MR. PETER HUESSY: I want to welcome you here to the 21st in our series of 35 seminars that we’re doing on missile defense, nuclear weapons and homeland security. Today I want to welcome our friends from the British, Austrian and Russian embassies. I also want to welcome our corporate sponsors, as well as acknowledge the Reserve Officers Association of America, the Air Force Association, the National Defense Industrial Association are also our sponsors.

And I’d remind you that tomorrow we have Barry Blechman, and Friday we have Admiral Benedict. And then next week we have Secretary of the Air Force Mike Donley on the 25th and Jim Miller on the 26th of July. General Formica, who is head of SMDC in Huntsville, is going to be August 3rd, as you know.

And another announcement is on September 13th we will be doing another event at the Reserve Officers Association of America on the strategic nuclear triad. We’re going to have Senator Conrad, Senator Hoeven and Senator Enzi speak. And then we’re going to have a panel of administration officials, probably General Chambers and Admiral Benedict. And then we’re going to have an outside panel.

We’re going to do it from 8:30 in the morning until about 11 o’clock. That will be at the Reserve Officers Association, again, the morning of September 13th. So let us know if you’d like to attend that. We will be sending out details on that.

As many of you know, Dave Trachtenberg is president of Shortwaver Consulting since 2008. He spoke at our seminar series for the first time back in 2003. He was vice president for industry programs at CACI, and senior vice president for homeland security at National Security Research. And before that, he was principal deputy assistant secretary for international security policy between 2001 and 2003. And prior to that, he was a professional staff member on the House Armed Services Committee.

I want to thank you, David, for being here today. And on behalf of ROA, AFA and NDIA, thank you for coming here to speak to us this morning. Would you give a warm welcome to Dave Trachtenberg?

(Applause).

MR. DAVE TRACHTENBERG: Thank you, Peter, and good morning to everybody. I appreciate the kind introduction and the invitation to participate in this series. It’s unusual for me to see so many
friendly faces that aren’t relatives. It usually takes a free meal to even get them to listen to me, so I appreciate your being here.

(Laughter).

I’ve known Peter Huessy for decades. I think he’s one of the clearest thinkers on defense matters in this town. And this forum, I believe, is probably one of the – if not the -- longest running high-level Capitol Hill series on national security matters.

I understand that over the past 30 years Peter has hosted more than 1,750. Is that correct? More than 1,750 of these Capitol Hill seminars, which is truly remarkable. So it really is a pleasure and a privilege to be here as part of the 30th year anniversary of this series, especially given the level of authority and intellectual capital that prior speakers have brought to this forum.

Now Peter is also very good an analyzing and predicting future trends. So I got pretty excited when I learned that he wanted me to address security challenges for a new administration.

(Laughter).

I thought perhaps, does Peter know something I don’t? But then, Peter always knows something I don’t, regardless of the topic.

I don’t know whether the title for this talk was meant to reflect a hope or a prediction, but regardless of the outcome in November the next four years will be critical for U.S. national security. And if there is a new administration, it will face a plethora of national security challenges across the board, from the need to deal with traditional threats to unconventional and emerging ones. There are regional challenges, like Russia’s greater assertiveness and anti-American posturing, China’s development of anti-access area denial capabilities, revolutions in the Arab world that are upending stability throughout the Middle East, and of course security challenges in our own hemisphere from Mexico to Venezuela.

A new administration will also have to confront the proliferation challenges posed by North Korea and Iran; one a regime with nuclear weapons and one actively seeking them, neither of which may be reliably deter-able in the long run. Our knowledge of the leadership decision-making processes in these countries is limited at best. We have a hard enough time trying to figure out who the woman is standing next to Kim Jong-eun, or why the hemlines of North Korean’s female soldiers are rising. If we can’t answer these questions, can we really say with confidence we know exactly what will deter these regimes.

And, of course, there are the evolving challenges of cyber security, energy security, failed and failing states, and a host of others. Dealing with any of these challenges will be even more difficult in the current budget environment. Sequestration will force us to do less with less, which means accepting greater strategic risk, and with it the prospect of unnerving allies and possibly emboldening adversaries.

You know, we could spend an hour on each of these challenges. But in keeping with the theme of this seminar series, I want to focus on nuclear issues. Because although nuclear issues get little
attention outside these types of forums, our nuclear strength is fundamental to our security and that of our allies, and serves as the backdrop for the exercise of American foreign and national security policy.

