

041415 Air Force Association, National Defense Industrial Association and Reserve Officers Association Capitol Hill Forum with Steve Blank, Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, on “Russia’s New Strategic Doctrine and Capabilities;” and Mark Schneider, Senior Analyst at the National Institute for Public Policy, on “Russian Nuclear Modernization, the Ukraine Crisis, and the Threat to NATO.” (For additional information on NDIA/AFA/ROA seminars contact Peter Huessy at [phuessy@afa.org](mailto:phuessy@afa.org)).

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

MR. PETER HUESSY: My name is Peter Huessy and on behalf of NDIA and ROA and the AFA, I want to thank you for being here to the first of our official breakfast seminars on “Nuclear Deterrence, Proliferation, Arms Control and Missile Defense.” We did have an event on March 27<sup>th</sup> with Bob Bell that was closed and just for our sponsors, which the transcript has been approved and is on our web site.

Our schedule: the 17<sup>th</sup> is Chris Ford and Mr. Klingner, who are going to talk about those wonderful subjects, Iran and North Korea, on Friday. And General Wilson, who is going to be Deputy at STRATCOM, who now is Head of Global Strike Command, has changed his remarks and he wants to be on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April. And then Ellen Pawlikowski is going to be our speaker for month of -- is doing it early as part of our “Space Power “ breakfast series.

Then Madelyn Creedon is speaking on the 24<sup>th</sup> and Senator Hoeven on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Some of you may notice that when you go to the web site the event is sold out. That means they’ve hit the 120 level. But don’t worry, just call me and we’ll put you in because usually we have 10 or so folks that don’t show up.

I also want to thank our embassy colleagues who are here today, as well as members of the United States Air Force and the United States Navy. In particular, I want to let you know we’re planning two triad events. The first one is the 17<sup>th</sup> of September here in Washington, D.C., where General Kehler and Admiral Haney and Frank Miller are three of our speakers. We’re going to have others, but we’ll let you know. That’s here in Washington, D.C. in the room we’re now in. Also we’re going to have a triad event in March of 2016 in Washington state at the Trident base. That will be our ninth triad event, which we’ll have there.

Before I introduce Steve Blank and Mark Schneider, our two good news folks -- they’re wonderful to call or email because you ask about what’s going on in the world and you get so depressed afterwards. But they are very good at what they do.

My colleague and friend Professor Curtis from Annapolis, from the Naval Academy, wants to say a few words before I introduce our two speakers. So, Professor Curtis.

PROF. WILLIAM CURTIS: I want to take my opportunity to express our appreciation to Mr. Huessy, Peter. For about the last five years he's been coming out to the Naval Academy and speaking to my capstone seminar group on nuclear weapons and national security. So I want to make this presentation. And I realize he travels a lot, so we figured we'd give him something that he could actually use.

(Laughter).

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: Now I know why I need to drink before I introduce people.

(Laughter).

Many of you are aware of our two extraordinary speakers that are here today. Steve Blank I met when he was at the Army War College and the Russian expert there. He is now with the American Foreign Policy Council.

And Mark Schneider, who is a professor at Southwest Missouri State University, which is one of the top schools in the country that deals with national security studies, and they have a Washington campus. He's also on the staff of the National Institute for Public Policy, which is run by its president Keith Payne. By the way, he and Bob Joseph among others, will have a new book. It's completed. It's being reviewed by OSD and the sponsors, but it is about nine arms control myths or nine myths about national security and nuclear deterrence, which will be coming out hopefully shortly. And I'm going to have Keith speak about that either at both an event here as well as at my triad conference in September.

Steve and Mark are going to talk about Russian strategic nuclear weapons policy and deployments, and the impact that has on American security policy with respect to both our own nuclear policy as well as missile defense. And so with that I'd like to introduce our first speaker of the day, Mark Schneider, from NIPP and from formerly OSD. Would you please give a warm welcome to Mark Schneider?

(Applause).

MR. MARK SCHNEIDER: Thank you. What I'm going to be speaking about today is not a particularly pleasant issue to talk about because we are clearly now in a European crisis. For the first time since the Second World War, the boundary of a European state has been changed by military force. That's something that very few people would have predicted a couple of years ago.

In addition to annexing the Crimea, Russia has de facto annexed two provinces in eastern Ukraine. When the weather gets better in the spring, we may well see additional attacks and attempted occupations of cities along the eastern Ukraine border. Moreover, Russian actions are not limited to the Ukraine. They have intensified pressure on the

Baltic Republics, and they're even pressuring Sweden and Finland in a rather unprecedented way.

Nuclear threats by the senior Russian leadership have been pretty commonplace since 2007 and are sanctioned, obviously, by Putin himself. In 2014 they changed intensified threats significantly and while previous threats were couched in terms of responses to aggression, clearly the nuclear threats that have been made in 2014 and early this year relate to what anybody who is not totally dependent on Putin's propaganda machine for their worldview, would regard as Russian aggression. Putin himself in August 2014 said Russia was one of the leading world nuclear powers and, quote, "It's best not to mess with us." In a Russian "documentary," quote-unquote, on the Crimea aired on Russian television on March 15, Putin was interviewed. He said that he would have put Russian nuclear forces on combat alert if it was necessary during the Crimean episode. We have seen things that very few people would have predicted even a couple of years ago.

