

National Institute for Deterrence Studies & Peter Huessy Seminar
***No New Start: Renewing the U.S. - Russian Deal Won't Solve Today's
Nuclear Dilemmas***

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Webinar Transcript

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Abstract

The August 1, 2025, Huessy Seminar, titled "*No New Start: Renewing the U.S.-Russian Deal Won't Solve Today's Nuclear Dilemmas*," convened leading national security experts The Honorable Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric Edelman to examine the evolving challenges of U.S. nuclear deterrence in a multipolar world. Hosted by the National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) and Peter Huessy, the seminar addressed the limitations of the New START treaty and the urgent need for strategic modernization in light of expanding nuclear capabilities by Russia and China.

The speakers argued that the treaty's 1,550 warhead limit is outdated and insufficient for deterring two nuclear peers simultaneously. They advocated upgrading additional warheads to existing delivery systems and expanding modernization efforts, including submarines, bombers, and command-and-control infrastructure. The discussion emphasized the inadequacy of current regional deterrence postures and the importance of missile defense and space-based assets.

Rejecting the notion that restraint would prevent an arms race, Miller and Edelman highlighted adversarial violations of arms control agreements and the lack of interest from China in nuclear negotiations. They called for a credible, flexible deterrent posture that prioritizes national security over treaty constraints and prepares the U.S. for a future where arms control must adapt to new geopolitical realities.

The seminar concluded with a robust Q&A session, reinforcing the need for bipartisan support and strategic clarity in shaping the future of U.S. nuclear policy.

Executive Summary

The Huessy Seminar, hosted by the National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) and Peter Huessy, featured distinguished speakers Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric Edelman. The session focused on the evolving challenges in U.S. nuclear deterrence policy, the limitations of the New START treaty, and the strategic imperatives for modernization.

Key Themes and Insights

- **Deterrence Fundamentals:** Frank Miller emphasized that deterrence relies on will, capability, and credibility. He argued that the current U.S. nuclear posture, constrained by the New START treaty's 1,550 warhead limit, is inadequate for deterring both Russia and China in today's geopolitical climate.
- **Strategic Modernization:** Both speakers advocated for uploading additional warheads to existing systems and expanding modernization efforts, including more submarines and bombers. They clarified that uploading does not interfere with modernization, as the operational and modernization teams are distinct.
- **China's Nuclear Rise:** Eric Edelman highlighted China's rapid nuclear expansion, warning that parity with the U.S. could arrive sooner than expected. He stressed the need to prepare for a two-peer nuclear deterrence environment.
- **Arms Control Realities:** The speakers criticized the feasibility of parallel arms control negotiations with Russia and China, citing historical violations and lack of interest from China. They argued that arms control should support deterrence, not constrain it.
- **Regional and Command Capabilities:** The seminar underscored the importance of regional deterrence forces and modernizing command and control systems. Missile defense and space-based assets were also discussed as essential components of future deterrence.
- **Extended Deterrence and Assurance:** The U.S. must maintain credible extended deterrence to reassure allies and prevent nuclear proliferation. This includes visible modernization and deployment of regional capabilities.
- **Policy Recommendations:**
 - Prepare to exceed New START limits post-2026.
 - Accelerate nuclear modernization and regional force development.
 - Develop capabilities that incentivize adversaries to engage in meaningful arms control.
 - Invest in missile defense and space-based deterrence infrastructure.

Unabridged Transcript

(Note: there will invariably be some word errors in the following transcript.)

00:00:10:01 - 00:00:50:14

Kimberly Cherington

Good morning. I'm Kimberly Cherington, and on behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies or NIDS, I want to warmly welcome you to today's Huessy Seminar and a special welcome to our featured guest, the honorable Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric Edelman, who have joined us today. During today's presentation, we encourage you to submit your questions in the chat at any time, which we will address in the Q&A portion of this talk, and stick around to the end to get insights on some of our upcoming speakers or go to our website, thinkdeterrence.com on the events page to learn more and register you and your colleagues.