In this regard, a new administration, I think, will face at least three important security challenges. First, is ensuring the continued viability of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. Second, is developing a comprehensive strategy that includes a revitalized nuclear posture, as well as other types of capabilities, including long-range conventional strike and missile defense capabilities. And third, probably the most challenging difficulty any new administration will face is restoring the bipartisan consensus that crumbled along with the Soviet Union regarding the proper role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security strategy.

The next administration's task in meeting these challenges will be complicated by several factors including: a lack of understanding among the general public and many members of Congress of the important purposes our nuclear arsenal serves in the post-Cold War world; severe fiscal pressures that will lessen the likelihood that necessary resources will be allocated to essential modernization programs; and continued calls to reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons entirely. Most of us are familiar with the arguments that nuclear weapons are Cold War weapons, developed for use against a Cold War adversary that no longer exists. Moreover, those who favor keeping them or even modernizing them are often accused of harboring a Cold War mentality.

A recent New York Times editorial railed against Congressional Republicans who support modernization asking, did House Republicans somehow miss the end of the Cold War? The editorial encourage the president to argue the case for much deeper cuts – nuclear cuts – and push back against members of Congress who incredibly still haven’t gotten beyond their Cold War obsessions. Now I believe the Time’s editorial writers actually have it backwards. Those who favor significant nuclear reductions along the path to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, in my view, are the ones who are stuck in a Cold War time warp, viewing nuclear weapons primarily through a bilateral U.S.-Russia Cold War lens.

The New START Treaty, I think, is a good illustration. A treaty that links our forces to those of Russia is a throwback to the Cold War. It does nothing to address the more serious nuclear threats we face and it has not led others to reduce their nuclear arsenals or abandon their quest for nuclear weapons.

As an arms control measure, I would argue, it was unnecessary. As a nonproliferation tool, I’d argue it is generally ineffective. And as a security instrument, it’s unresponsive to 21st century types of threats.

While the Soviet Union was clearly the biggest nuclear threat we faced during the Cold War, our nuclear weapons did more than just deter a Soviet nuclear attack. They helped deter chemical and biological attacks from others. They put a damper on the impulses towards large-scale conventional warfare. In fact, arguably, they’ve been the most important reason there has not been a World War III.
They assured allies of our commitment to their security and in the process, by the way, have been a boon to our nonproliferation policy by removing incentives for our allies to go nuclear themselves. And, as I stated, they provided an essential backdrop for the exercise of American power in the national interest. Our nuclear weapons have served both military and political objectives, and they continue to do so today.

Despite this, we have witnessed the progressive decay of our nuclear infrastructure and a deterioration of our nuclear posture and capabilities. Now I won’t belabor the realities of our aging nuclear deterrent and the lack of commitment to its modernization. Senator Kyl, Congressman Turner and others have spoken about this. It has also been highlighted over the years by numerous studies, including several by the Defense Science Board.

This is a problem that has not been adequately addressed. And the failure to address it actually extends over multiple administrations and multiple Congresses. Funding cuts to nuclear programs, deferred modernization plans, a prohibition on new nuclear capabilities, the push to permanently ban nuclear testing through ratification of the previously rejected CTBT, additional arms control measures, further cuts in the nuclear stockpile, a possible abandoning of the triad; each of these actions and decisions may be consistent – may be viewed as consistent – with the president’s vision of a nuclear-free world, ultimately. But the logic behind each of them, I would argue, is questionable at best. It isn’t hard to make the argument that the cumulative effect of these actions over time may be the denuclearization – the de facto denuclearization – of the American strategic deterrent.

Barry Blechman, who Peter noted you will hear from tomorrow and who I consider a good friend and thoughtful analyst on these matters, may disagree with this view. But I believe we are approaching our own nuclear tipping point, with the future efficacy of our nuclear deterrent at stake. I also believe that continuing down the path we are on risks communicating a message of irresolution and uncertainty to both friends and adversaries; or perhaps a confirmation of America’s declining power in the world, which may itself be dangerously destabilizing.

We’ve heard good words from some administration officials on the actions being taken to address shortfalls in our nuclear posture. General Kehler and others certainly understand the importance of the nuclear mission and the need for modernized capabilities. They’re doing the best they can with the tools they have and the resources they have been given.

But let’s make no mistake, this is an administration that does not see an enduring value in nuclear weapons. Ultimately, it is the president that sets policy. And this president believes, as he has said, we have a moral obligation to lead the way toward a nuclear-free world.

In a climate of budget austerity and multiple unfunded priorities it’s unrealistic, in my view, to assume that this administration will fight to ensure that nuclear programs are funded adequately, regardless of any political commitments made in the heat of the ratification debate over New START. If we fail to modernize our nuclear posture, the credibility of our extended deterrent will likely also suffer. I can think of few things more damaging to the credibility of our security guarantees to allies than the
loss, either by design or neglect, of the very capabilities that have underpinned allied security for nearly seven decades.

