MR. CLARK MURDOCK: I apologize for the last minute bait-and-switch. You almost had a tall, handsome guy who has his hair, instead of by a short, stocky guy who has no hair. Larry Ferrell was my boss for many years in the Air Force, and I got into a habit of when he calls -- even at the last moment and says, “Clark, will you do this for me?” – I say yes. So, yes sir.

I’m happy to be here. I’m just in the process of publishing a report that’s entitled – and I want to make sure I have the title right because it’s the only place where the word consensus really appears – “Forging a Consensus for a Sustainable U.S. Nuclear Posture.” This is a study that was supported by OSD Nuclear Matters, and received oversight from OSD Strategic Forces, essentially. I’m sure the name Madelyn Creedon is a name that’s familiar to you all.

And in that we did essentially two things. One, a case study of the efforts that had been made in Washington and inside the beltway gang, to forge a sustainable consensus. And I talk in particular about the creation of the bipartisan Perry-Schlesinger Commission, which then evolved into the Obama administration’s 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, which then reached another agreement between the 1251 report that laid out the plans for modernizing both the triad and the nuclear complex that supports it, and on about $250 billion over 10 years. I think that’s where it ended up.

And that was the deal that was struck right at the end of 2010 of nuclear modernization for New START ratification. The deal started to unravel almost immediately in 2011, with the most significant first act I think probably being the House appropriators not marking to the budget request, which would have been the first year in implementing that deal. And from that, we tried to get some lessons learned out of that process.

And then the second portion of this study was to bring together what I call the broad – several practitioners, theorists – from the broad middle of the spectrum of opinion on nuclear issues. And we hired eight people as consultants for CSIS, whose job was first of all was to write a short description – a short paper, three to five pages, usually bullets – on three subjects: the role and value of nuclear weapons; on the characteristics of a sustainable U.S. nuclear posture; and then on what would be their recommendation for a political strategy for how you would forge this consensus?
And then from that, we worked through a process that I facilitated to create the statement that I distributed out – called an agreement – in support of a sustainable U.S. nuclear posture. Note, the word is not consensus, because in addition to areas of agreement, we found that there were several areas of persistent disagreement that never went away. And then we came up – we report the lessons learned out of that process to produce the statement that I distributed here. And I just want to speak briefly to our lessons learned from both the case study and from this facilitation effort that I engaged in with these seven to eight leading experts, and then throw it open for questions on any topic that people are interested in.

The case study is something that all of us lived through, during that time. And no sooner was the commission report being signed than you had immediate buyer’s remorse by the chairman of the report who ran out and wrote an introduction to the report that nobody else that was a member of the commission supported. You also had two or three people, depending on how you count them, who signed the report even though it didn’t reflect their views.

Because in my view if you read the Perry Commission report, it is extremely hard to support that report and then go out and oppose the New START agreement. So you have a bipartisan report that was intended to forge a consensus that was immediately rejected on the Hill as being – well, that’s a very interesting report but it doesn’t reflect my view – during that time. And elements of it were then, as they say, cherry picked from that point on.

So then you have the formulation of the Nuclear Posture Review, and many of the people who were involved as drafters for the Perry-Schlesinger Commission, almost immediately moved into government. Jim Miller and I, for example, co-chaired what Jim Schlesinger referred to as the “Tiger Team” for force structure design. And we were the ones that came up with different options during that time. But by the time my Tiger Team – and it was my Tiger Team because Jim was in the government at that time. Brad Roberts, coming into the government, was delayed so he could finish drafting the report during that time.

So a lot of the intellectual capital that was built into the Perry-Schlesinger Commission moved into the government at that time. And I think that there were several participants, certainly in the Department of Defense which I’m closest to, who thought that they were representing the agreement struck during the Perry-Schlesinger (phase ?), because there wasn’t a consensus because they didn’t agree on the fundamentals -- but the agreement -- and that came out in the Nuclear Posture statement.

New START was agreed to. In the end-game for getting New START ratification, then-Senator Kyl led the negotiations with the administration on beefing-up and adding more detail
to the modernization plan for the triad and for the nuclear complex. And then what looked to some as maybe an act of bad faith, voted against ratification.

