY: With that, Mr. Secretary, thank you so much.

(Applause).

SEC. TRACHTENBERG: Thank you.