Moreover, the importance of our strategic nuclear forces for extended deterrence will likely go up as their numbers come down. Continued NATO enlargement and the desire of others to seek safety under the U.S. nuclear umbrella should Iran get the bomb, are likely to place additional stresses on these forces. The next administration must consider these issues as it ponders how to restore the capabilities of, and confidence in, America’s strategic nuclear deterrent.

Now a new administration will also need to confront the narrative of the global zero movement. The arguments in favor of moving toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons take many forms, including for example, nuclear weapons are not relevant to contemporary threats. We’ve all heard that argument.

The most recent report by Global Zero, to which General Cartwright, former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, lends his name and approval, says, and I quote, “9/11 exposed the lack of efficacy, indeed, the irrelevance, of nuclear forces in dealing with 21st century threats,” end-quote. Now nuclear weapons don’t address all the threats we face anymore than non-nuclear weapons do. But in a world of proliferating nuclear wanna-bees, where other nuclear armed states are enhancing their own capabilities – qualitatively and quantitatively – they do remain relevant to some of the more serious ones.

Then there’s the argument that we will never use nuclear weapons, therefore why should we have them? As General Welch said, we use nuclear weapons and have used them successfully every day. General Welch pointed out, and I agree with him, that there probably isn’t a single weapons system that has achieved a 100 percent success rate in accomplishing its mission beyond -- more than nuclear weapons have in preventing attack.

Then, of course, we’ve heard the argument that the Cold War is over and Russia is no longer an enemy. As I mentioned, our nuclear weapons do more than simply deter Russia. My belief is that the nuclear zero narrative is unfortunately misguided in its logic. It’s as misguided in its logic as it is attractive and alluring in its simplicity.

But it underpins the current administration’s policy to our nuclear posture, which seems to reflect a reductions is good, more reductions is better, approach. Official statements tend to reinforce this notion. For example we saw this in the president’s statement in Seoul when he stated, quote, “We can already say with confidence that we have more nuclear weapons than we need.” And in comments last month by the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Levin, who stated, “I can’t see any reason for having as large an inventory as we are allowed to have under New START, and that we should consider going far lower,” end-quote, in nuclear weapons.

Such statements do not track with the comments of former StratCom commander, General Chilton, who stated two years ago in testimony on the New START Treaty, quote, “I do not agree that it is more than is needed. I think the arsenal that we have is exactly what is needed today,” end-quote.
Nevertheless, recent published reports suggest the so-called NPR Implementation Study will propose further cuts in our nuclear arsenal to about 1,000 weapons, roughly a one-third reduction from the levels agreed to in the New START Treaty. The Global Zero report calls for a total of 900 weapons, arguing that existing nuclear stockpiles vastly exceed what is needed to satisfy reasonable requirements for deterrence between the United States and Russia, as well as vis-à-vis third countries whose nuclear arsenals pale in comparison quantitatively.

But deterrence is not solely a numbers game. What is sufficient to deter one adversary today may not be sufficient to deter him tomorrow. Nor may it be sufficient to deter others.

Likewise, what is adequate to assure allies -- one ally -- may be inadequate to assure another. Deterrence is an art, not a science. We cannot know with certainty exactly how many nuclear weapons will deter all adversaries at all times.

Is it 10,000? Is it 1,000? Is it 311, as some have suggested? This is one reason why the Moscow Treaty provided for a range of 1,700 to 2,200 weapons, to allow at least some flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

Deterrence does not rest solely on what we think should be sufficient to deter someone else. Sometimes what the other fellow thinks is important, too. As Clark Murdoch and others have pointed out, strategy should decide numbers, not vice versa.

But the Global Zero movement appears preoccupied with numbers, specifically with the number zero. There are several aspects of the report that I think are worth noting. First, I think the report, like the movement itself, is built on three intellectual fallacies.

First, that the worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons is feasible. Second, that it’s desirable. And third, that if we lead down that path others will follow.

We all know that the technology to create nuclear weapons can’t be dis-invented or un-invented. This alone calls into question the feasibility of a nuclear free world. Moreover, nuclear weapons have been the largest impediment to large-scale global warfare since they were invented in 1945.

The idea that we would be safer without nuclear weapons than with them is at least not supported by the historical record. Do we really want to abandon the capabilities that have helped prevent a conventional World War III? I’m reminded of the late British strategist Sir Michael Quinlan, who declared, “Better unquestionably to have nuclear weapons but not war, than to have war but not nuclear weapons.” And former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who when asked why she opposed the elimination of nuclear weapons, stated, “There are monuments to the futility of conventional deterrence in every village in Europe.”