00:00:50:15 - 00:01:00:07

Kimberly Cherington

Now, it's my pleasure to introduce our host for today's seminar, Mr. Peter Huessy, president and Senior Director of Strategic Deterrence Studies

00:01:00:07 - 00:01:07:03

Kimberly Cherington

at Geo Strategic Analysis and a senior fellow here at NIDS. Peter, over to you.

00:01:07:04 - 00:01:36:10

Peter Huessy

Thank you very much. I want to welcome Mr. Ambassador and Frank Miller, also our president, Jim Petrosky. Eric Edelman will be speaking twice, but he was an Asian American diplomat. He served as undersecretary of defense for policy between 2005 and 2009. He was also ambassador to Turkey and ambassador to the Republic of Finland, and Principal Deputy Assistant to the Vice President for National Security Affairs between 2001 and 2003.

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Peter Huessy

He was a career Foreign Service Officer in the Foreign Service Office Series. In 1992, he's received the Distinguished Civilian Service Award from the Department of Defense and the State Department's Superior Honor Award. Frank Miller is a foreign policy, a nuclear deterrent, and nuclear defense policy expert, sir, of 31 years in the United States government, including the Department of Defense, Department of State, and was a special assistant to the President George W Bush in the white House.

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Peter Huessy

He's also a principal of the Washington-based international business advisory firm called The Scowcroft Group. Frank will lead off our discussion today, about new start and where we ought to go in terms of the future deterrence force, the United States, including arms control issues. So, Frank, on behalf of NIDS, I want to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to come talk to you.

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Peter Huessy

And, over to you, sir.

00:02:33:01 - 00:03:07:00

Frank Miller

Thanks very much, Peter. First, I'll be, extend my gratitude to the whole NIDS team and say how much? It's, an honor and a pleasure to be, on this recording with Eric again. Eric and I do a lot of work together. We have throughout our career, and it's, It's a pleasure. Let me start by taking us back to some basics before we start talking about the New Start treaty, because the basics are either forgotten by most people or never learned the basics.

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Frank Miller

Begin by saying that deterrence is a combination of will and capability, and credibility of our deterrent rests on how people perceive our will and our capability. That's how our enemies perceive us, how our allies perceive us, and what we in fact believe ourselves. So, what is U.S nuclear deterrence policy? For decades it has been to hold at risk what potential enemy leaders have value.

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Frank Miller

That's themselves the support structure that keeps them in place. The secret police, the intelligence services. He selected parts of their military forces, nuclear and conventional, and their war supporting industry. It's those things that they need to dominate a postwar world, and it's those things that they need to know won't exist. If there is a war. So now there are people who will say, we only need to bust potential enemy cities.

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Frank Miller

Well, that's foolish. First of all, it's immoral. And second of all, the people who live in those cities have nothing to do with their leaders' decisions. There are also people who say, let's only target conventional forces and war supporting industry and leave, an enemy's leadership and nuclear forces intact, which precisely gives the enemy exactly what it wants the ability to dominate a postwar world.

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Frank Miller

So, by holding at risk what enemy leaders value themselves, their support structure, their key elements of their nuclear and conventional forces, and the war supporting industry? We had a policy that we successfully followed for several decades now. New start keeps us and the Russians at an overall strategic force level of 1550 strategic weapons. That was perhaps fine for the world of 2010, a world in which the threat was principally Russia, but not really viewed as a threat.

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Frank Miller

The PRC was an afterthought. It only had a few tens of silos. But today is not 2010. Today is very, very different from 2010, and the threats to us have increased. The Russians have almost completed a massive modernization program, have built a large circa 2000 weapon regional nuclear force, and have found various ways to evade the new Start treaty with novel systems.