But there was still the position on the part of the administration – or some within the administration, not all of them – was that Senator Kyl’s work enabled New START to get ratified because it allowed several Republican Senators to vote for it. And Senator Kyl had never said that he personally would vote for it. But anyway, they got through New START ratification.

And then, it started to unravel. And by the time the Budget Control Act was passed and the fiscal climate had changed in July and August of 2011, prospects for being able to implement the deal that was struck at that time started to unravel. So no consensus, but you had an agreement with a (set of words ?) within the Perry-Schlesinger Commission and you had a deal that was struck that started to unravel fairly quickly during that time.

As we look, we think that there are still the prospects – looking into the future – still the prospects of forming a more lasting consensus, but it has to go back to fundamentals. There has to be a dialogue between the Executive branch and the Congressional branch, on the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security, on the contributions they make to U.S. national security, for how long and of what type? I want to turn from the case study to this agreement that you have in front of you. Again, not a consensus because I’ve identified several places in the text where people sharply disagree and we have a persistent disagreement.

The nature of the security environment. One of the things -- to go back to the process -- is that I had thought when I started this project was that the broad middle would be the consensus, that I would try to take the middle 65 percent of the people. And my minimum requirements were, if you could spread them on a continuum and that they could talk to each other. There are people a little further out on each end who can’t really talk to each other, during that time.

There was another explicit assumption that came through. I hadn’t realized it, but it reflected my biases. I didn’t select anybody to be a member of this group who’s underlying agenda was really to see the United States rust its way to disarmament.

(Laughter).

You know, to use the dysfunctional nature of our political process, the polarization, the ability to block movement. I didn’t want anybody – and I think we could name who we’re talking about – who wanted to rust their way to disarmament during that process. And so that led to, as we looked at these individual statements and people talked to each other, we didn’t have that kind of consensus.
We had two consensuses. One was the center-left one and one was the center-right one, with two or three people that were in the middle -- on the center of both of them -- but it was center-left and center-right. We had scheduled a working group meeting for the day after the election. I said, what was I thinking?

We cancelled that group and then awaited the outcome of the election. And then we started with a center-left consensus. If Romney had won, we’d have started with the center-right one. Elections matter.

So then what we tried to do is to stretch the consensus as far as we could towards the right to see how far it would go. And I learned two powerful lessons from that process. One is that this is not a linear distribution of opinion.

At one point I chose two people, one to the left and one to the right of center, and said if I can get consensus between those two guys everybody else will fall in between. I got a consensus agreement between those two guys. Everybody else didn’t fall in between.

These issues are too complex, there’s too many dimensions to them. You start losing people. People I thought were comfortably in the middle between these two guys, left the consensus.

So I had to start over again and re-work it with everybody at the same time. I started to pull it to the right a bit to try to get one of the people who eventually didn’t sign the statement, and I started to lose people to the left, who said, you can’t do that. So the concessions, the changes I had made to try to attract that person from the right, I took back out, because if he wasn’t going to sign I wasn’t going to give him the concession.

We tend to make that mistake when we’re trying to build an agreement, where you negotiate with somebody and negotiate with somebody, and we’ll assume that they’re operating in good faith, which is not always a good assumption to make when you doing these deals in Washington. If they don’t sign, the concessions you give them come off the table again, because otherwise you just water-down the agreement that you have in order to go attract somebody who wouldn’t agree to the final output.

The final output is the statement that you have in front of you. I’m not going to go through it. It’s an interesting one and it indicates that there are a few issues that are like theology, as one of our participants pointed out.

The value of nuclear weapons. Some people believe that they’re profoundly threatening. Other people believe they make the world unsafe for major conventional war. So there’s a fundamental difference on the theology.
It also means that there’s a fundamental difference on the value of nuclear weapons. Then, there was also a fundamental difference on the vision of a world without nuclear weapons, both its practicality, its feasibility and its desirability. Now I have to admit I’ve always taken a copout position on that, one similar to one my former boss Les Aspin use to take. He said, of course I want a world without nuclear weapons. We’re the big conventional power. That’s a better world for us.