Further there is no evidence to support the proposition that if we gave up our nuclear weapons others would follow suit. In fact, it’s not unreasonable, I would argue, to imagine that doing so would have the opposite effect by encouraging others to fill the vacuum in a race to become the next nuclear
power. Nor is it easy to discern any direct correlation between American nuclear weapons policy and the policy of others. As Mark Schneider as pointed out, Russia has increased its reliance on nuclear weapons and is developing a range of newer and more sophisticated nuclear weapons systems.

Interestingly, the Global Zero report appears to portray Russian nuclear modernization efforts in a positive light. They will improve Russia’s survivability against the threat of an American nuclear first-strike, as if this is a serious concern. It appears that for some U.S. modernization efforts are unnecessary and dangerous, while Russian modernization efforts are stabilizing.

Then there’s China. Whether or not you believe the reports about the so-called underground Great Wall and that China may have several thousand nuclear weapons rather than the several hundred cited by official U.S. estimates, China continues to invest considerable resources in its nuclear capability, as the DOD’s most recent report on Chinese military developments make clear.

Neither North Korea nor Iran appear to believe that nuclear weapons are “increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective,” to quote the words of the so-called Gang of Four, former senior U.S. government officials. Quite the contrary. And there is evidence to suggest that others are looking at novel attack scenarios, such as developing nuclear weapons that maximize EMP or electro-magnetic pulse effects.

Add in India and Pakistan, which by some accounts may soon have the world’s third largest nuclear force, and one tends to get a different perspective on how the rest of the world sees the relevance of nuclear weapons. In short, as the bipartisan Strategic Posture Commission concluded in 2009, the conditions that might make the elimination of nuclear weapons possible are not present today; and establishing such conditions would require a fundamental transformation of the world political order.

Until that day arrives, Global Zero believes we should abandon the triad and eliminate our ICBM force entirely. They assert that the ICBM force has lost its central utility and that ICBMs in silos are inherently targetable. They see this as a liability. But they do not address the fact that the ICBM force presents the adversary with a serious targeting challenge.

Not only are the silos hardened, but there are 450 of them on U.S. soil, along with about 45 launch complexes. If we eliminated the ICBM leg of the triad, we’d be reducing the number of targets on U.S. soil an enemy would have to hit from nearly 500 to a handful, which seems to me to be the antithesis of stability. Moreover, the need to strike a multitude of targets on the U.S. homeland may introduce an additional level of – call it psychological complexity to the deterrence calculus of an adversary – something I think we should wish to encourage.

General Welch, when he was here, outlined the reasons why keeping the triad makes sense: from its resilience to flexibility to adaptability and to the survivability it provides. Having a diversity of weapons and delivery systems also provides a hedge against the technological failure of any one system. Every U.S. administration has understood the value of the triad, including the two Democratic administrations since the end of the Cold War. The Obama administration in its 2010 Nuclear Posture
Review, explicitly recognized the importance of maintaining the triad. But recognizing its value and taking the necessary actions to maintain it are two different things.

A new administration should also reassess the current prohibition on developing new nuclear capabilities. The president has stated the massive nuclear arsenal we inherited from the Cold War is poorly suited to today’s threats. I actually agree. Our weapons were designed against a particular type of threat and were not engineered to be discriminate. But this appears more often to be offered up for a reason to eliminate our nuclear weapons rather than to modernize them.

The administration has prohibited the development of any new nuclear capabilities that would be better tailored to deal with contemporary threats, and the NPR was explicit on this point. The U.S. will not develop new nuclear warheads. Life extension programs will only use nuclear components based on previously tested designs and will not support new military missions or provide for new military capabilities.

This prohibition, I believe, has significant long-term consequences. For example, what incentives are there to attract high quality scientific and engineering talent to the nuclear enterprise when people are told they cannot produce anything new? Simply sustaining weapons that are not suited to the threats we face today, or may face tomorrow, is, I believe, a flawed strategy. Don’t get me wrong. This is not a call to start building new nuclear weapons, although that may be necessary at some point. But it is a call not to preclude courses of action that may be needed to deal with dynamic changes in the security environment.

There are a number of other questionable assumptions and conclusions, I believe, in the Global Zero report, but I won’t dwell on them here. While I believe it’s critical to invest in a flexible and resilient nuclear deterrent, I also believe the next administration must develop a comprehensive strategy that incorporates other elements of power, including military power, into our strategic posture. General Kehler mentioned the need for tailored deterrence, including kinetic as well as non-kinetic capabilities and the exploitation of space and cyber space. This not only will give policymakers a broader set of options for dealing with contemporary and emerging threats, but can also be seen as a hedge against the possibility our nuclear arsenal will atrophy to the point it becomes too small to deter, too inflexible to respond, too unreliable to assure or too ineffective to maintain.

