

# 03.23.21 Nuclear Deterrence Forum Frank Miller

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## SPEAKERS

Franklin C. Miller, Peter Huessy, Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem



Peter Huessy 00:15

Welcome, everyone to our nuclear deterrence forum series and I'm Peter Huessy. I'm director of strategic deterrence studies at the Mitchell Institute of Aerospace Studies And today, we are honored and pleased to have my friend Franklin Miller, Principal of the Scowcroft group and longtime nuclear deterrence expert in this edition of the nuclear deterrence forum. Prior to his current role at the Scowcroft group, Franklin led a distinguished 30 year career 31 year career in public service, serving in the Department of Defense as Acting Assistant Secretary of international security policy. And after the Department of Defense, Franklin served in the White House as special advisor is a special assistant to George W. Bush, and Senior Director for policy in arms jolt at the National Security Council staff. Over the course of his career, he has had substantial influence on the development of US nuclear deterrence, and targeting strategies as well as start one and start to welcome Frank and thank you for taking the time to join us today. Let me preface my remarks by saying as you know, the modernization the US nuclear deterrent force has been described by the Department of Defense's the nation's number one defense priority. However, the decade long dual consensus reached in 2010, on the modernization of our nuclear forces in the New START treaty is under challenge. I'd like to invite you to provide our audience with an overview of how you think the US should approach nuclear deterrence, and modernization but particularly looking at the myriad

misconceptions that sometimes get in the way of the path forward. So, Franklin, thank you for being here today. It's over to you, sir.

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Franklin C. Miller 01:59

Peter, thank you. Thank you for having me. Thank you for continuing to host this very important series with the Mitchell Institute to make certain that this debate is aired and that people are engaged because it is absolutely vital. Before I get into my remarks, let me do a shout out to Alabama Crimson Tide. And I hope you all are watching I got my Roll Tide tie on to celebrate the team's victory. So you asked about approaching how the United States should approach nuclear modernization and I would say, let's begin at the beginning. Let's begin quite at the beginning. And the question is, is there a nuclear threat which requires being determined? And the answer is of course there is. And it's gotten worse. It's a threat that's gotten worse over the last 10 years. Over the last 10 years. Russian strategic forces have been modernized to a fantastic extent. I mean, whether you believe Putin or not, it's 85 to 90% of Russian strategic nuclear forces are new. Plus, they've got all the exotic systems, and they're proliferating their short range nuclear systems. So the threats gotten worse for our European allies, as well as for ourselves. China, strategic forces are growing. There's absolutely no transparency. The threat the United States and our allies is clear, but China's threat is growing. And then there's North Korea, which is a nuclear weapons state one of these days we're gonna stop kidding ourselves, but North Korea is a nuclear weapon state. So over the last 10 years or so the threat has gotten worse. So okay. We have established that there is a nuclear threat. Let's talk next about the state of the US deterrence, which is used to protect us against that threat. The US deterrence is an aging force. It will need to be replaced or retired, there is no middle ground, replaced or retired and the warnings are clear. You heard it from Admiral Cecil Haney commander of Strategic Command about six, seven years ago. You heard it from General John Heintzen commander of Strategic Command until about two years ago now the vice chairman, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, you hear it today, from Admiral Chas Richard, all the commanders are saying the force is getting old and cannot be sustained without modernization. You heard it from former Defense Secretary Ash Carter. So the force is aging and requires modernization to offset the threat which is growing. The first question I think is do we keep a Triad. And there's every reason to keep the Triad and there's absolutely no reason to do away with something which has worked so well, for seven decades. Actually, the only folks, Peter, who want to get rid of the Triad are those who want to get rid of the US ICBM force. What is that going to do? That's going to reduce adversaries targeting problems dramatically and in fact if you get rid of the US ICBM force even China has something of a pre-emptive first strike capability. But let's talk about the ICBM force and some of the myths and misconceptions that are out there and that we hear constantly, constantly