Now that’s not what most people mean by that, because that reason is why everybody else wants them, if we’re the big conventional power. That’s not going to help get the world rid of nuclear weapons. But that has been sort of my position.

And on feasibility, I’ve always been in the skeptical camp on that. And as long as we’re talking about not within President Obama’s lifetime, I know it’s not in my lifetime because I’m an old guy. So I don’t even think about feasibility of things within my lifetime, and after I’m dead, I don’t care, you know?

(Laughter).

But that is an issue that fundamentally divides people. And when you’re trying to negotiate a deal, they look at any unraveling is down the slippery slope towards a world without nuclear weapons. And you know, ideas matter, words matter during this time. And there’s no question that the perception of many actors in this about the Obama administration were colored, affected, shaped by the express statement of the president that this was the direction he was going to go in to reduce the role of nuclear weapons as part of moving towards a world without nuclear weapons.

A final issue that’s almost theological is ballistic missile defense. It was actually an issue on which I gave concessions in order to try to broaden the consensus, and took the concessions back. It’s amazing for somebody who has been in the business as long as I have – when I was working on the Hill for Les Aspin there was no consensus, at all, on missile defense. Now, everybody believes in theater missile defense. But that wasn’t true – theater ballistic missile defense. As you see in the statement, It’s a very strong statement of support for the positive role that missile defense plays in dealing with regional rogues like North Korea and Iran.

Where the argument is, is over national missile defense. And part of it is the old Cold War arguments about the extent to which ballistic missile defenses are destabilizing, in terms of the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union. That’s still a matter that persists today. And also, profound disagreements on whether it works, you know?

And this is a disagreement that cuts through the Executive branch and the Congressional branch as well. The Bush administration spent nine to ten billion dollars a year to build a
capability that nobody really wants to use because if you do it means deterrence has failed. But they really, really don’t want to use it because they don’t really know if it’s going to work in the way it was suppose to.

But that doesn’t stop us from responding to North Korea’s bluster by adding more to that capability. It’s a good signal of capacity. I’ll leave it to Jim Miller to add how taking SM-3 off the table contributes to deterrence or not. It’s not a question I want to address.

But it certainly makes likely, more likely, more likely a very unlikely prospect of a new U.S.-Russian agreement on New START II, during that time. But missile defense was an issue, not quite as divisive as the value of nuclear weapons to U.S. national security. But it was one that there were definite bending points that neither those on the left nor those on the right were willing to accept.

So anyway, a very interesting effort. The report itself will be out in a couple of weeks. By the time Peter has posted this debate, if anybody wants to go back to this discussion and look at it, you’ll be able to link to the report at that time. The individual statements are interesting, and I think this statement is interesting. There is a lot of agreement, it’s just not on the big issues.

Any questions?

(Applause).

MR. PETER HUESSY: Clark, there’s three areas that I’d like you to kind of give us your thoughts on the range of opinion: extended deterrence, particularly our Asian and our European allies. There is a current of people being unsettled and I wanted to see if you could address that in terms of our allies. The second issue is the argument that a number of analysts make that we can deter and maybe dissuade, but the defeat part of our posture means that we’re talking about what they call war-fighting and that we should be postured not to take out the other guy’s forces, even in a retaliatory mode in terms of, I guess you’d call that damage limitation. And the third thing is the issue of the proliferation in Iran and North Korea are – and I think they’re the problem – to what degree do reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons really impact that in a beneficial way?

MR. MURDOCK: Okay, I think those are all the questions I have time for in the remaining half hour.

(Laughter).
I’ll start again with another speech. I’ll take the last question first because it’s the simplest one. My group agreed – and if you look at the people who signed it it’s pretty remarkable.

My group agreed that any actions the United States and Russia took with respect to their nuclear arsenals had no impact on North Korea, had no impact on Iran. They’re far more concerned about the U.S. as a conventional threat. It’s not direct deterrence, it’s extended deterrence is a much bigger issue for the United States, I think, in terms of nuclear weapons.