The 2001 NPR, which I was involved with, envisioned the growth in advanced conventional capabilities and missile defenses as important complementary capabilities to nuclear weapons that would allow us to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, while we achieved the nuclear reductions envisioned in that NPR, and codified by the Moscow Treaty, we did not achieve the desired growth in non-nuclear offensive and defensive capabilities beyond an initial rudimentary GMD deployment. More than a decade later, we are still debating future concepts for a prompt global strike capability and have made little progress on fielding anything.

But the current administration has indicated that if we do field anything, it will be fielded in limited quantities. Moreover, despite what I believe is the importance of prompt global strike and missile defense capabilities, there’s a risk that progress in even these non-nuclear areas may fall hostage
to the nuclear zero movement. Ironically, one of the most significant reasons this administration has offered for suggesting the U.S. can safely reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons is perhaps the most serious impediment to achieving the administration’s vision of a nuclear weapons-free world.

The 2010 NPR cites the growth of unrivaled U.S. conventional military capabilities as a key reason we can safely reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons, and in that vein calls for developing long-range strike capabilities. But I would argue that that is precisely why others will not follow our lead. For some, nuclear weapons are the great equalizer in world affairs, allowing them to level the playing field with us. What adversary or strategic competitor will agree to forego nuclear weapons if doing so means accepting U.S. conventional military superiority?

Will North Korea? Will Iran? Will China? What about Russia?

I believe a new administration, if there is a new administration -- eventually there will be a new administration -- should consider investing in technologies that maximize opportunities for success with respect for prompt global strike capabilities and missile defense. This includes looking at directed energy and space-based systems to maximize defensive coverage. However, Michael Gorbachev, the last president of the Soviet Union and a Global Zero spokesperson, stated that unless new types of conventional weapons are prohibited and the weaponization of outer space is banned, all talk about a nuclear weapons-free world, quote, “will be just inconsequential rhetoric.” So the nuclear zero movement may have a detrimental spill-over effect on the other elements of our defense posture as well.

Finally, I think perhaps the greatest challenge a new administration will face is to re-establish a bipartisan consensus on the proper role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy. For more than 20 years now we’ve lacked this consensus. Without it, we will continue to argue over whether we need nuclear weapons at all, and if so, how many weapons we need, what types and on which platforms. Restoring this consensus should be part of the administration’s overall national security strategy. This will not be easy, but it is necessary.

I’ll leave you with this thought. In his final speech to the U.S. Congress, Winston Churchill made the following statement. “Be careful, above all, not to let go of the atomic weapon until you are sure – and more than sure – that other means of preserving peace are in your hands.” I think Churchill’s words are as relevant today as they were when he spoke them in 1952. A new administration must heed them and act accordingly.

Thanks for your attention. Peter, thank you.

(Applause).

I’d be happy to take any questions from the floor.

MR. : Dave, excellent presentation. I agree with all of it.

MR. TRACHTENBERG: Thank you, Peter. Next question.
(Laughter).

MR. : One of the things I certainly agree with is that the neglect of our nuclear posture has cut across multiple administrations, not just this administration, including the three Bush administrations. And one of the mysteries that I’ve experienced, and that you did too, and I’ve never been able to figure it out – as you know, we got a Congressional commission established under the last Bush administration that would have been chaired by Dr. Foster. It was the ideal instrument to try to turn around the trend, in terms of the deterioration of our nuclear posture. And that was the purpose of the thing.

And we had bipartisan support for it, and we dominated the Senate and the House at the time. And yet, the Bush administration’s Department of Defense killed that commission. They wouldn’t put a penny into it. It languished for 18 months and didn’t even have a single meeting.

I have never figured out why they did that. You were in the administration. You know – and I believe if I’m not mistaken, you would have ended up serving on that commission yourself. And they ended up killing this commission. Why? Do you know why they did that?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: Well, Peter, bureaucracies can do strange things. All bureaucracies can do strange things. And as you well know, even when I was in the administration, these kinds of issues were not generally accepted -- within our office and among those who had responsibility for them -- were not generally considered on a day-to-day basis. They were about as far from people’s minds as they are today.

We are two decades since the end of the Cold War, and a certain narrative has developed. And the narrative is that, as I said in my remarks, these weapons are Cold War types of weapons. The strategic environment has changed. We’re in a different situation today.