from the critics the first is that that the U.S. ICBM force is destabilizing well that's nonsense not all icbms are the same. The Minuteman Three force is a single warhead force. Its replacement, the GBSD, will be a single warhead system. Deterrence theory holds that single warhead ICBMs, are not attractive targets for an aggressive highly worth icbm like the russians have and like the chinese are beginning to get into our attractive targets so the us force is first and foremost stabilizing not destabilizing then then they then they say well but the icbm force is subject to an accidental launch. Well unless i've missed something in the in the 60-odd years that we've had an ICBM force it has never, I repeat, never been an accidental launch so I don't know where that where that's coming from. but I mean even if you want to concede that argument on a day to day basis us ICBMs are targeted on the open ocean so even if you concede that a never had never before occurred event occurred the system would go off into the open ocean then there's the notion that they are on a hair trigger again that's nonsensical only the president of the united states can order an icbm to be launched only the president that doesn't mean they're on a hair trigger it means that there is a whole series of decisions that have to be followed before the force can be launched. Then there's the old, "Oh you could launch them on false warning." The last time we had false warning events was in the Jimmy Carter administration we had one when there was a computer chip that failed ignore it and there was another time when a training tape was accidentally loaded into into an operational system at NORAD. That was the 1980s. We have not had a false warning event since then, so I'm not certain, I just don't understand how they can keep waving this flag around. Then there's the famous, "Well it's gonna force the president's hand, the president's gonna have to launch under attack." The president might launch under attack, and any enemy leader that's out there has to consider that possibility. But we have not been so foolish as to array our forces in such a way that the ICBMs were destroyed, we have no retaliatory capability and we have for decades designed our retaliatory plans around the worst case situation, so that even if we did lose some ICBMs we would be able to retaliate effectively. And then, then there's then there's the one that continues to be asserted and reasserted. "Well Minuteman Three could always be life extended." No it can't. No one can't look at what Admiral Richard, the current, the current commander of U.S. Strategic Command said last January, you cannot extend the Minuteman Three. So if you need to Triad, you need an ICBM force. If you need an ICBM force, you need the GBSD. It's just that simple. You also need a modern sea based force. Now I applaud the Navy and the department defense in making the Columbia SSBN program a high priority the Columbia SSBN is a must it is an absolutely necessary addition to our SSBN force because the Ohio class boats are going to have to start coming out about one a year beginning at the the perhaps the end of this decade but the Columbia is necessary but not sufficient there are three parts of the sea base determine if there's a submarine there's the vessel and there's a warhead the Trident two D five was deployed in 1988 for the first time you know that's more than 30 years ago right it has gone through one life extension program it's supposed to last until

the mid 2030s or beyond and so a second life extension program called d five life extension two is absolutely necessary to keep the missile operational and to provide a pathway into whatever the new missile is well there's the d six or i don't you're gonna call it navy's gonna call it in the in the mid 2030s and beyond that programs been slashed by that by the congress last year it's not a wise thing to do and finally There's a new warhead, the W 93. Now, this is one that's caused a great deal of controversy. First of all, we've had some people in the UK assert that it's a joint warhead program. That's absolutely totally completely false. It is not a joint warhead program, joint warhead programs are prohibited by the non proliferation treaty, we're not going there, we're not going to do that. The w 93 program would, would exist in parallel with a sovereign UK program, which would draw from some of the expertise we're going to put into the W 93. And would eventually, if both programs go forward by non nuclear parts from the Kansas City plant, just the way British warheads have in the past. And that's perfectly okay with an obliteration treaty. But the W 93 program is a program the United States of America needs for American deterrence policy. And we've been very fast and quick in discussing it. If you look at the ssbn force today, the lowdown on our tried and true missiles is 75% w 76 dash ones, which have been life extended, and 25%, w 88, which are getting sort of a mini life extension program. 15 years from now, those warheads, they're going to be fairly old. If there was a technical failure in the 76 dash one, your sea based force would be cut as a, as a deterrent you could rely on by 75%. We need to spread the risk in the 2030s and beyond. And what we need is a three warhead package we need 1/3 76s, 1/3 88s and 1/3 93s, so that we offset the possibility that perhaps there is a failure in one of those warheads, in what's called the backbone of the strategic deterrent. So that's something that we need for ourselves. And when you look at the times that the D o t complex, the nnsa complex, which is under tremendous stress, needs to develop warheads starting now is necessary. It's just necessary. Then there's the LRSO, the ALCM-B was deployed in 1980. It had a projected service life of 10 years, 10 years, right? So if there's no LRSO, the B-52s go out of the nuclear deterrent period. And then people say, Well, don't worry about it, we've got to be 21. Well, those are people who don't understand operational reality. Let's talk a little bit about operational reality here, people, you're not going to ask a bomber crew to go in and drop 16 gravity weapons in the middle of a nuclear conflict. That's not going to happen. The bomber, even a b 21 will require a standoff capability. So again, if you want to try as you need the ICBMs SLBMs. And the bomber leg to be fully modernized. And then there's the the NC three element, which is the glue that holds everything together. So again, let's go down sort of the list. Do we Is there a threat that requires in turn? Yes. Do US forces require replacement? Yes. Finally, is it affordable? Well, we've heard it, Peter, you and I have heard for years, oh, it's too expensive. It's going to cost you know, here's the 30 year lifecycle cost is if that's how we measure progress, but we don't. But despite efforts by critics to scare people with sticker shock, let's turn to the facts. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review said that the the nuclear programs would cost between six