Earlier this month the London Times reported that quote, "President Putin is using the threat of nuclear showdown over the Baltic states to force NATO to back down." They continued, "The Russians generals present at the meeting in Germany had been briefed by Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov about what message to deliver and they said they spoke with the approval of Mr. Putin." We're in a situation right now where there is a lot of uncertainty on what the Russians will do next, but it's not likely to be anything we hope they will do.

There is a lot of concern in NATO about the possibility, particularly in Eastern Europe, of a Russian attack on a NATO state using the same rationale that they used in the Ukraine. In February of this year British Defense Minister Michael Fallon said, quote, "I'm worried about this." He's talking about Putin's pressure on the Baltics, the way he is testing NATO. He continued, "NATO has to be ready for any kind of aggression from Russia in whatever form it takes." Also in February, deputy NATO military commander, General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, said that a Russian conventional attack on the Baltics is possible and would be backed by the threat of escalation.

Russia has been staging a lot of nuclear exercises. This goes all the way back to 1999. In ZAPID 99 they actually announced they simulated the first use of nuclear weapons in a theater war. The number of exercises in 2014 just went off the scale. In 2015 their announced program involves literally 4,000 military exercises, 120 of them by the Strategic Missile troops. That doesn't, of course, include big nuclear exercises or the regional exercises where they may be planning to use nuclear weapons in simulated attacks.

In May of 2014 Russia staged the largest nuclear exercise ever. It involved all elements of the Russian nuclear triad, live missile launches of ICBMs, SLBMs and tactical nuclear missiles. It ended with what the Russian Defense Ministry called a massive nuclear strike.

They're continuing this. In March of this year Russia conducted what they call a snap drill. It involved both the conventional forces and the nuclear forces. Pavel Felgengauer, a leading Russian journalist, pro-democracy journalist, characterized the situation as follows, "These units were being prepared to fight the U.S. and its allies on all possible fronts, in the North, West, South and East, in the air, land and sea, in the eventuality that the present Ukraine crisis escalates into an all European war and later global nuclear war."

We have applied sanctions against Russian actions. They've been less effective, I believe, than the decline in the price of oil. They haven't prevented further escalation of Russian actions. We have taken very few steps to enhance military deterrence, particularly deterrence of the type of action that could cause a war between the United States and Russia.

We're putting a lot of undue emphasis on arms control, which isn't working very well. Russia and the United States are half way through the New START reduction period. If you look at the numbers posted on the State Department web site, in every area limited by the New START Treaty, Russian capabilities and numbers have increased. U.S. numbers are down significantly in all three categories.

One very interesting development is that in December of 2014 General Karakayev, who is Commander of the Strategic Missile Troops, said he had, quote, "around 400 strategic missiles." and he was talking about ICBMs here, "with warheads assigned to them which are currently on combat duty." That's interesting because there's no way he can have that number of ICBMs without violating the New START Treaty with a covert force, because the total declared Russian strategic force won't sustain more than about 300 ICBMs. He also listed the number of ICBM types he has. It's one above the number that's in either the START Treaty MOU or is accountable under the New START Treaty. Something fishy is going on there.

Setting aside compliance, assuming New START was actually complied with, in December of 2010 the Russian defense minister announced that they were going to increase their deployed nuclear warheads and deployed nuclear delivery vehicles. That's not exactly what New START was supposed to do. He said he would meet the warhead level by 2018, talking about the New START level, and the delivery vehicle level by 2028.

That was five years ago and they're way ahead of this schedule. In February of 2015 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov changed the timetable and said our priority under the treaty is to achieve the limits stipulated for strategic arms and delivery vehicles by 2018. He didn't mention the fact that that meant that Russia's increasing its numbers, not decreasing them. But that's the sort of situation that we are now facing.

The premise of our 2010 Nuclear Posture Review was that there was little possibility of a major war with Russia. Russia wasn't an enemy. I think that really has to be looked at in light of what is actually going on in Russia today.

Now in terms of modernization, we have a Russian program which vastly exceeds what we're doing and in some respects is reminiscent of what the Soviet Union was doing. The focus is not really on life extension. They've done life extension on their legacy missiles, but what they're doing is developing and introducing new types with the stated objective of replacing all legacy types by about 2021.

This includes a new road-mobile and silo-based missile. We call it the SS-27. They call it the Topol-M Variant 2. There is a MIRV'ed version of this missile. They call it the RS-24 Yars, and we call it the SS-27 Mod 2. It's testing in the late part of the last decade violated the START Treaty.

They have a new ballistic missile submarine, the Borey-class which carries a new heavily MIRV'ed Bulova 30 SLBM. Everything I've talked about up to now is operational.

They're in the process of upgrading the capabilities of the bomber force, the TU-160 and the TU-95. The new 5,000 kilometer range stealthy cruise missile, KH-102, is also now operational. They have announced the development and deployment by 2018 to 2020 of a new heavy ICBM they call the Sarnat. Russia has announced the development and deployment after 2018 of a new rail-mobile ICBM.

That's very important for the simple reason that rail-mobile ICBMs are not mentioned in the New START Treaty. The definition of launcher, which is critical, was literally changed to exclude rail-mobile ICBMs. It's the old START Treaty definition of a road-mobile ICBM. Rail mobile ICBMs will not count unless the Russians agree to a treaty amendment.