And I can’t speak to why specific bureaucratic actions were or were not taken. But I can tell you that even in the Bush administration it was difficult at times to get people to wrap their heads around the nuclear issue generally – a very difficult thing to do. It remains difficult to do.

Part of the problem is, I think, just the lack of general education, a lack of historical context, a lack of understanding the relevance of these types of capabilities, the purposes they have served and continue to serve. Until we can sort of break through that, and actually work to restore the general understanding of the importance of these capabilities, I think we’re always going to confront this. You’re right to point this out as a challenge that we’ve faced. I think it’s a challenge that the next administration, whatever the next administration is, is going to face. I think we’re going to be wrestling with this challenge for many years to come.

MR. : Isn’t it going to require presidential leadership? I mean the last president that led on this was Ronald Reagan.

MR. TRACHTENBERG: Presidential leadership would certainly help – would certainly help. But again, it’s incredible difficult in the current environment, and in the foreseeable environment, I think, to get the level of leadership that would actually change the situation.
MR. HUESSY: Let me ask you a loaded question. My colleague Rebecca Heinrich, who used to work with Trent Franks and is now at Heritage, has pointed out that Mark Schneider’s testimony before the HASC laid out 15 examples of where the Russians have explicitly threatened the use of nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies in just the past three years. A report in yesterday’s paper said that the Russians have offered the Venezuelans IRBMs and that Chavez in return had offered the Russians basing rights for strategic nuclear bombers. Is this Putin simply sticking thumbs in the eyes of his adversaries, or is this serious?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I think it is serious. I think it’s serious because I think it reflects a failure on the part of the United States to actually manage the relationship with Russia appropriately. I think many people expected to see a different relationship with Russia and a different type of Russian behavior.

That was part of the rationale behind re-engaging with Russia on arms control. It was part of the rationale behind the New START Treaty, to be able to elicit Russian cooperation and really engage Russia on issues of common concern in a more productive way. I don’t think there’s any indication, certainly none that I’ve seen, that suggests we have been successful in that endeavor.

And I think the 15 examples that Mark Schneider points to are exactly correct. What we’ve seen in recent years are examples where Russia has been increasingly assertive and increasingly threatening. I think it’s more than just posturing. I think it’s something that we do need to take seriously, because after all, it’s not only our security but our allies’ security at stake as well. So I think we need really to re-think the entire relationship with Russia going forward.

MR. ：David, great talk and I applaud you. Let me catch up on something I haven’t looked at in a while. At one point in your talk you mentioned something about the NATO alliance and the American nuclear umbrella as part of that. Can you speak at all about the nature of the dialogue within the alliance, both for longtime and fairly new members with the United States regarding that nuclear umbrella? What kind of pressure are they putting on the administration either way – on the United States either way – in terms of what we do with our nuclear force structure?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: That’s a great question. And I think that this administration hasn’t done the right thing when it comes to rolling our allies into any discussion on what should happen, for example, with the remaining U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe. The allies definitely need to be a part of that discussion.

I also think there are differences of opinion, not surprisingly, between various U.S.-European allies in terms of whether or not the presence of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe is a good thing or not a good thing. I think Frank Miller made a very relevant point a while back when he said that the calls to remove U.S. tactical or theater nuclear weapons from Europe that have been voiced by some of the older NATO allies, don’t resonate very well among some of the newer NATO allies. And it’s really unfair to decline to provide that linkage, that umbrella of protection to the new allies that we once provided to the older NATO allies. And I think he’s right about that.
So there are different opinions here on this, but I think any administration, this one, the next administration, before it makes any decisions in that context, has got to factor in the views of all of the NATO allies. In fact, extended deterrence has been recognized as an important role for nuclear weapons all along. It’s in the 2010 nuclear posture review. And again, it’s a fundamental role that our nuclear weapons play. To make decisions unilaterally, without factoring in the opinions of allies, not just Europeans, Asian allies as well, what have you, I think would be a mistake.

MR. : Dave, the head table has been the source of many of your questions here, but let me kind of just shift back a moment to your comments about the Perry-Schlesinger report. You seemed as though you were supportive of that effort. What I’d be interested in hearing you talk about is, we do have presidential leadership. It’s not exactly what you might want with the Prague speech, but talk a little bit about where you think the NPR that this administration has put forward has failed to implement the general bipartisan perspectives that were incorporated in the Perry-Schlesinger report.

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I want to say a positive thing about the Obama administration’s nuclear Posture Review. When that NPR came out in 2010 and I looked through it, I thought it was a very well written documents and I thought it very clearly enunciated the administration’s policy. In fact, I’m disappointed that we in the Bush administration weren’t able to d– do something similar – did not do something similar with a comprehensive unclassified statement like that.