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Frank Miller

China now has a very growing nuclear force. They have over 300 silos, a great difference from where they were in 2010. And so, we can't pretend that the world hasn't changed and that indeed the target bases we need to hold at risk haven't changed. So the issue is our credibility, which in a crisis and a real crisis could turn deadly if Xi Jinping or Vladimir Putin or their successors doubt our will and our capability, we must have force levels necessary to hold at risk the 2025 to 2030 target faces 1550 is not sufficient, and therefore, as soon as new start expires, we need to be able to start uploading our existing nuclear forces by adding

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Frank Miller

warheads to the Minuteman force, to the Trident Force, and making a larger force of B-52s. That's the short-term fix. And for the longer term, we need to expand the modernization program originally proposed by President Obama to include more submarines and more bombers. We can't do that with New Start. And I'm not. I haven't even touched on. I think Eric will touch on the regional nuclear forces, which do start, does not address at all.

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Frank Miller

So new start stands in the way of our getting an adequate deterrent against China and Russia in modern times. And therefore, our credibility is at risk because we have, we don't have the forces necessary to carry out our policy. And if we don't go past New Start, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin will decide. We don't have the will to have an adequate deterrent.

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Frank Miller

With that, let me stop and turn it over to my colleague.

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Eric Edelman

Well, let me echo Franks. A word of thanks to the entire team that Peter and his colleagues have, that's allowing us to do this. Let me just add a couple of things that maybe build a little bit on what Frank said and on the article we wrote, almost two months ago now in Foreign Affairs.

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Eric Edelman

It starts, I think, by pointing out that we are facing a really novel situation because, China is well on its way to becoming a nuclear peer of the United States. Not quite there yet. But I would stress that it may happen sooner than we think. The Department of Defense reports annual reports on Chinese military power, have said that China will build out its force and be a nuclear peer by 2035.

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Eric Edelman

I would just note that China's deployment of capabilities on the conventional side, have always gone quicker than we thought, and, at greater scale than we thought. And I don't know why there's any reason to believe that that would not be the case on the nuclear side of the ledger. As General Cotton is pointed out in testimony, China already has more, ballistic missile launchers than the United States.

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Eric Edelman

And so I think we have to be, ready to deal with this sooner rather than later, which is one reason why, I think Frank and I believe that when New Start expires in in 2026, we need to begin the process of moving forward to deal with this novel situation of having to deter two nuclear peers at the same time.

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Eric Edelman

I would, also add that, the instrument of ratification by the United States Senate of New Start actually specified a couple of things, one of which was that we had to move forward with modernization. But we are very late to that. As Frank said, Russia is probably 95% done with its nuclear modernization. It's been going the pace for a decade and a half.

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Eric Edelman

China is already in the midst of this large buildup. We're really only at the beginning stages of our effort. It also specified that, in the future, we would have to take into account, the disproportion, the asymmetry between Russian theater, nuclear weapons and art theater, nuclear weapons. Now, we've got to take into account two asymmetries, because China's nuclear buildup is been the focus of a lot of attention on the strategic side, but it's also engaged in the build buildup of theater capabilities.

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Eric Edelman

That, we have difficulty matching. And I think the reality is that the path to any nuclear conflict would start with a regional confrontation. That was certainly the case in the Cold War. I don't see any reason to believe it wouldn't be the same. In the two-peer nuclear world we're about to enter. And so once again, we have some work to do.

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Eric Edelman

And we have to think about the future of arms control in a completely different way in order to take into account these, novel, circumstances that we're facing. I know that there have been some folks who argued that, some of the things that Frank and I recommended in our Foreign Affairs article, particularly uploading, would somehow get in the way of our nuclear modernization efforts.

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Eric Edelman

I don't see any reason why that would be the case. People have proposed, parallel talks with Russia and China. I would actually point out that Frank and I, back in, December of 2020, just on the cusp of the inauguration of the, Biden administration actually proposed that, rather than rolling over new start, which was expiring in February of 2021, with a five year rollover, that it would be better to negotiate a conditional annual rollover with the Russians.

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Eric Edelman

That would be, predicated on, actual progress in negotiations, which would have given the Russians some incentive and which would have also called for inclusion of China in those negotiations. The idea of having parallel talks with Russia and China and keeping them in sync with one another strikes me as, a task, maybe, beyond the ability of the United States government.