Russia is developing, and they're about to deploy, a missile they call the RS-26 Rubezh. They say it's an ICBM. What it really is, is an intermediate-range missile masquerading as an ICBM. And it's one of a series of actions they're taking which is shredding the INF Treaty.

They have announced the development of a fifth generation missile submarine that will carry ballistic and cruise missiles. Russia is developing a new stealthy heavy bomber. Everything I've just said is from the official Russian media and reflects official Russian government statements. A lot of it actually has been confirmed by the Obama administration and the Bush administration before it, but you've got to do a lot of research to find it.

The Russian Sarnat heavy ICBM is particularly interesting because it's going to have, according to the Russian Defense Ministry, 10 tons of throw-weight, which is more than the Cold War era SS-18 heavy ICBM. It's reported in the Russian press to carry 10 heavy and 15 medium nuclear warheads. The Russian press now reports they plan to deploy 46 of them in the 2018 to 2020 timeframe.

I mentioned the rail-mobile, it's very important as a circumvention option for the entire New START Treaty. Retired Colonel General Alexander Zelin, former Commander of the Russian Air Force until fairly recently, says Russia is developing an air-launched ICBM called MARK. That's interesting because air-launched ICBMs are not subject to the New START Treaty. This is a second circumvention option that could be used to deploy levels of warheads and delivery vehicles that are not allowed, supposedly, under the New START Treaty.

According to the State Department "The United States has determined that the Russian Federation is in violation of its obligations under the INF Treaty not to possess, produce, or flight-test a ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) with a range capability of 500 km to 5,500 km, or to possess or produce launchers of such missiles." Secretary of Defense Ash Carter says this is an intermediate-range cruise missile, which means you can cover a great deal of Europe from Russian territory.

There's actually a much wider range of compliance issues that have emerged in the Russian press. The RS-26 Rubit missile is either a circumvention of the INF Treaty, or possibly a violation of it. Dr. Keith Payne and I have outlined the legal case that it's a violation of the treaty in an article that appeared last year in "The National Review" online.

In addition to this, we have a series of Russian actions that are either circumventions or possible violations of the INF Treaty. This includes a type of late Soviet era intermediate-range missile, the Skeorost, that is not listed in the INF Treaty. It was never declared as part of the INF force. It is a potential covert Russian deployment. We don't know for sure, but it clearly existed and should have been declared and eliminated under the INF Treaty.

The range of the Iskander-M, their new theater nuclear missile, may be twice what supposed limit of the INF Treaty. This is probably Treaty circumvention, rather than a violation. There's no indication it has actually been tested to those sorts of ranges.

Pavel Felgengauer says that Russian ABM systems and surface-to-air missile systems, and he listed all the modern ones, are nuclear armed and have a secondary role of nuclear ground attack. What we have is a wide range of actions that would constitute either violations or circumventions of the INF Treaty. Put them all together and the INF Treaty is essentially a dead letter.

Interestingly, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter has stated that the range of options we should look at from the Defense Department could be active defenses to counter intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missiles, counterforce capabilities to prevent intermediate-range ground-launched cruise missile attacks, and countervailing strike capabilities to enhance U.S. or allied forces. I think the key word here is "should." While Dr. Carter is sincere, I have very little confidence that the Obama administration will actually do anything to respond to this within its remaining couple of years in office.

We know the Russians are developing new nuclear warheads. Their senior officials openly state that they are doing this. They say the new warheads have improved characteristics. They range all the way from super high yield weapons, megaton range, down to sub-kiloton tactical nuclear weapons or what they call precision low yield nuclear weapons. There are reports that these have actually been deployed on some of Russia's strategic missiles.

The Russians reportedly have a capability to produce up to 2,000 nuclear weapons a year. We have a totally broken nuclear weapons complex. We can't produce a new type of nuclear weapon. We can do life extension programs on existing ones, but we can't do anything else unless we fix the complex. There's an enormous asymmetry there.

The Obama administration says the Russians have 4,000 to 6,500 nuclear weapons. It says there's a ten-to-one disparity in tactical nuclear weapons. Perhaps even a more serious problem is that the Russians have retained essentially the entire range of tactical nuclear weapons that existed in the Cold War.

During the Cold War we had a countervailing deterrent capability, right now we don't. Our tactical nuclear forces have been reduced to a single type of nuclear bomb. There are many, many possible attacks the Russians could launch against NATO that we have no in-kind deterrent capability against, and I think that's a serious vulnerability.

Russia is modernizing their tactical nuclear weapons. The Iskander-M is clearly nuclear capable. They said so. Our government has said so. There are hundreds of press reports in the Russian press to that effect. This is a PNI violation, the Presidential Nuclear Initiative, which eliminated essentially all of our tactical nuclear capabilities other than a gravity bomb.

The commander of the Russian Air Force at the time, General Zelin, said that the SU-34, which is a new long-range Russian strike fighter, is becoming part of the Strategic Nuclear force because they're going to put a long-range cruise missile on it. The only problem is if you put a long-range nuclear cruise missile on a fighter plane it becomes a heavy bomber and subject to the New START Treaty. They're not going to declare the SU-34 a heavy bomber, so we've got an impending violation of the New START Treaty, and a very serious one, in play.

We are in a situation where the Russians have a very low nuclear weapons use threshold. The real formulation is probably not what they put out in their military doctrinal publications. It probably is significantly lower in terms of the threshold of nuclear first use. Indeed, it's interesting that in February of 2015 Ilya Kramnik, who recently until it was abolished was the military correspondent for the official news agency RIA Novosti, said that in the version of the doctrine that was adopted in 2010, they actually lowered the threshold for nuclear weapons use to include regional wars. And I suspect that is true.