I was also struck, however, by the NPR’s focus. And if you look at the NPR -- go to the very end of the NPR. It’s the penultimate paragraph in that document, which basically talks about the president’s vision for a nuclear free world; but then says, you know, it’s going to take a long time and there are going to be a lot of prerequisites that need to be (met ?): the resolution of all political disputes, complete transparency. It’s a laundry list of things that to me seem completely unrealistic, certainly to expect in our lifetimes.

So I think while on the one hand the NPR espoused some good words and some good theories, in a sense I’ll also say this, if you read the Obama administration’s NPR there’s some things in there that are very similar to the Bush administration’s NPR in terms of its support for the triad, for advanced conventional capabilities like prompt global strike, for missile defenses. I think you could find all the various elements there except the term new triad. So there’s a lot of commonality there, I believe. But again, it comes down to, how is this implemented? How is this put into practice? And when you look at the funding, when you look at the programs, when you look at the policies – and the NPR explicitly says there will be no development of new nuclear capabilities – then I think you have to call into question – I question whether or not the statements, even though there were some good statements there, are met with appropriate backup in terms of the money and the programs and the policies. So I don’t want to sound entirely negative on this administration, but I think things have been lacking. And again, I think policy is set at the top.

MR. BAKER SPRING: One thing that was curious this year, in my mind, was the testimony of the nuclear lab directors. On procedural grounds alone, it seemed to me, revealed tensions between the labs and NNSA, which logically leads to the question is it more about procedures and process? Are there
substantive disagreements that are emerging between NNSA, which is the primary policy interface with the lab, and not just procedural ones? And if so, what might those be and are we going to see potentially a different description of where we are in the nuclear enterprise from the labs from what we’ve seen in gosh, maybe more than a decade?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I don’t know the answer to that question, and I can’t really address it, although it’s a very good question. What concerns me in looking at the labs and in looking at the entire stockpile stewardship or management program, is that with the annual certification requirement, there always seems to be this caveat that things are okay now, but. You know, if they get worse there might be a problem. If this or that happens, we may not be able to certify.

I get concerned because my sense is that the certification itself is really walking a very, very fine line. And I think if you look at it over the years it’s indicative of the fact that I don’t think we’re doing enough. And it’s getting very hard to sort of hedge our bets these days, I believe. That’s what concerns me, really, in terms of looking at what the labs are doing and looking at the stockpile and the management program.

MR. : You mentioned in your talk that our current nuclear forces are not geared to the current security environment imposed during the Cold War for particular purposes aren’t quite relevant today. You also said you were not prepared to call for the development of new nuclear weapons. But if we were to go down that path, what kind of new capabilities do you think are relevant to the current security environment, the current set of threats that are evolving?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I think that’s an excellent question. And I think if you look at some of the things that other countries are doing in terms of burying targets and infrastructure and trying to find ways, basically, to sort of defeat our capabilities, I think we need to take that into account. The weapons that we have today, of course, were built many years ago.

The last time we built a new nuclear weapon was, I believe, 1990. That’s over 20 years ago. The nuclear weapons we have today are, in fact, in a sense Cold War weapons. They were designed to go after hardened Soviet targets, not really intended to minimize collateral damage – so called collateral damage, what have you.

It is a different environment today, and therefore we should not prohibit, in my view, the development of different kinds of engineering capabilities, design capabilities and the like, to tailor the weapons themselves to potential threats. Now potential threats can take many forms. I don’t know, exactly, what the full range of threats can be. The point I was trying to make is what concerns me is that we are sort of handcuffing our own ability to deal with the evolution of threats, by handcuffing our ability to respond to those threats as they evolve. Sustaining the nuclear deterrent is fine, but sustaining weapons that weren’t designed to deal in an evolutionary way with evolutionary threat is, to my view, inadequate.

MR. : Going back to numbers, when Linton Brooks was here a couple weeks ago, he spelled out a logic that fundamentally says that President Putin of Russia won’t negotiate with the United States,
the United States is not stupid so we won’t reduce to 1,000 weapons. And the interesting question is, do you think that the next administration will or won’t be presented with a fair accompli in that regard?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: That we reduce to 1,000 weapons?

MR.: Yeah.

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I would hope not. I would also – my sense is, and obviously I could be wrong. But my sense is that we won’t know where this administration plans to go in terms of further reductions until after the November election.

The so-called NPR Implementation study, which was also nick-named the 90-day study, it’s more like 90 months with the length of time it has taken. All I’ve seen and all I know about that are the few published reports that have been out there so far. They may be right. They may be wrong.