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Eric Edelman

Carry out my own experience. I don't want to speak for Frank, but managing a negotiation with one superpower, rival, was stressful enough on the US government back in the Cold War. The idea that we somehow going to manage two parallel negotiations strikes me as distinctly unrealistic. And some people have recurred back to the, freeze on, nuclear warheads that President Trump in his first term, proposed.

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Eric Edelman

And reached a preliminary agreement, with President Putin on the problem with that. Now, in the current circumstances, that it would advantage our adversaries and disadvantage us. And so, I think that, allowing New Start to die a natural death and moving forward to, deal with some of the challenges to our deterrent that Frank outlined is, is really the order, you know, order of the day.

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Eric Edelman

And we ought to be prepared to do that in 2026. And why don't I just stop there and I think Frank and I look forward to a robust discussion with the many folks who have joined, today.

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Peter Huessy

Thank you, Eric, and thank you, Frank. I have three questions. I'd like to start with. It was really said on this seminar series that we should not upload our strategic forces because to do so would disrupt and delayed the strategic nature modernization program currently underway. You've addressed it partially, but I want to ask each of you to go work a little bit more extensively, a bit more detail about part of the argument, I think I heard people say was adding warheads to the ICBMs and so believes is doable, but their view was it would take time and effort away from other parts of the Department of Defense and NNSA, which both have

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Peter Huessy

very a very full plate with respect to modernization. So, Eric, why don't you start and then a couple of broader, Frank. Because that is a question I think, a lot of people are asking is should we should we upload because it's a relatively easy thing to do in the scheme of things, building more submarines probably won't happen until after 2042.

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Peter Huessy

And I could I've got 50 extra ICBMs, but if we could build any more than that, that's going to also be a much more lengthy process. So, Eric, over to you, sir.

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Eric Edelman

Well, I'll, I'll start. And Frank, I'm sure we'll have more to say, but some of this is actually relatively easy because we're going to be in a transition period between, at different paces of different, legs of the triad. So, reactivating some of the Trident tubes, for instance, on existing, Ohio class, submarines doesn't get in the way of Columbia class, you know, moderate modernization.

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Eric Edelman

The same with, you know, taking steps to reverse what we did with, some 30 or so B-52s. And so, I think, you know, that same with Minuteman. I mean, that's not going to get in the way of how we downloaded Minuteman, because correctly, we regarded mirrors as destabilizing. Unfortunately, our adversaries are not following suit and in fact are deploying systems with even more warheads on them, potentially.

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Eric Edelman

Yeah. And so I think it is not outside the can of the US government to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. It will take money and it will take, you know, focus and effort, on the part of the government. And that I think is an important element which we maybe can talk more about because I think these issues have suffered from having fallen into sort of, this way into it over the last 30 years.

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Eric Edelman

And I think there are very few people in the senior ranks of the government who completely understand all of this and that. That is a problem that has to be remedied. But it's got nothing to do with, you know, with, the practicalities of uploading.

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Peter Huessy

Frank, over to you, sir.

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Frank Miller

Thank you. I completely agree with Eric. Let let's be clear, the question that the people who would upload are your operational force. It's the people at the at the weapons storage facilities at Kings Bay in Bangor in the Navy. And that's your Minuteman cruise in the field with the three ICBM bases. They have nothing to do with modernization.

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Frank Miller

Okay. Nothing at all. The people who are modernizing, are they shipyards up and up at Groton and the Norfolk area? They're the people at SSP or designing the Triton to life extension tool, but they have absolutely nothing to do with the people who would upload except at the very top. That's the, you know, the Navy all reports to Admiral Wolf at SSP.

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Frank Miller

So, the fact of the matter is that that argument just doesn't hold water. It's got nothing to do with modernization and upload are completely separate AI, functions. The only place that possibly comes together is, is for the Air Force. When it does the upgrades to the B-52, it has to get new radars anyway. And so, it's in that process that they're going to be the ones that were taken out of the nuclear will be reconverted.

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Frank Miller

So, let me just put that argument to rest. It's completely wrong, factually, completely wrong. And in fact, the Strategic Posture Commission said and that that was a wide range of people from the left to the right, bipartisan, nonpartisan group, said, let's prepare to upload and let's go full steam ahead on modernization. And they did not see any contradiction between those two statements.