But they agreed that if we make moves in that area – and there was disagreement on this – but some believe that if we make moves on our arsenal it will encourage other non-nuclear states to work more closely with the United States in advancing its anti-proliferation goals with respect to North Korea and Iran. This group in the signed statement said, there’s not much evidence of that yet. That’s also a remarkable thing, when you consider the people who signed it.

My own feeling is the answer is no in both cases, because I don’t think there’s any hard evidence that’s there. But I think more significantly, this broad middle of the spectrum of opinion also is very – no impact on North Korea and Iran. The jury is out on whether it has any impact on people’s cooperation. Maybe, no doubt, START II will do it.

Okay, extended deterrence. The Nuclear Posture Review is all about extended deterrence. So was the Perry-Schlesinger Commission.

The United States is – Dick Betts is an old friend of mine. I heartily commend the article to you because he wrote an article in the current Foreign Affairs called, “The Lost Logic of Deterrence.” And I haven’t gone back and done an audit yet, because he’s only talking about U.S. deterrence against Russia, China and with rogue states. He doesn’t use the term extended deterrence. Yet extended deterrence is what the United States is all about right now.

We’re the largest conventional superpower by far. We can obliterate any nation on earth, it just takes longer with conventional weapons than it does with nuclear weapons. Direct deterrence isn’t a problem for us, it’s extended deterrence. And I was surprised that Dick could write an entire article on deterrence and not even mention extended deterrence, because that’s where the crux is. And it’s about assurance.

In an earlier study I’ve done I quote the “Healey Theorem” for a former defense minister of the U.K. back in the Cold War. He said, you know, it only takes a probability of 10 to 15 percent to deter the Soviets that we’ll carry through with our threat. It takes 90 percent to assure our allies that they believe what we say, you know?
And that kind of balance is always there because when you look at an extended deterrent commitment, you’re asking nations that could develop a nuclear weapon to forego a nuclear weapon and trust somebody else to risk their cities in defense of their cities. It’s the Tokyo versus San Francisco question. A very tough decision to make, particularly when you start looking at the definitions of say both France and the U.K. for why they want nuclear weapons.

It’s an integral definition of sovereignty, in France. You know, for some nations – and I would include India and Iran in this category – it is an expression of themselves as a civilization. You know, an Indian diplomat once told a good friend of mine, India is a great nation and all great nations have nuclear weapons. Of course we’re going to have nuclear weapons.

So, extended deterrence is what it’s all about on this one. And I think, you know, that at one time we convinced the Japanese that the TLAM-N was their weapon, until we got rid of it. Well, we shouldn’t have convinced them in the first place.

Now, we’re in a situation where some people think we really have four legs to the triad, not three, the fourth being DCA’s based in Europe. Those DCA’s, they’re expensive in the sense of – not the nuclear capability so much on an F-35, although you can’t mention word F-35 without exorbitantly expensive coming to mind. The F-35, it is the B-61 LEP that you have to have in order to have a nuclear capable F-35. And $10 to $12 billion, the latest estimate, that’s serious chump-change in this environment.

And, you know, it starts to bring in issues when you start thinking about the future of the triad. And I’ve done some work on that. My future work is going to include additional work on a sustainable U.S. nuclear poster.

We’ve done a framework of all nine options. You’ve got a triad the way we do it today. Then you’ve got a cheaper triad, and then you’ve got a really cheap triad.

The really cheap triad is Virginia-class submarines rather than Ohio-class submarines, with further range missile on them. I mean after all, if you’re talking about a ship-launched ballistic missile – I had one submariner (in color ?) uniform say, the great thing about subs is you can’t find them anywhere. And I said, if you can’t find them anywhere why do you have to have such a long-range missile on them?

And then you start getting into questions of bombers -- whether it’s a stand-off bomber or whether it’s a penetrating bomber -- the expense cost associated with that. And then when you get the really cheap – you can’t really make ICBMs cheaper than you do now, you know? You can replace them, and it’d still be pretty cheap compared to others.
But then you start asking of the United States, why haven’t we tried what the Russians and the Chinese do, mobile missiles? And that’s pretty cheap too, when you start comparing that to an SLBM. Anyway, costs are going to drive you – I’m sorry to bring up these kinds of subjects in a place like this -- but costs are drivers on this. And then, of course, you go to dyads and then monads and you look at all the different variations of those as well.