We have heard, as I mentioned, lots of nuclear threats out of the Russians, several

of them even during the Ukraine crisis. Several were Vladimir Putin personally when he was president of Russia. Moreover, we are seeing a lot of nuclear exercises.

The most scary part of this whole business, from a standpoint of the risk of war, is that the Russian theory of victory against NATO involves what amounts to a conventional blitzkrieg against a NATO state backed with a nuclear strike, a demonstration nuclear strike. Their premise is that NATO will collapse and not respond. That's a pretty dangerous premise to operate on. Their theory of victory is they can nuke somebody and they're not going to be hit back. That's a recipe for starting a global nuclear war. And yet, this is what we're hearing out of the senior Russian leadership, and it's a pretty dangerous situation.

I think there's a very clear need right now to beef up our nuclear deterrent capabilities. The NATO Rapid Deployment Force is a good step in the right direction, but needs to be forward deployed. The Russians can take the Baltic states, according to Putin, in two days. And you can't get anything there in two days of any significance.

As the deputy commander of NATO, a military source, has pointed out, your Rapid Deployment Force needs a nuclear component to it to deter a Russian nuclear attack. And there's no indications that that's even being seriously considered.

Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. STEVE BLANK: Okay, I'm going to give you the bad news.

(Laughter).

First of all, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great honor to be back here and speak to this audience, and I'd like to thank Peter for inviting me. I also want you to know something. We don't always tell people to their face just how brilliant and wonderful they are, but what you heard is in a class by itself. There's nobody in the states, and I can say that at least as far as the overt world is concerned, who commands all this knowledge and analysis.

And it is a function not only of the fact that we have, so to speak, relatively disarmed, but that we have disarmed ourselves intellectually in terms of studying the Russian military, that there is nobody else in this town that I know of who could do this. And whatever conclusion you come to as a result of our discussions today, think about the fact that we need to increase our expertise on Russia in general, and on the Russian military in particular, by an order of magnitude. Otherwise, we will be caught blind, as we were in the Ukrainian crisis.

So with those factors in mind, let me begin. As Mark pointed out, there have been a series of nuclear threats. Just to recapitulate what he said, there have been a series

of rhetorical threats by Putin, by his underlings, and they are continuing.

The rhetorical threats are directed at every NATO member, including the United States. We have bomber runs from the Arctic all the way down to the south Atlantic coast of the United States. So again, bomber runs -- and in the Pacific as well -- that include all of NATO members, again, including the United States.

Russia is now deploying nuclear-capable missiles in the Crimea. The importance of this is that it shows that they are never going to give back the Crimea unless their hands are tied or by force; and second, if you know your Russian history, once Russia dominates the Crimea and the Black Sea coast, it then uses that territory as a springboard to project power into the Balkans, the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

And that's happening. You just have to pick up today's paper, it's about the arms sales to Iran. But other things also, because the nuclear modernization that Mark has talked about, and which is very frightening in its own right, is not the only part of the story if you look at the Russian military.

I'm not going to talk about their conventional modernization, but you have to understand that the nuclear modernization is premised upon a concurrent conventional modernization. Let me quote to you a document from 2003. Some of you may remember in 2003 the Russian military, Sergei Ivanov was Minister of Defense, they published a White Paper, if you like, "Urgent Tasks of the Russian Military."

It states, quote, "When we speak about the nuclear deterrence factor, especially when this notion is applied to the deterrence of threats associated with the use of conventional forces by the enemy" -- and they're not talking about guerillas, they're talking about us or potentially China -- "we should also take into account that under contemporary conditions such deterrence can be effectively carried out only if highly equipped and combat ready general purpose forces are available." So in other words, we have a two-sided modernization going on here: nuclear and conventional. And what's more, as the Russians say, this is a part of an asymmetric, that's their term, strategy. We are now calling what we've seen in the Ukraine hybrid war. What we saw in Crimea we won't see elsewhere because Crimea has unique situations. But the kind of systematic use of all the elements of military power, diplomacy, information, military, economics, including nuclear intimidation and deterrence, even in a regional conventional situation, is part of an overarching strategy.

So we have the deployments in the Crimea. We have the deployments of the Iskander, which Mark talked about, in Kaliningrad, from where it can threaten not only the Baltic states but Poland, Germany and Sweden and Finland as well, perhaps Denmark as well. In the early stages of this conflict, according to NATO -- and this is not necessarily public news but I don't think it's classified -- when they started the operations in the Donbass, they deployed nuclear-capable bombers on the border with Ukraine in an unmistakable signal that NATO picked up, indicating don't intervene, we are ready to go nuclear, in this case with nuclear-capable bombers.

And then finally, we have what Mark talked about, Putin's interview where he said that on the eve of the occupation of Crimea he was actually seriously considering a nuclear alert. I want you to think about that for a moment. Let's assume for a moment -- and you can never assume this, but let's do so for the sake of argument -- that Putin is telling the truth here. What this means is that based on the threat assessment that he had gotten and had been conjured up on his own, NATO was preparing to occupy Ukraine. Now it would be difficult to imagine a greater fantasy as of February of 2014, because if you talk to people in NATO the last thing they've ever wanted is to have to deal with Ukraine.