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Peter Huessy

Okay. The second question I had, Frank, is, again on my seminar series, there was a proposal or idea that, well, we can wait until 2035 before we add any warheads to our current new start levels of somewhere between 1550 and about 1800, if you count the bomber weapons. And the argument is that we have all we need now to deter China and Russia, and only in 20, 35 and beyond, when if China gets to a higher level, then we can think about adding more warheads.

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Peter Huessy

I'd like you to respond to that if you would.

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Frank Miller

Well, Peter, the logic on that just doesn't hold together. I mean, if you believe in existential deterrence and you don't really have to have an operating force, you can believe that. But the force of 2010, the 1550 looked at the world of 2010, the world's change. The Chinese now have 300 silos where they might have had a couple of tens.

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Frank Miller

The Russian force is, is more diverse. So, the world's changed, the threats changed. And clearly the force designed for 2010 doesn't comply with the threat. And the deterrence requirements of 2025, 2030. So, I just don't understand that we clearly today need to grow the arsenal. Modestly to cover the, the, the dual threat from China and Russia and, and a bit for North Korea.

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Frank Miller

So no, I completely reject that. Eric might want to have something to say.

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Eric Edelman

Well, I, you know, Frank and I, have said in, in, other venues that we don't believe the United States needs to match both Russia and China weapon for weapon in order to be able to deter

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both. But that doesn't mean that the force in being, as Frank said, is now sufficient to deal with this growing, growing threat.

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Eric Edelman

Both Russia and China. And by the way, that's not just the conclusion that Frank and I have reached and that the, Strategic Posture Commission in which he served reached it's also a conclusion that was reached by some of the senior officials in the Biden administration who were dealing with this, same set of problems, and was reflected in the comments that anybody made at the Arms Control Association and had been... made at CSIs, which suggested that there have to be some adjustments, to the force to take into account the growing number, of targets that need to be held at risk.

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Eric Edelman

And still having some reserve, that you can use to deter the other, other potential aggressor. So I, you know, when you add to the fact that, anything we do in this domain takes a long time and takes longer than we think it will initially. I don't think there's really a lot of room to be waiting around to deal with the problem.

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Peter Huessy

Okay. Thank you very much. The third question I had was, it's often said, well, if we add to 1550, the Russians will add and then we'll add and it'll they it's the arms control narrative that seems to be an automatic response to particularly within the media when they talk about nuclear modernization. It seems to everything we, the United States does is starting off an arms race, when in fact, as I've pointed out numerous times, everything we're building currently in the program of record keeps us at the new start level.

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Peter Huessy

So how do we how do you call new start an arms race? It's you can't. So, if we go above that, we might whether we do see launch cruise missile or whatever. But Frank, you and I have talked about this, and the question is. Keith Payne and Dave Trachtenberg and others have done a I think about a year ago, really extraordinary history of this idea that Paul Warnke said, two scorpions in a bottle and or two apes on a treadmill.

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Peter Huessy

I think that was it that there's no there's no end to an arms race. So, stop. Restraint is good. What do you say to, and I've heard during the past debate this year and that that was comments along that line from some of the members. Not that many, but enough. That said, if we show restraint than the other guys will so that we shouldn't add beyond the 1550.

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Peter Huessy

Sorry about the length of my introduction, but this is a very it's a very common response to what you see among the public media think tanks as well as Congress. So take it away, Frank.

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Frank Miller

Well, it's a myth. It's a complete and total myth. I mean, the Russians have been adding weapons, ever since the new start was signed. They do it by circumventing the treaty by coming up with systems like the transoceanic torpedoes and the rivet snick. Which you're not, which are not, controlled by the treaty. And to be perfectly blunt, at the end of the day, I don't care how many weapons the Russians have, if I have a deterrent that can adequately cover my target-based arms control is important.