to 7% of the defense budget. And that's the defense budget that was still under the congressional sequestration caps. The caps are gone the budgets larger so that that that six to 7% I haven't calculated is less. But what do you break down to six to 7%? Only 3% was for new replacement systems. The other 3% was for operating the current force. So now the question is, is 3% of the defense budget necessary to deter nuclear attack on the United States and our allies? And that answer is easy. It's Yes, period, full stop. So again, I think what we need to do is we need to get back to myth busting and truth telling. There is a threat. It is a growing threat. Our systems are aging and they must be replaced or retired. The triad is absolutely crucial. A modern ICBM force is essential to a modern strategic Triad. The sea based leg, the so called backbone, includes boats, missiles and warheads all of which need to be modernized. We need both penetrating and standoff capabilities for the bomber force. And so modernization is essential and affordable. So to go back to your question, how would I address this threat? And this, this this question of modernization, threat, aging US systems, capabilities of us systems, cost. And I think that's the answer. And I hope that the debate on the hill turns to these kinds of facts, as opposed to repeating the kinds of myths that the opponents continue to trot out, which sadly, have not been challenged enough, over the last couple of years. So Peter, with that, let me turn to you and your questions, and also then see what the audience would like to talk about.

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Peter Huessy 15:30

Thanks, Franklin, for that rundown. And I would like to explore some of these concepts with some additional questions. History, as you know, as demonstrated that deterrence prevented major power armed conflict, particularly in 1961 over Berlin and 1962 in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Going forward, How do you envision nuclear deterrence as a key tool in preventing future major power conflict? Especially when you're talking about near peer competitors, such as the Russia and China?

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Franklin C. Miller 16:01

Well, you know, I think what we've seen since 1945, is an aberration in history. If you go back and look at at European history, say, from 1648, I think which is when Korea was failure established the modern nation state, and you bring it up to 1945. The major powers of Europe went to war with one another, on average, you know, five to seven times a century, and I'm counting the Napoleonic Wars is one war, whereas there were actually several the Wars of the Italian independence as one, not several. So and then, after 1945, that stops what good leaders change, no political ambitions change, no. Nuclear Weapons made war between the major powers too dangerous. And, and that's why deterrence is so critical. nuclear deterrence isn't going to stop terrorists, it's not going to stop 911. It's not going to stop gray area conflicts, but it has stopped war between the

major powers. I think that's critically important. I see. The other part of nuclear deterrence that gets lost as we do these navel gazing exercises is nuclear deterrence works because we get into the heads of Hooton and Jian, ping and say, don't go there. It's too dangerous to do something like that. The difference between between Putin and previous Soviet leaders is that they experience World War Two and all the tars booton did not. And Putin is more, more inclined to be a risk taker than his old gray Soviet predecessors. And she seems to think that that he too, can take many more risks than then many of his predecessors. So we need to continue to influence the leadership in Moscow and Beijing to say, No, not today. No, a land grant is not worth potentially starting a war in which the Russian Federation is going to be destroyed. And so that's what I think nuclear deterrence is so critically important.

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Peter Huessy 18:18

You go to another question, Frank, and you spoke in your remarks, and you have often about the national consensus, we have had over a period of decades, but in particular, since 2010, with respect to new start on the one hand and modernization on the other. Where do nuclear experts agree across the board? on principles of deterrence?