Deter, dissuade, defeat – you go out to StratCom and yes they continue to use the word deterrence, but they’re concerned about employment. Their job is the employment of weapons. Their job is carrying out the guidance. It has always been that: SIOPs, different kinds of plans.

And it is the employment of nuclear weapons if deterrence fails. The requirements for defense have always been larger than they have been for deterrence because frankly, nobody knows how much it takes to deter. Nobody knows how much it takes to deter.

Now John Wolfsthal, who has focused on this issue a lot, formerly part of the administration, said at not this most recent conference at Carnegie, but an earlier conference, he thought that the number of nuclear weapons that would deter the United States was under 30. I don’t know if that’s true or not. I don’t think there’s an American president who could use less than 30 missiles if the United States had been attacked by 50 missiles.

But I’m just saying, I don’t know if less than 30 would deter us. But he also went on to say that he thought that Russia was moving in the same direction. I know that’s not true.

So how many does it take to deter? I don’t know. Nobody really knows. Does it take several thousand? No.

And I think the Soviets -- to me one of the big conundrums of the Cold War -- that at the same time they had 30,000-plus nuclear weapons, they also built this huge BW complex. What’s up with that? I can’t even think how to employ it after all the nuclear weapons have been used during that time.

Next question.

MR. : You had some interesting things to say about your process, and I’d like to probe that a little bit. One thing, you may have seen in miniature, why if it’s hard to get a group of about a dozen people, all very knowledgeable and all respecting each other, to try to agree; it’s even harder to get a group of 535 people with varying degrees of intelligence and not necessarily respecting each other, to agree. But the late Bob Linhardt, who I thought was one of the best analysts in town, use to say that in the United States government you can get people to agree on what to do provided you don’t ask them to agree on why you’re doing it.
And I’d like your sense, having just gone through this, of whether that is the best way to approach the question of dealing with our future nuclear posture?

MR. MURDOCK: Bob, too, was one of my former bosses, not for very long I’m afraid because he tragically passed away within a week of becoming my boss. It was somebody’s way of telling us there were too many brains in that particular office during that time. You’re right, it’s much easier to get agreement on what to do than why you do it.

As we found with this drill, we couldn’t get agreement on fundamentals, like the value of nuclear weapons. So it means that any deal you have can unravel very quickly. You can reach agreement on what to do, but it’s fragile.

And that’s why I would argue you do have to have a debate where people on both sides of the aisle come to trust the other and accept the fact that it’s easier for a Republican administration to do arms control than it is for a Democrat. Because if a Republican president does arms control he’s got ready people on the Democratic side who will support arms control. And it’s easier for a Democratic president to do modernization of the complex, the modernization of the triad, because he’s going to have support on the Republican side.

That is, until the deficit hawks overtook the defense hawks. You’ve got a bit of a problem with that right now because you’ve got sequester. But there’s no question that the cross-aisle consideration is a bit easier for certain subjects.

And it does mean that one of our findings is that you can’t just do modernization by itself. You can’t just do arms control by itself. It has to be part of a package that attracts enough people to it that Democrats will hold their noses and put more tens of billions of dollars in it to modernize it, if they believe that the overall trend of arms control and nonproliferation are going in the right direction.

And that’s the fundamental assumption that under- lied Perry-Schlesinger, and was fundamental to the Nuclear Posture Review, and under the New START modernization deal. And even though it unraveled some, we’re still slugging forward on that deal now and trying to make it work. Because I don’t think you get agreement on the why in this area. It’s just not there.

MR. : Clark, the administration, of course, is undertaking a nuclear review of their own. What do you see as the major elements that remain to be resolved in that analysis and debate internally in the administration? What do you think is the most likely outcome of the review?

MR. MURDOCK: Well I think that debate has been over for, I don’t know, about a couple of years now. What is it, about a 100 day report that was 99 days finished two years
ago? I mean, the drama of the – the case study is quite interesting, from my perspective. And this is not quite in our case study, but it’s my perception of things.