Nonetheless, Putin was prepared to play the nuclear card, at least so he says. What this tells us is that not only do they have these capabilities that Mark is talking about, they have an intelligence and threat assessment process that somewhere along the line, from the guy in the street doing order of battle and collecting information to the policy maker, is so seriously flawed that the threat is magnified beyond any rationale magnitude. And therefore, they are hysterical enough -- and I use that word advisedly -- to think about nuclear options almost in a pre-emptive way, regardless of what the doctrine says. That's something we need to keep in mind because what we are then talking about is a serious problem that affects the entire Russian military system, both conventional and nuclear.

The purpose of these threats, and of these deployments, and the fact that many of them are being advertised in ways that was not always the case under the Soviets, tells us I think something of the way in which the Russians look at the use of nuclear weapons both in politics and in war. The first point it tells us is that the old McNamara idea that the only use nuclear weapons have is to deter other nuclear weapons, is still wrong. It was wrong when McNamara said it, it's still wrong today.

And the idea that there is no strategic mission that nuclear weapons can credibly perform, which is an argument you hear in this town from the arms control lobby, is as far as the Russians are concerned -- and I would say at least in my opinion -- dead wrong. That does not mean we go out and use them pre-emptively or anything else, but they do have strategic and political utility apart from a wartime situation. The deployments, the threats, the rhetoric, all says we are prepared to escalate in defense of our vital interests, and those interests are expanding. And we are prepared to escalate to the nuclear level, and go first if you threaten us.

And it's an article of faith, by the way, in the Russian military. The Russian military could not operate in the boundaries of the former Soviet Union if it did not have nuclear weapons because otherwise NATO would intervene and then they would have no means of countering NATO.

Second, all of us know about the Russian obsession with being a great power and status. Nuclear weapons are the talisman of that status, and constantly flouting them tells everybody we are a great power. As Putin said, don't mess with us. Take our interests

seriously, respect us, and so on.

Third, these deployments and threats give Russia the freedom to conduct non-nuclear major external operations like Ukraine, like Georgia before it, and potentially elsewhere. We need to understand, for example, that Russia is now engaged in power projection operations as far away from Russia as including Latin America. They are engaged in a global search for naval bases, ports of call, whatever you want to call it. And those include not only places in the Indian Ocean, like the Seychelles, they also include Latin America, Cuba and Nicaragua in particular.

But also, they are trying to get bases in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean. They already have a facility at Tartus in Syria. They have stated they would like to get back to Alexandria. And those of us who are older remember they used to be in Alexandria in the bad old days, and it offered them a great strategic location. And, of course, they are projecting power elsewhere in these areas as well.

As I pointed out as well, the nuclear deployments interact with the conventional modernization, which is equally comprehensive. Now the sanctions have affected them. There are programs that are being stretched out or delayed like the T-50 fifth generation bomber. Nonetheless, the Defense Ministry said again the other day, we're not cutting back on spending.

This is a classic Russian manifestation. This goes back to the czars, the rivalry between the Finance Ministry which is responsible for the national economy, and the Defense Ministry. The Finance Ministry says, you're going to destroy the economy of the country. We're not going to catch up with anybody. Instead, you're going to create a major domestic political-economic crisis.

And the Defense Ministry says, we are under siege. We have no allies. We must have all this defense. We must be second to none. And what's more, if the Americans have it we must have it, regardless of whether we have it or not.

And so, up until recently the nuclear modernization program, which as Mark pointed out began several years ago, was a surrogate for conventional deterrence. They did not have the conventional forces, at least before 2008, that they felt comfortable with. And the Georgian war proved to them that their forces were a mess and major reforms were launched.

Now, the situation is different. If you look at the new doctrine that came out on December 26<sup>th</sup> of last year -- it's on Putin's web site, it's available in English if you want to read it. It states very clearly that Russia now has confidence in being able to conduct non-nuclear deterrence. It doesn't explain what that term means, but non-nuclear means conventional, I think.

So the nuclear shield and sword are well enough developed now, as are the conventional, that Moscow believes it doesn't actually need to go nuclear to deter NATO.

It just needs to brandish those weapons without actually threatening to strike with them, at least rhetorically, or so it says. But that means, therefore, that they have the freedom to engage in military operations well beyond their border, or so they think, without fear of retribution because they have both conventional and nuclear means of deterrence.

And NATO, and particularly the United States, are what the Russians call Glavni Vrag, “main enemy.” And therefore, not only can they deter NATO from intervening in the CIS, they now have what they believe to be is virtual freedom to do so. Now, I was in a conversation with some people yesterday who believe that Putin was surprised by the fact that NATO-EU cohesion has held up to now on sanctions and so forth. But the fact of the matter is there has been very little in the way of military response of any kind of coherent nature to what has happened in Ukraine. We have a lot of rhetoric and flailing of arms and saying this is awful, or that we’re going to do something about it, but until the money is spent and the capabilities are on the ground and visible, it’s a lot of smoke and mirrors. It’s not actual.

And as Mark said, and I share his pessimism about this, I don’t expect the Obama administration to figure out what needs to be done. And what’s more, I’m not sure that Congress is going to do so either, given the pre-eminence of budget hawks. But you can see from your own experience and from what’s being reported, just how sequestration has cut into our capabilities. There’s an article by Stephen Sestanovich in the new issue of “American Interest” and he talks about the fact that there’s virtually nothing in Europe with which we could resist.