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Franklin C. Miller 18:41

I don't know that they do. You know, I don't know. I think that, that were once there was consensus, there's more and more drift. And I think that that the some of the reactions that came out in the wake of last week's last Friday's announcement by the British government that it's going to increase its stockpile somewhat highlights all that. There is there is a strong, there is a strong set of supporters in Washington for nuclear arms control. But if you don't have a modernized force, you're not going to get nuclear arms control in the future. I mean, the Russian leadership, the Chinese leadership doesn't view arms control as something that's a universal good or altruism stick. We do. But they don't. And you saw what happened when the Trump administration tried to engage the Russian government in an arms control agreement that would have encompassed all their nuclear weapons just not there. Their strategic ones. I think I've turned down flat barrel because there's nothing that we were building at the time that the Russian leadership was interested in constraining. So unless we have programs that are going to, that are going to face the Russian and Chinese leadership, with things that they don't like that We're not going to have a situation where we're, they're going to be even interested in talking about real arms control with us as opposed to posture

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Peter Huessy 20:08

I've been questioned on some people say, you're going to have to do NC three, you're going to have to do warhead modernization infrastructure, and the three platforms and missiles, which comes to about eight different elements. Some will say, Oh, just put some aside and delay them for a while. And we'll get to them eventually, the stretch out the cost, what's your sense of whether that's viable or not?

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Maj Gen (Ret.) Larry Stutzriem 20:31

That's not viable. And I mean, we, the reason we're in the situation that we are in today having to do all of the platforms and the nuclear command control, is that the George W. Bush administration, which ICER didn't do the modernization, that's necessary, then, I mean, we had the Kennedy tribe would have modernized by Reagan, 20 years later, it should have been modernized by the George W. Bush administration. And it wasn't it wasn't because they didn't view booton as a threat, because China was not on the horizon as a threat. Because we got involved in in Iraq and Afghanistan, but having different things for 20 years. Now, we're in a spot where we have to modernize everything at once. And so deferral is just no longer an answer. You know, all of this talk about Minuteman three, you're gonna have to start retiring Minuteman three in another 10 years, it's just not going to happen. The second thing is, and maybe maybe your listeners can, can come up with a, an example that eludes me, I'm not aware of any program that we ever save any money on, by by by stretching it out. The only thing you get when you stretch out a program is you add costs. Okay, you just add cost. And so I just, I think, both for political reasons, for strategic reasons, and for economic reasons. That's a dead loser.

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Peter Huessy 21:48

Let me you've mentioned the British increase in their nuclear inventory. But elaborate on that, because you and I talked earlier about that reaction within Europe, as well as within the arms control community, as well as Russia and China. detail for us what the British did, and the significance of it, and how you view the reaction?

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Franklin C. Miller 22:16

Thank you. I think I think I think it's really important. And I think there are some basic truths that come out in the last week or so that that are worth pointing out. So the first thing is, is that in 2010, the British government, you know, in in the in the year of the product speech are all going to go to zero announced that it was going to cut its opera, its its nuclear stockpile down to 180 warheads By the mid 2020s. So, last Friday, the British government announced that it was abandoning that policy and it was going to build a stockpile up, I think, to 260 warheads from I mean, I think it's sort of the current stock class

in the 220s. And so instead of going down to 180, they're going to come up to, to about 260. So let me give you three, three sets of reactions come first, a substantive reaction on strategic grounds. I think it's absolutely the right decision. And I would say it's a bit overdue. 2010 was the height of the product speech, and we're going to go to zero and the world's not going to have to worry about nuclear weapons anymore. 11 years later, the world's very different. I mean, we've already talked about the Russians here. We've talked about the Chinese there. We've talked about the the North Korean threat. And indeed two interesting things in the last 48 hours. The British defense secretary on television on Sunday mentioned the increased capability of Russian ballistic missile defense. And there's an article by Mark Ryan, Tali and Marshall Billingslea. And real clear defense that talks also about the effectiveness of Russian BMD. So if you're in the British government, it's your responsibility to provide for an effective deterrent in light of all of that. So you have to react, you have to build up your your arsenal somewhat to the point that you're once again comfortable that it poses a threat even as a minimum deterrent. That's the sort of the first the strategic reaction. The second is, is you know, it's got to be the world of low comedy and rank hypocrisy. To hear the statement by the Russian ambassador to the United Kingdom, that this breaks the Brits commitment to the NPT is from the ambassador of a country that's building hundreds of nuclear weapons every year, you know, and to say that that the Brits by going from like 220 to 260 are going to break the NPT is its rank hypocrisy? Well, you know, maybe as in the old Soviet days, the MoD doesn't tell the MFA that they are building hundreds of new nuclear weapons a year but what a stupid thing to say. And I hope he gets seven. But as I've been thinking about this, I think there's a third and actually much more important point about the reactions to this. And I think the reactions highlight the stark difference between those of us who worry about deterrence. And the NPT go to zero crowd. On the other hand, if you're a practitioner, or if you're an official, his real responsibility for deterrence, you worry about what influences GE and booton. Right? That's what you're focused on getting their heads, make sure they don't do something stupid. The NPT go to zero crowd worries about what influences the NPT delegates, in part based on the mistaken notion that proliferation is sparked. by P five Arsenal's proliferation is not sparked by P five or some proliferation is sparked by regional ambitions. It's sparked by what your neighbor is doing, and not by what's happening among the P five Arsenal's and that's just, you know, that that's been lying around so long as a bad argument, it just ought to be tossed out. But I think most importantly, what all of this reveals is, I guess I would say it's a difference between those who believe that deterrence must be real incredible. And those who believe it's only existential. You know, we believe you and I and others, that g important must understand the consequences of a net worth of initiating a nuclear war. Because if that happens, God forbid, our systems will get through, right? But if you're in an existential, existential deterrence advocate, you just It doesn't matter. You've got an arsenal, it doesn't matter if those RVs get through. If the Brits have a minimum deterrent in Russian BMD tricks, a