But I don’t think we’re going to know yet for some time. It’ll be an interesting question for Jim Miller, in terms of what he thinks about that. But I think this is just a question that we’ll have to wait and see. Hopefully – hopefully, we won’t take any actions that are irretrievable or irreversible or that sort of lock the next administration into a situation where something becomes a fair accompli that shouldn’t be.

MR.: I’d like to return to the question from the gentleman in the corner about NATO. He asked it more in the context of how our administration, whichever one it might be, can approach NATO as they move forward. But can we turn that around and now after three years of wrangling, especially between France and Germany, NATO’s come not to a bipartisan but a 28-partisan consensus. It’s a bit strained, but a consensus. How should the allies approach us as they move forward?

And for some reason, the most recent documents from NATO, the Strategic Concept and the DDPR (ph), seem Russia-centric, I think largely as a result of inputs from Secretary Clinton. But as you mentioned in your talk, extended deterrence in Europe, whether it’s from our weapons or British weapons or French weapons, (since ’89 to now ?) was non-specific. But the new documents make it seem Russia (centric ?). How should the alliance deal with – (off mic)?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I think that’s an interesting observation. It’s understandable, I think, why the allies tend to look at these issues with more of a focus on Russia. Obviously, for some, Russia is right on their doorstep. And the history of their relations with Russia are less than pleasant in some cases. So I think that’s understandable.

I think it’s also going to be more difficult if the alliance continues to expand to achieve any kind of consensus within the alliance simply by way of the numbers. Twenty-eight nations is a lot of nations to agree on just about anything. NATO’s new strategic concept still is clear that the alliance is and will remain a nuclear alliance. But it’s going to be interesting because it sort of depends on which ally you talk to in terms of how they approach this.
And if you talk to any of the allies, you can come away with 28 different opinions, actually, in terms of what they think about the issue. It’s not going to be easy. I do think it’s going to be harder. I think the job is going to be made harder for any administration that looks to continue to expand the alliance. But again, I don’t think it’s one of those decisions that we can afford to act on unilaterally.

I don’t know if that answers your question or not. It’s a good question. It’s just a difficult problem.

MR. : NATO has been wrestling with it since the Suez Crisis, after which they decided that they would do everything by consensus.

MR. TRACHTENBERG: And they’ll continue to wrestle with it, for better or for worse.

MR. : You mentioned that you (liked some ?) of the NPR. And so – (off mic) – statements of policy of the administration, would you be willing to say that there is a national consensus of what our strategic nuclear posture should be? And on the other hand, you mentioned – (off mic) – does no new capabilities mean no new systems?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: If I understood your question correctly, I don’t think that there is a consensus in terms of our overall strategic posture. What sort of drove the consensus during the Cold War was the existence of the Soviet Union and the acknowledged threat that it posed. I think today people are talking about threats of international terrorism and all kinds of other threats to the point that I don’t think the strategic consensus exists today. I think it’s important to try to reclaim a strategic consensus on our overall strategic posture. But it doesn’t exist, despite the words in the Nuclear Posture Review.

I think the words were well written. And I think they sort of faithfully expressed the direction that this administration wanted to go. But I do think some of the logic was flawed. And I do think the implementation has been lacking.

What was the second part of your question?

MR. : No new capabilities -- would you understand that to mean no new systems?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: I think no new military capabilities means no new military capabilities. If the systems provide new military capability, then they fall under the prohibition.

MR. HUESSY: What about the platforms?

MR. TRACHTENBERG: Platforms?

MR. HUESSY: Even if the warhead and the guidance stays the same, do you still want to build new platforms?
MR. TRACHTENBERG: Oh I think we need new platforms. I think this administration recognizes the need for new platforms. You’ve got -- just in terms of the strategic deterrent alone -- you’ve got Minuteman missiles that were deployed in the 1970s.

So now the talk is let’s analyze the alternatives and maybe by 2030 we’ll come up with a new land-based missile -- the same with the sea-based deterrent. With the Ohio-class SSBNs retiring, we’re talking about a follow-on platform that’s probably not going to be available before the 2029-2030 timeframe, if then. We’ve been talking about a new manned bomber for how long? Decades.

So yes, I think new platforms are not only okay, but I think they’re necessary, simply because like anything, there’s a finite limit that we can expect existing platforms to continue to serve the role that they’ve served for so long.

MR. HUESSY: Thank you, Dr. Trachtenberg.

DR. TRACHTENBERG: Thank you.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: We will see you here tomorrow with Barry Blechman, and then to Admiral Benedict.