The premise that Europe is a zone of peace and that we don’t have to worry about Russia in Europe, and some of the other premises that have governed policy for a generation -- not just the Obama administration -- have been shown to be false. It is time to not only life the sequestration but to have another major debate on strategy and to reconstitute our capabilities not only for understanding Russia but China and other bad actors as well. Finally, the nuclear capability facilitates Russia’s ability to make threats not only in the CIS but all the way out to the Arctic , the Balkans and potentially beyond if they get these naval bases that they want in Asia and Latin American and the Middle East.

Let’s talk about arms control. Mark has pointed out they’re in violation of START, or at least circumventing it in many ways. The INF Treaty, finally the administration after sitting on the information for five or six years, came clean and said the Russians have been in violation of the INF Treaty in a number of ways. The CFE Treaty was also broken.

Now again, I don’t want to get into conventional weapons but you have to understand the interaction between the two here. The fact that nothing was done when the Russians said we are suspending our observance of the CFE Treaty, is unprecedented. If you don’t like a treaty you have the option to give six months or whatever time of notice is stipulated and say this no longer meets our interests, we’re leaving, and that’s fine. We did it with the missile defense treaty, the ABM Treaty.

The Russians simply walked out of the treaty. Last year, at the end of the year, they simply said we're not paying attention to this anymore. But we want to discuss conventional arms control in Europe, they said last week. So the classic Russian ploy, now that we're dealing from a position of strength, let's cut into your military capabilities further.

INF we've talked about. So that means every arms control treaty on the table has been broken by Moscow unilaterally. Moreover, even when they're complying we aren't living up to our end of the bargain with START, as Mark has point out.

The American nuclear enterprise is in very sad shape. Despite the fact that the administration claims it is funding it, the fact of the matter is that modernization is not taking place at anywhere near the pace it needs to. And it's not only a question of Russia, it's probably also a question of China, whose opacity if anything is greater than Russia's by a considerable order of magnitude. And when you have your discussions on China, no doubt this will come up.

But the fact of the matter is we are dealing with people, at least in Russia and China's case, who think that treaties are an opportunity for concealment. And China doesn't want to even get involved in the treaties. It is a mark of our blindness that we have not said to China, we want arms control and we want you to be at the table because we recognize you're a great power and a major nuclear actor, which are facts, and which the Russians insist on having because they worry about the Chinese conventional and nuclear capability. But in this administration, obviously nobody has gotten the message that this would be a smart card to play even for rhetorical purposes.

Finally, ballistic missile defense. You may not be aware of this, but missile defenses in Europe are about to come under renewed attack. I don't mean physical attack, but political. The stated rationale for the building of missile defenses in Europe, both in the Bush administration and in the Obama administration, has been the threat of Iranian missile strikes, conventional and/or nuclear.

Both administrations believe, probably rightly, there is no way you can build enough missile defenses in Europe to thwart a Russian nuclear attack on Europe if it was to occur, or a large-scale missile strike. Second, the physics of these installations and weapons systems preclude their being used, as Moscow insists, as a basis for striking at the Russian missile and nuclear complex. What that means is that we have deliberately, as we did in the Cold War, taken the assumption that we cannot defend Europe directly against Russian nukes, or now conventional missiles in a large-scale missile attack, except by using ICBMs and the threat of extended deterrence.

If the agreement with Iran goes through, and I'm not going to discuss the merits or demerits of that agreement in my talk. If you want to ask we can talk about it. But if that agreement holds and goes through, and you can already see this in the Russian press, the Russian government is going to get up there and say, okay Mr. Obama, you built

these systems because you said Iran is a threat. You've now signed an agreement saying that Iran is not a threat. What are you going to do about this?

If you continue to keep these there we will assume, as we always have, that these are a threat to the vital interests, and survival if necessary, of the Russian state and we will reply accordingly, asymmetrically, but accordingly. And what is the reply? More nukes, more MIRVs and also hybrid war, subversion and attempts to undermine the political cohesion of NATO's desire to spend money and maintain these installations in Central and Eastern Europe.

So for all of you who are involved in the missile defense program one way or another, or just have an interest in it, this is coming down the road unless the agreement with Iran falls. And even if it falls, this will probably come down the road.

Next to last, tactical nukes. Mark talked about this. Russia will not give up its tactical nuclear weapons unless we take our out of Europe. There's no way that's going to happen now. The problem is, what are we going to do with these weapons? There are a lot of people in the U.S. and other militaries who feel that there's not a lot of military utility you get from tac nukes, that you can't get from advanced precision munitions.

Second, these are aging. If you want to maintain them you're going to have to rebuild either U.S. or NATO air capabilities, which is expensive; or rebuild tac nukes, which is, again, expensive. And what is the mission? And are you going to get 28 nations to sign up in a communique when the next NATO summit takes place, which I believe is next year, to discuss what should be NATO's nuclear policy?

Now those of you who follow NATO know that when NATO has to sit down and decide upon its nuclear policy, it's a very arduous process. To get 28 states to sign off on a nuclear understanding on missions, roles and costs and all this, is not simple. Given the European disinclination to spend even on its own conventional defense, what are we going to see with regard to tac nukes?