whole bunch of them, Well, you know, they had an existential deterrent, it just didn't work, or the outcome be assumed to be obsolete. So we don't need to replace it, we've still got it right. And that's a fundamental difference. And I think more needs to be, more attention needs to be placed on it. We're not about existential deterrence. We're not about the fact that because we have old systems that are lying around Putin and Xi Jinping find that credible, we have to focus on systems that Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin find credible. And that's what the focus has to be on. And that's why we need to modernize.

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Peter Huessy 27:28

Thank you, Frank. I really appreciate that. And I want to remind our listeners that our next event on their Aerospace Nation forum, will be on March 31, will be with general Jacqueline van Overbust, who is the commander of the US Air Force Air Mobility Command. We always open up our sessions for those from the audience who would like to ask them questions. I have two Frank. One is from gentlemen, a friend of ours from the Examiner, Abraham Mashie. And he asked a question, I'll walk you through it first is that Chairman Smith of the House Armed Services Committee has said, we only need 300 or so warheads like the Chinese minimal deterrent. And specifically, he has suggested either eliminating or significantly cutting back on the ICBM leg of the triad. So two questions, would you address the 300 minimum return issue? But the other question is, wouldn't reductions in the ICBM force save us money? So there's two part question.

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Franklin C. Miller 28:31

Let's let's take them in reverse. We're getting rid of the ICBM force save us money? Of course, it would. I mean, you know, that's, that's that's a no brainer. Would it dramatically increase the risks of the safety and security of the United States and of our allies? Absolutely, it would, you know, and as I said, in my prepared remarks, getting the ICBM course, actually gives the Chinese a preemptive nuclear strike capability against the sub bases, the bomber bases in Washington and Omaha. So So, you know, that's a crazy thing to do. And all of the arguments put forward by by formerly general people about getting rid of the ICBM force, I simply wrong on the face. The other question to Mr. Smith, and I've testified in front of him, and he said things like that, previously is, is, is a difference between a Chinese minimum deterrent force and a US extended deterrent force, which has to deter Russia, China, North Korea, as well as attacks on our allies. We don't have a minimum, the minimum deterrence. We have a much broader role for our forces. And we have a role that requires them to be survivable and to be able to provide for the defense of the United States and our allies. So you can't you can't just go across from what the Chinese believe they need and what the United States has or what the AI States requires in our broader context. And if you really want proliferation, if you really want proliferation,

make the United States deterrent, a minimum deterrent force to tell the Allies they're on their own. You'll see proliferation there.

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Peter Huessy 30:14

We have another question that comes from one of our military air attaches. He says, Would you talk about the continued relevance of DCA as part of the nuclear deterrent? on the continent? Absolutely.

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Franklin C. Miller 30:28

Look, let's let's face facts, our alliance relationships took quite a battering over the last four years, you know, and President Trump's transactional relationship with the Allies undercut allied confidence in the American Security guarantee. The DCA and your provide, and a credibly important political symbol to the United States is there forward deployed in a nuclear deterrent role in a NATO mission to to deter Russian adventurism and aggression against our NATO allies, the force is being upgraded. And in this decade, we will have a modernized nuclear weapon to replace nuclear weapons that are decades old. And with modernized aircraft that can get through the increasingly effective integrated Russian air defense system. And our allies believe in that deterrence. And I think after the past four years to pull that deterrent out, when we get would be interpreted, Europe is just another symbol with the United States is packing up and going home. So So yes, I strongly believe in the deterrent force that's followed, based in Europe in the form of the DCA, and with the allied nations participation, because it's important that the allies have a hand in their own nuclear stake in all of this. I mean, if we're providing a nuclear umbrella for NATO, it's important that allied nations as well as the United States step up to do that.