Getting New START ratified turned out to take much more political capital than I think anyone imagined. Let’s hear it for Senator Kyl. He played the politics (as he should ?). What was in the back of his mind was getting the administration to expend so much political capital just getting New START – a very modest treaty by anybody’s evaluation – getting New START ratified so they wouldn’t have anything left for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

In the consensus report, the consensus statement that you have, the agreement statement rather, we say people were divided on the wisdom of pushing for CTBT ratification. But everybody agreed we should base our assumptions on no more testing. So the only thing that’s out there is further U.S.-Russian reductions. And the real debate is over – and it’s not much of a debate because I think the issue has been decided – over whether it will be unilateral or negotiated. I think the administration has already decided, quite wisely, they don’t want to take the political heat associated with trying to do it unilaterally, which means they have to engage the Russians.

And right now, I don’t see an agreement that the Russians would reach with the United States that the president could take to the Senate. And that’s because of missile defense, essentially. That’s what the Russians are concerned about, is missile defense. The SM-3, I don’t know the system well enough to know if there was ever any prospect of its being the kind of effective system – and how many billions of dollars that would have created in something like that. But, it would have evolved.

But I do know that SM-3 was a showstopper for the Russians, during that time. They wouldn’t even talk to us. It was like a pre-condition before any kind of meaningful negotiations on further reductions. And it’s ironic, because it is a situation, as some have pointed out, the United States is negotiating to reduce its stockpile down to a level that the Russians would have to build up to to maintain. And so, you’ve got a problem there too.

MR. BRUCE MACDONALD: Hi, Bruce MacDonald. First, a shout out really to you for the great job that you did with the Perry-Schlesinger Commission. I mean we did not know when that started out that we would need the kind of assistance we needed on force posture. And Clark stepped into the gap and did a magnificent job. And then, as you say, even more when we were hit with massive defections –

MR. MURDOCK: Let’s just put it this way, it’s not the first time I’ve pitch-hit for Jim Miller.

(Laughter).
MR. MACDONALD: Massive defections. And Clark did such a great job and hooray to you for doing that. I’m at the U.S. Institute of Peace which supported the study.

My question is, one of the things in the report talked about China and the Chinese nuclear strategic posture, and that the numbers were increasing. And it said that this may be because—always a good hedge word; you know, one way to get a good report among people is to use lots of weasel words that could be interpreted either way—may be increasing in numbers because of U.S. missile defenses. Could you share with us your thinking about what you think is driving or what is behind the Chinese philosophy in their forces and what the implications are for the United States and what we should do to make sure that we keep our posture strong in that regard?

MR. MURDOCK: It’s a big issue. I’m not a China specialist. I’m a hardware kind of guy. Sticks and stones may break my bones. Well yeah, right.

Missile defense, I said—a national missile defense and one of the big issues is China with respect to that. And I think we’re seeing some play-out of that now. When Secretary Kerry was over, he should have been making the point, and I suspect he was making the point, that look, you’ve got to do something about North Korea. Because when you don’t do something about North Korea and they act like this, we move additional assets into the theater that you may not like because of the balance between the United States and China. You know, missile defenses, they don’t differentiate which country a missile comes from. If they’re positioned in a way to take care of North Korea, they’re also positioned in a way to take care of China, during that time.

China has a known no first use. We use to have debates in this country between people who didn’t want no first use and people who did want no first use but didn’t really mean it, and those who meant no first use and did mean it. We all know that if circumstances are really created in which the leader of a nation has to think about using a nuclear weapon, the declared policy of no first use is of no use, from that perspective. It’s just declaratory policy, because you don’t really think about what you’re going to do until you really face the conundrum of what to do with it.

So I think the Chinese are starting to understand that when they do not do more to dampen down what North Korea does, it results in security things happening like the movement of national missile defense assets towards Guam, for example, that can make a difference. So the Chinese equation is quite important. And it’s not just the China equation, because China has to think about Russia too.