That would, to some degree act as a deterrent to further Russian threats. When the Russians get up there and say, if you don't do what we like or if you try to threaten us, we're going to nuke you. And we should sit back and say well, you know, we can nuke you too. Now do you want to talk? Instead, the Russians fully believe that they can frighten and intimidate the West, at least parts of it, with nuclear weapons if they keep doing it often enough and, what's more, if nothing happens and if they pay no cost for it.

Finally, my last point, Peter mentioned it and we talked about proliferation. Mark did not talk about that because he wanted to talk about force structure. I want to conclude discussion this.

We just saw yesterday that the Russians are selling Iran the S-300. Several years ago when they were thinking about doing it the Israeli government told them that basically if they did that there would be war, because Israel would strike at Iran before

they had the S-300 to take out the then-existing nuclear capability. This is another example of lighting a match and throwing it into an oil field. But it's not the only one, because yesterday they also signed a contract with Beijing to deliver to Beijing the S-400, which is even better, and which Beijing will use to thwart our strategies and allies in the Asia-Pacific theater. It also shows some important things about the Russo-Chinese relationship that are important from a nuclear point of view and from a strategic point of view. Russia used to never sell China weapons better than what it sells India, and now has done so. And it's likely to do so further if they sell them the Amur-class submarines.

Second, this means that Russia and China are becoming ever closer. Whether it's an alliance or not, people differ. I don't think it's an alliance in the classical sense of the term. There's a lot of diplomatic rivalry between Russia and China in East Asia, although it's below the surface.

But the fact of the matter is that they have made a calculated effort to abet the growth of Chinese military capabilities. And even the Russian Ministry of Defense in November called for an alliance with China, or a collective security system including China, to thwart, quote, "color revolutions and terrorism, the threat in Central Asia." But the fact is that this could extend to systems that would have an impact on potential nuclear use.

Let me just conclude with one example. China gets the S-400. Knowing the Chinese, they will then indigenize it, strip it, try to figure out how to make their own. The Russians will probably try to prevent that, but the Chinese air defense capabilities will be enhanced.

That may lead some in China, and there are those in China who think this way, that they have an opportunity to strike either in the South China Sea or against Japan or Taiwan, perhaps. If that entails a U.S. retaliation, there is good reason to suspect that the so-called doctrine of no first use does not apply. And the Chinese may actually retaliate against an American conventional counterstrike with nukes.

The fact of the matter is that the Russians are now complicit in this kind of situation, even if it's against their own interests, and they know it is. And by selling China new, advanced technologies and weapons systems, and by calling for a collective security system, and by joining with China globally in the Middle East and elsewhere, and finally by trying to threaten the United States with nuclear weapons, and lastly to support North Korea politically, which is now the case in Moscow, the Russians are challenging us across a whole series of strategic dimensions and regions, both conventionally and in nuclear terms. And it's essential not only that we understand the challenge, but that we respond.

Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: We'll take questions now.

MS. MAKELA DODGE: Makela Dodge with Heritage. Some Russian commentators are now talking about the potential of a coup or kind of increasing dissent within the Putin ranks. Do you see any indications of that?

MR. BLANK: I don't think you're going to see anything in public until actually something blows up. But look, there's the famous analogy by Churchill is that Russian politics is dogs fighting under the carpet. So you see the carpet rise but you don't know exactly who's doing what. So there's obviously pulling and hauling because first of all, we know there are people who are saying look, we can't afford Crimea. We can't afford this. You've got to make a deal. The economy is being ruined, and so forth.

And others are saying, the West is our enemy. We have to go forward. If we don't, we lose power. Ukraine is part of Holy Mother Russia, and all this. And what's more, if we make any deals with the Americans we will lose our power, and that's ultimately all they care about.

So yeah, there are struggles. There's always political struggles in the Kremlin, but Putin is the dictator. His authority, I would argue, is greater than any Russian ruler since 1953 when Stalin died.

MR. SCHNEIDER: I agree with that. As long as Putin has popularity and polls 86 percent or some such number, he's not going to be overthrown by anybody.

MR. : Sir, a hypothetical scenario of the threat, the threat, the threat, NATO starts to move troops towards -- to prevent their march further west -- and Putin uses a tactical nuke. What does the world do?

MR. BLANK: Well, since it's a hypothetical -- I think it's a remote hypothetical. NATO is not going to go on the offensive. And to be honest with you NATO doesn't have troops that are going to move anywhere, and Putin knows this.

I mean, as Sestanovich pointed out in his article -- it's coming out, I got an advance copy -- when Putin gets into trouble at home he blames the United States. And he blames the -u and he blames the United States. He's come to believe his own rhetoric and propaganda, because for 15 years people have been telling him he's god. That affects people.

And the entire elite has come to believe this threat assessment also. Think about what I mentioned as far as the threat assessment. Nobody in the West was prepared to support Ukraine in any meaningful way in February of 2014, and it was not hard to see this. Good intelligence analysts would tell you this.

Yet this guy says, I'm ready. I was even thinking of calling out a nuclear alert because of a revolution, not a coup, in Ukraine. So given that level of obsessiveness and

paranoia, NATO doesn't have to do anything.

You know, the argument in this town is if we do X we will provoke Putin. I'm sorry guys, Putin had been provoked a long time ago. You could walk into the room and Putin would be provoked.

MR. SCHNEIDER: It's impossible for any U.S. policy to fundamentally change Russian views about the United States. It's just so ingrained and is a continuation of legacy Cold War attitudes towards the United States. They don't have the ideology anymore, but they have an official ideologist in the Kremlin. Unfortunately the unwritten current ideology is increasingly looking like fascism.