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Peter Huessy 32:06

Well, thank you, Frank. There is another question and it has to do with our bombers are currently not on alert, and do not carry weapons, they're stored separately. And so in a very real sense, we have two forces of the Triad on alert those submarines and ICBMs. The question is, would, putting missiles, cruise missiles and gravity bombs on the bombers be seen as an escalation and therefore destabilizing? And so does that not basically mean, we were basically back to a dyad? on a day to day basis?

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Franklin C. Miller 32:40

Well, yeah, I mean, on a day to day basis, I would agree we have a diet. Right. And and again, I mean, to return to the basic point, if you don't go ahead with GBS, D, you're down

to a moment. Right? There's something if something happened to the ssbn force, then the President's going to have to bring the bombers back on alert or not. Because because people will claim that it's escalatory, which I don't think it is, necessarily. So that's one reason why the two missile forces the land based voice in the sea bass force coexist today, in under current conditions, and keeping the bomber force off of alert today is a political decision that that pretty well accords with the current international environment. Now, if we got into a crisis, and if the president, whoever the president is at that time, decides to to alert some portion or the entire bomber force that sends a signal, first of all, to potential enemy leaders, that trying to nullify the US deterrent has become even harder. Because you can't just strike at at the three bomber basis. The bombers may be dispersed, they may be forward deployed, bombers are slow flying, and they're recallable. This is one of the things that has made them so so attractive in an arms control context that they get a discount. So yeah, there will be people who will say, Oh, my God, that's terribly escalatory. But the first question is, what did a foreign power due to cause a crisis to cause the president to have to consider that in the first place, that would be highly escalatory he can't get into a situation where, where enemy powers do something which is aggressive, and which threaten us in a very real and immediate sense. And then say that our response is escalatory. Start with whoever dropped or through the first step.

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Peter Huessy 34:42

Let me go through a couple questions we haven't covered and that is, if you're going forward in arms control, not on the basis of what you think Russia might accept or even China. But what would improve the stability and strategic security that night is as allies, would you go back to the start to attempt to ban land based marine ICBMs?

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Franklin C. Miller 35:07

Well, I would, I would I don't, I think I think that that horse is out of the barn. I mean, I, you know, I respect President Bush enormously, but I think he made a miscalculation. In those heady days when he looked into Putin's eyes and saw his soul. President Bush decided that the only way that the Russians could afford to reach the levels of the Moscow Treaty of 2002 was to allow him to have more of ICBMs. And so we abandoned the push that was begun under start to, to eliminate word ICBMs. If you look at what theorists say, is the single most destabilizing element of any side's nuclear forces, it's the word acbf. Because one warhead kills five pretend warheads, it becomes a lucrative target. So absolutely, I would I would make that a high priority. As I say, I don't I don't think we're going to get there. I just I think that moment in time has passed. I think it's a, you know, a sad footnote in history that we had an agreement signed by the president, United States, the President of the Russian Federation, and we couldn't get it ratified. In both countries, parliamentary

systems. It is what it is. But again, I mean, I think Peter, the one of the one of the issues. One of the perverting issues that has plagued arms control, is that we tend to focus on strategic systems, which is okay, if we weren't there to defend our allies. But we are there to defend our allies. And again, back to the British example, some of these Russian systems like the system that they deployed that broke the INF Treaty, those systems that hit the United Kingdom, those are things that the Brits have to take, take take account of the shorter range systems that the Russians are deploying ground sea, and air that threaten our other NATO allies, those need to be constrained. The simple, the, you know, the the simple wave of the hand is, Oh, those are some strategic systems, they can't hit the United States of America, that's not a problem. What the hell that's that that's true. If we're there on the front line to defend our NATO allies, those are our problems. And the notion that we can give the Russians a free pass, they can develop and deploy as many sub strategic nuclear systems as they want. And that's okay, because because we've kept the strategic system and it's just simply wrong. It's just simply wrong.

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Peter Huessy 37:34

Frank, let me bring our session to a close by asking you a further question. What do you think about the policy proposals of no first use that have been laid out by some of the nuclear deterrent critics?