We think about Russia. We think about the other front. They have to think about that front. The Russians have to think about the Chinese.
I recently engaged in an exercise sponsored by – recently being two days ago – an exercise to talk about how the erosion of the U.S. nuclear posture might affect things. And I think – pretty direct – I think nuclear weapons have a lot to do with global status and influence, the perceptions that people have. And second to none – which is again something that this group of people all agreed to – second to none.

They didn’t want to be inferior to the Russians. Why? Because they didn’t want to encourage the Russians to think that they were a superior nuclear power and what that might mean in terms of calculations and so on. So you take something like second to none, you look at deterioration, and it affects issues like extended deterrence.

And so to me the equation is fairly direct, less nuclear capability, the less perception of nuclear competence, the loss of U.S. global and regional influence, the increase in regional and global instability, more demand for defense industry products. I mean, it’s pretty straightforward in my mind. It’s sort of like, you can pay me now or you can pay me later. But you have to look at the underlying political and symbolic implications of the loss of nuclear status. And I think that’s where the China equation comes in.

And it would not surprise me if tomorrow we found out – I don’t think Phil Carver is right that they’ve got thousands of missiles out in those miles, but it wouldn’t surprise me at all if they have twice as many. It’s part of the strategic culture – part of the strategic culture.

MR. : Did your consensus building efforts address the issues of whether a hedge is needed and how much of a hedge would be required and how you might use it? I guess the paraphrase is, a contemplated reductions environment.

MR. MURDOCK: I think everybody agreed, even those on the left, that nuclear weapons are a hedge against political uncertainty, geopolitical uncertainty, that they’ve had a suppressive effect upon large-scale violence, during that time. And the possession of nuclear weapons – I don’t think Kenneth Waltz is entirely right about that – but there’s no question that the fear of nuclear escalation has had a inhibiting effect upon the actions and behavior of statesmen. You know, the hair on the back of your neck goes up more when you think about it.

You can see it in the India-Pakistan case, which is about as fraught with tension as you can imagine, with the interplay between the conventional inferiority of Pakistan and India’s Dead Start or Fast Start, whatever it is – Cold Start. Dead, would be the wrong word, but there’d be a lot of deaths during that time – Cold Start. Even there, it has an inhibiting effect, during that time.

And so nuclear weapons are a hedge. Now how much of a hedge do you need? That gets into issues like triad versus dyad. And my own sense of it is that this country will try to
keep a triad as long as possible. Things have to get really, really tight before we start moving towards a dyad. That’s my own gut feeling.

MR. TOM COLLINA: Tom Collina, Arms Control Association. I agree with you on your last statement that the triad is going to be with us for a long time. You also mentioned a cheaper triad, which I think we also have to deal with as we go forward, given sequestration and all the rest. And you mentioned your thoughts on how to move to a cheaper triad. Given what you know about how the administration is dealing with on all three legs and modernization plans thereof, how would you move forward with that package of modernization activities given the budget environment we’re in?

MR. MURDOCK: The Stimson Center has probably done the best work, the best recent work, on the cost of sustaining the current triad. And it’s about $32 billion a year, I think is what they estimated. If you look at under sequestration and where we’re coming down to, that’s $32 billion in ’13 dollars of sequester capped levels of about $487 billion, according to the recent CBO work, during that time.

So you look at $32 billion out of $487 billion and that ain’t that much, just in terms of that cost. Now, yes, when you look at a $250 billion ding for the complex and for the triad itself, that starts looking like a lot more. But still, for a $487 billion defense budget in constant ’13 dollars, you can afford whatever level of nuclear forces you want. It’s just the priorities you put on it during that time.

To me, a lot of it depends on your concerns about the emergence of a Cold War-like competition emerging between the United States, China and Russia. If you think that there’s a significant prospect of that, you want to keep ICBMs because it raises the barrier of entry. We live in a world right now where we don’t know where sensors are going to go, and computing power is going to go, and big data is going to go.

The amount of aim points associated with our subs and with our aircraft is very, very small compared to hardened ICBMs silos, during that time. So if you’re concerned about a potential for great power competition, Cold War-like competition, you want to keep the ICBMs as a hedge. That keeps you in the triad business for quite a while because it’s not cost that drives you on the bomber side.