MR. BLANK: One other point here. This has been going on for 15 years. This is part of the information warfare component of the hybrid war. The first target was the Russian people. They have been subjected to this kind of endless barrage for 15 years if not more. It's not an accident, for example, if you look at history, the first thing Gorbachev does to try and get reform going is to try to get people to think differently, start a media campaign. Because until people get different ideas, they're not going to behave differently.

MR. SCHNEIDER: I don't know if I mentioned this earlier, but a recent Russian poll indicated 54 percent of the Russian people believe that a war with NATO is imminent. That reflects the constant propaganda that is being broadcast over the Russian electronic media, which right now is almost completely under the control of the Kremlin.

MR. FRANK REILLY (ph): Frank Reilly, Nuclear Security and Deterrence Monitor. To what degree do you think Russian nuclear modernization will impact the Congressional discussion going forward and the mark up process for U.S. nuclear weapons?

MR. SCHNEIDER: I hope it does. I mean, it must have some effect. However, there is still a significant reluctance to face the reality that we have with Russia today. I'm not very confident that we will see the spending increases that we need to do something about beefing up the U.S. deterrent capability. I just don't see that as very likely. Smaller steps may be taken, but I don't see really big ones, and there are a lot of very large problems that developed due to 20 years of underfunding the nuclear deterrent forces. They can't be solved overnight even if we had an unlimited amount of money.

MR. BLANK: I agree with Mark, but it's not just Congress. It's the administration. Let me give you an example.

There's a video that I got from a conference last month in Warsaw where the energy director for Russia gave an interview. And she said, our policy towards Russia is one of -- you know, the old liberal integrationist idea that we should all get together and integrate in this kind of liberal world order -- and we're disappointed and quote, "a bit surprised that Russia does not want to do this."

Think about that. After 15 years of Putin saying, I don't want this. We're not going to do this. We still profess to be surprised at this.

Now if you are surprised that the Russians don't want to join the liberal democratic agenda, whether you like the agenda or not, then you're not paying attention. And if you're not paying attention you're not going to do what Mark and I both agree is necessary. And that goes for both Congress, the White House, and let's be honest, the intelligence community.

MR. WILLIAM CURTIS: The Army War College just released a study. I think the title of it is "1704: An Analysis of Soviet Force ?). And one thing that impressed me is -- and I think it's something we as a nation haven't paid enough attention to -- is the connection that they've made in the line of thinking that influences Putin's vision of the world and the situation that occurred in 1700 with Peter the Great's defeat; and then in 1704, they came back and actually won. And they traced that all the way down to Putin's character today. If you've read it, what do you think about it?

MR. BLANK: I haven't read it yet. Probably some of them were listening to my old lectures. But, you know, Putin likes to identify with Peter the Great. I think they got the dates wrong. 1709 is Poltava, although they win a victory in 1703 and set up St. Petersburg.

The real basis for this strategy -- although historically yes. it's Russian suspicion of the West and its ambivalence towards Westernization and all that. The real basis for today's multidimensional strategy, if you want to call it hybrid war or whatever term you want -- where nukes are only a part of this, by the way: information, energy, all that -- the real basis for this is Soviet strategy in the interwar period from the '20s. And who is the executive agency carrying this out? It is the forerunners of the FSB. It's the KGB and NKVD, OGPU, all those alphabet soups.

It's media penetration, espionage, making economic deals in Europe and the United States, building up the military at home because they expect another major war in Europe at the time and so on and so forth. The famous, you know, Spanish civil war episodes. This is a classic KGB operation or strategy. And these are the guys who taught Putin how to be a KGB agent. It's no surprise that at a time of weakness, which was the case 15-20 years ago, they fell back into that, and they're still doing it.

MR. SCHNEIDER: Let me add a little bit to that. There's an enormous legacy effect of Soviet thinking on Russian military doctrine and Russian foreign policy, and if anything it's growing. If you read Putin's 2014 speeches, and they're all on the Kremlin web site in English, he's openly embraced the legitimacy of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialism.

During the Cold War we used to make mutual charges of the other side being imperialists. If you have Putin's speeches you can build a case just by quoting them.

What he is saying is dangerous stuff when you combine it with nuclear weapons and a nuclear doctrine that says that if I go first against NATO or the United States or whoever else they are going against, they win because the other guy doesn't have the guts to counterattack. That's a pretty risky theory of victory, to put it mildly.

MR. BLANK: And if you read some of those speeches as well, for example the most striking one is the March 18<sup>th</sup> speech of last year on the annexation of Crimea, Adolph Hitler could have given that speech in 1938-39. All you have to do is change the words Russia to Germany, it reads exactly like Hitler.

MR. SCHNEIDER: That's absolutely correct. I mean, even Hillary Clinton has pointed that one out, the rationale he has advanced for his actions is straight from 1930s Germany.

MR. HUESSY: Mark and Steve, thank you for those nice words of encouragement.

(Laughter).

I want to thank Professor Curtis and our colleagues and friends from Annapolis. It's a joy to come over and teach and talk with you folks. Thank you for taking the trip over here.

Mark and Steve, thank you all for remarkable remarks. Would you all give a thank you?

(Applause).

We will see you Friday with Jeff Klingner and Chris Ford.