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Franklin C. Miller 37:51

Well, to be honest, I wrote a piece a couple of months ago, called the sole purpose is a policy without a purpose. You know, again, so if you are in the business of being a policy maker, the first question that you have to ask is, what's the problem I'm trying to solve? And I don't understand what problem we seek to address by saying that the United States will never use nuclear weapons first. If our goal was only to deter nuclear attack on the United States of America, okay, fine. But that's not the case. Our policy is to deter aggression against our allies to and the large Russian conventional forces pose a major threat to our allies. And, you know, you and I have heard for years about, well, NATO has overwhelming conventional strength. Well, okay, that's a great headline. But there's not a lot below the headline, because it requires massive mobilization by the United States and movement of our forces over to Europe. And right now, at the border, I don't care where you start, whether it's up and up and kicking us in Norway, all the way down to Turkey. The Russians have superiority of conventional forces along the Russian NATO border. And so part of this whole policy is to deter any attack any place because no one in NATO wants to fight conventional war on NATO soil, right? So the nuclear threat to escalate if Russia goes and tries to take off a piece of the Baltics or something is important to determine the the Russian aggression now, okay, so let's, let's put that aside. I mean, that's, that's the

purpose. That's why we shouldn't go to no first use. So what would happen if we did go to no first use? The first thing that would happen is that once again, allies would lose confidence in our determination. The defendant, as I said, No ally in NATO, is prepared to fight a conventional war on its own soil. Not gonna happen, right? They don't want that. So allies will lose confidence. The second thing that will happen is that those allies who had the capability to produce their own nuclear weapons, and there are some will at least start to go down that road a little bit more. So now you have fuel proliferation. The third thing that's going to happen is because of the mindsets, the conspiratorial mindsets in Moscow, and in Beijing, the Russians and Chinese are gonna believe that, you know, no one in the military, or Russia or China is going to believe that if we say, we're not going to use nuclear weapons first, that we wouldn't, because they say, well, the Chinese say they won't use nuclear weapons first. And we don't believe it. Because there's a huge loophole, as Admiral Richard said, you could drive a truck through. And the Soviets had no first use policy. And when we got there war plans, when Germany collapsed, East Germany collapse, they were clearly first US options, so they're not going to believe it. And the fourth thing is, if you really think that by the US going to know for excuse, we're going to influence Russian and Chinese military planners, so that they're going to abandon No, first US, I got a bridge in Brooklyn, I'd like to say, because that's just not going to happen. They develop their own national security policies and their own military policies based on what they believe is important and vital to them, not what we're doing. Right. And so this is, you know, back to remember what he has forward past two to three things will happen, two of which are bad, no first use, four things will happen. And all of them are bad. I mean, there's, there's, you know, and I have yet to hear anybody come up with a compelling and clear reason for moving to a no first use or even a sole purpose policy, except that it makes us feel good. Well, okay. If we can start to turn, it makes the Allies proliferate. And it makes it there's no difference with the Russians or Chinese. But, you know, let's consider it strongly. It's a foolish idea. And I would hope, I would hope is the Senate and the House, have these discussions, as we go into the next couple of months about are determined that these kinds of things are explained and laid out in exactly the kind of detail I have just laid out. It's just foolish. So did I I hope I didn't exhaust the questioners. I mean, I don't know. We have an additional

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Peter Huessy 42:48

question is quite interesting. Those people that have proposed, okay, get rid of ICBM said, Oh, we can't win that argument. Then they said, well, let's do a Minuteman slip, and get rid of it. After a little bit of time, that will kill GB SD. And I can't win that argument. So now there's a new argument. And that is well, okay, we'll go with GB SD, but we need to save money. So instead of building 400, ICBMs GB SD, will build 100 or 200. Now, I don't want to predicate I don't want to prejudge your answer. But my understanding of acquisition is

you cut acquisition at the end of the program, not at the beginning. So you either going to increase cost dramatically as you go over time or at the end and 2035 or whatever, you will cut production, and therefore it doesn't help your budget deficit or your defense budget today, though, go ahead and answer that question. Because it's a question from one of our listeners, participants. Well, let's just some people who oppose cutting the number of GB SD at the end of the deal?