We’re going to have bombers. We’re going to have bombers anyway. And adding the nuclear capability to them, apart from the warhead, you’re talking five to seven percent additional costs, maybe 10 percent. But it’s not cost that drives you on the nuclear capable bombers.
SLBMs, that’s a different issue, during that time. But right now in the community, SLBMs are considered the most survivable leg of the triad. But in some ways they’re also the most provocative leg of the triad because you’re never going to get Russian ICBMs off alert as long as the United States has SLBMs. Because as we all know, the thing about SLBMs is you can’t find them, today.

So I think people are going to look at cheaper versions of the triad because they’re looking at cheaper versions of everything. But I don’t think it’s going to be cost pressures themselves that drive it down.

Okay, Peter?

MR. HUESSY: I’m going to ask you one more question.

MR. MURDOCK: Gee, it’s almost 9 o’clock

MR. HUESSY: I know. In honor of the original topic of Jim Miller’s remarks, could you give us kind of where you see the continuum of missile defense issues that you folks have explored, however you want to go on that? I just think I would like to hear that.

MR. MURDOCK: Missile defense is an issue on which there’s a great deal of dispute, some of which is almost theological in nature. I think the consensus on missile defense has moved a lot in this new era because people are a lot more worried about non-deterrable adversaries, or less deterrable adversaries. Terrorists, obviously, are non-deterrable. They’d like to force the United States into using a nuclear weapon and would use a nuclear weapon or a nuclear capacity if they had it. I continue to be surprised that we haven’t had a dirty bomb, considering the vulnerability of radiological material. I continue to be surprised at that, particularly in the wake of Boston – or just reinforced in the wake of Boston when you think about it because the technology for a dirty bomb, that ain’t hard, during that time.

So you clearly think a lot more about defenses. Iron Dome in Israel, a bit of a game changer, I think, in terms of the effectiveness of that capability and what it meant. In terms of the most recent conflict over Gaza, it was very different than the one six or seven years ago over Lebanon.

The effectiveness of defense has made a big difference there. So the case, I think, for theater missile defenses has been made, during that time. It’s a question of how much and who pays for it and under who’s control and a number of other things like that.

It’s the national missile defense that is a bigger thing, and I think actually that argument on the substance of it has been won. People want national missile defense if they can have it. We’ll buy missile defenses, national missile defenses, even if we’re not convinced of their
utility, because we want to send a message. We might have wanted to do a few other things with the recent decision to beef-up the ground-based interceptors on the West Coast.

We’re going to look at an East Coast system. We’re going to do it now. Congress has insisted. There will be one at some point. I have no doubt about that, during that time.

So I think the case for missile defenses has been made, and it’s a question of how fast we go and how extensive we go and what we spend the money on. But I don’t think—you know, the argument that used to prevail when I was still back on the Hill, you know, about the destabilizing effect and so on; it’s hard to say that when you’re buying something that protects you from Kim Jong-un. He’s a pretty destabilizing kind of guy, you know?

(Laughter).

How can missile defenses be destabilizing? Okay, thank you very much.

(Applause).

MR. HUESSY: Wonderfully done, Clark. Before you get up, just a minute. I do want to remind you Congressman Rogers—this is the HASC Subcommittee chairman, the Intelligence Committee chairman—is going to speak, but we haven’t scheduled it yet. But Congressman Rogers is the 24th.

And our esteemed guest from the Navy, Admiral Burke, is going to be speaking on the 30th here, not the ROA, but he will be speaking here on the 30th. And then we have Mr. Cook from NNSA, I believe is May 7th, if I’m not mistaken. So the schedule you see posted at AFA goes through, I think, June. But that’s just because July—

MR. : July is in.

MR. HUESSY: Okay, then it’s all there. So there you go, and please email Sarah or I if you haven’t signed up. I want to thank our sponsors. And Clark, that was an extraordinary presentation.

MR. MURDOCK: Happy to do it.

MR. HUESSY: And we really enjoyed it.

MR. MURDOCK: I set the bar pretty low for you.

MR. HUESSY: You set it very high. Thank you, Clark.

(Applause).