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Franklin C. Miller 43:51

Well, I mean, you're absolutely right. I mean, first of all, if you're doing this to to reduce the, the current budget is not gonna have any effect. Because the cuts, as you say, will come at the, at the end of the program. And if you defer, you know, if if if this is a Trojan horse for say, well, let's, let's wait another three or four or five years, and then pick the program up again? Well, as I said, in my experience, deferring programs only results in increased costs, not not decreased costs. So the economic argument is flawed. The second, the second thing that I think the argument misses is that is that it fundamentally fails to appreciate what the gpsd program is, I mean, people talk GPS, you say, Oh, well, that's the missile. That's the Minuteman missile replacement. No, the GBSD program has three parts. They're distinct, but they are related. The first is the first is the silos, the whole infrastructure, the launch control system. We've seen the horror stories about, you know, the glass doors that don't close and all that. So. So it's the silos and the infrastructure that have to be fixed. It's the command and control system that has to be fixed. And yes, it's the missile, it has to be fixed. And so, you know, what are you going to do you say, I'm going to upgrade 200 silos, and leave 250 silos in a Minuteman three configuration, which are which are getting to the point of being unsustainable. I mean, can you predict the future that far out? Or do you go ahead and upgrade all the silos? And the NC three, you're going to have to upgrade the system period? Full stop, right? You don't, you know, segment NC three. And now you're talking about missile production? While you're talking at the margin, you're talking cost at the margin? Right. So that argument, I think, is, is just completely flawed, it fails to appreciate the breadth and scope of the entire gpsd program. Just like, you know, for example, the state Well, the Columbia is the only part of the, of the sea based program, I think the Columbia program is absolutely vital. Make no mistake about it. If you don't pay attention to the W 93. And you don't pay attention to the missile that the submarine is going to carry. You haven't you know, you're not you're not protecting yourself in 2035. And as we have learned over the past decades, we're no longer in the 50s. You know, you can't go from concept to being in the field in five years, right? You can't do that. It takes us forever. And so if you want a system that's going to be deployed and operational starting in about 2035, you doggone well, better start working on it. Now. Whether it's a W 93 warhead, or it's the D five le to missile leading to whatever else is out

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Peter Huessy 46:44

there. Want to go back to the British decision to increase or it's sure. You mentioned Marshall Billings. He comment but what do you think the British themselves? Are they reacting to missile defenses on the part of Russia or China? Or is it concerned about a SW, possibly down the road having a breakthrough? What do you think motivates the British to, again, increase their nuclear warhead inventory?

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Franklin C. Miller 47:12

Well, yeah, first thing I want to stress is, is that the the increases on the margin? You know, it's from, like about 220 to 260. Right. I mean, so this is, this is this is it's important for the UK, you know, for further nonproliferation study, it's it's silly to make an issue of I've not seen anything in the in the press, nor have I, in my many, many consultations and discussions with British officials seen anything that points to a concern about advances in a SW to the degree that people are concerned about advances in SW, the design of the Columbia class, and the design of its British counterpart, the Dreadnought class, that's what we're doing. I mean, you know, the investment is going to be in in making these submarines invulnerable in the broad ocean area for decades and decades. And there are things that the Brits are doing, as well to ensure that they're, they they have, I don't know where they are on the procurement chain, but they're buying PA, a SW aircraft to help protect the submarines as they as they exit and enter the base up and fast lane. They're building attack submarines to help the submarines exit and return to the to the base of fazli. So but I don't think a SW is the driver here, the British defense secretary on TV on Sunday, this past Sunday, talked about Russian advances in ballistic missile defense. And, you know, so add that to the paper that Marshall and Ryan have put out, and, you know, again, this this, you know, for a minimum deterrent, this gets down to a pretty simple mathematical equation. If you're, if you're the Prime Minister, if you're the minister, the Secretary of State for defense, if you're the Chief of Defence Staff, do you have in your highly classified counsels decided how many arriving warheads constitutes a significant threat for the Russian leadership to say stop, right? If you are faced with the prospect that Russian ballistic missile defenses can reduce that number. Then you have to say how do I offset it? And the answer is I add some more warheads. So that the number I believe will the term lead Bowden, we'll get through you know, it's it's pretty simple. The American response to do to BMD is, we're going to overwhelm that threat. We have sufficient capability to overwhelm that threat. But if you've got a minimum current, your other things that you have to do.

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Peter Huessy 50:15

Well, Frank, thank you, Franklin, thank you so much. We've come to the end of this nuclear

deterrent forum. To you and our audience, I want to thank us. Thank all of you from us. You're at Mitchell Institute, and want to thank our staff, particularly Kamilla, who works on this and just does a fabulous job. Thank you. And also, to all of you out there have a great aerospace power kind of day, is what we do here at the Mitchell Institute. And again, Franklin, thank you very much, and thanks to our audience and our supporters that make these forums possible.



Franklin C. Miller 50:48

Thanks, Peter. And Roll Tide.



Peter Huessy 50:50

Roll Tide. Thank you, sir.