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Frank Miller

But arms control is an adjunct to deterrence. It can't replace deterrence. And so if I don't have an adequate deterrent, I don't have anything. An arms control is not going to help me. We just as Eric said, and I'm going to turn it to him in a moment. We don't need to have the same number of weapons as the Russians and the Chinese together.

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Frank Miller

We need to have a number of weapons that are necessary to make our deterrence policy credible. And I think we are getting to the ragged edge of that right now. Unless we start uploading. And so, you know, again, the Russians are going to do what the Russians are going to do. We have to have a deterrent that we believe in, that our allies to believe in.

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Frank Miller

And most importantly, that Jinping and Vladimir Putin believe in. And we need to therefore go past new start limits. I think that Eric has been in this business a long time to.

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Eric Edelman

You know, I would just add to what Frank said by saying, I mean, it's certainly possible that, you know, the Russians, would add as, as well, but right now, the Russians, because of their investment in a, a, really brutal war of aggression and attrition in Ukraine, are really, I think, at the outer limits of what their economy will allow.

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Eric Edelman

So, although they certainly have the capability because of what they have in reserve, to upload some of their own systems and increase, the number of warheads that they have. I think there are some limits on how, you know, how much they can, can do because of the straits they find themselves in.

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Peter Huessy

Yeah. Frank, I'm going to turn it over to my president. Jim Petroski. He has two questions, which, Jim, go ahead and ask. And I'll come back after you're done.

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James Petrosky

Yes, thank you very much. And this is really intriguing. But, you know, looking at the past, we you know, I wonder what we learned from Russia's departure from new start. You know what? What is the big lesson takeaway on that in terms of how treaties work and how does this affect any potential nuclear arms treaty with China? Or even if we were even considering having some sort of treaty with, with China, as they begin to expand?

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Frank Miller

To get where you want to go first.

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Eric Edelman

Well, let me start, Frank, and then you can you can revise and extend my remarks. First, the Chinese have shown almost no interest in, having any kind of, nuclear, arms control discussions with us. They barely will talk to us about their nuclear weapons. I have some personal experience of that back in, in the Bush 43 administration.

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Eric Edelman

And as far as I can tell from talking to successors and colleagues and government, that attitude hasn't changed in the last 15 or 16 years. Their, their, position on this is that, you know, the bad us and Russians are way ahead and of nuclear weapons and they have nothing to talk about and understandably, you can see their point because they want to become a peer.

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Eric Edelman

I believe, and any kind of arms control agreement would likely try and mesh them in some level below parity. And so I think we're not likely to see them, be willing to negotiate. Certainly not unless they see us developing systems that they would like to see constrained by some agreement. So, on the Russian side, Frank and I have written on, on this as well, which is that the Russians have, unfortunately, a very long history and pattern of violating almost every agreement that they've signed with us.

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Eric Edelman

I think Frank and I have, calculated that they're in violation of some nine, different agreements, including right now in the war in Ukraine, the chemical weapons treaty. So, to me, that puts the onus on, you know, making the Russians abide by the agreements that they have reached with us before we start launching into negotiating new ones.

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Frank Miller

So, I agree completely. On the first point, China is not interested. In the Biden period, Assistant Secretary of state, for arms control, Mallory Stewart had had meetings with the Chinese in 2023 and said, we want to talk about arms control with you. The Chinese said, no. So, the two parties got together, and the US really is talking points to the Chinese set up next.

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Frank Miller

The Chinese fear arms control because arms control means that you have to have transparency and verification, and they don't want any of that. So, if you knock out the basic underpinnings of an arms control agreement, there's really nothing much to talk about. With the Russians, as Eric said, they're cheating. They're cheating on a new start by, by developing weapons systems which were designed to evade the treaty, just like they developed fourth generation chemical weapons designed to evade the chemical weapons treaty.

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Frank Miller

And they need to be back in compliance with their existing agreements before we start talking about something new. And the Ericsson's, something also very important that people need to remember. Russia and China don't engage in arms control out of the goodness of their hearts, which is kind of what we do. But never mind, they want to constrain US weapons systems.

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Frank Miller

And right now, they're looking at an aging US deterrent, you know, in in 7 or 8 years, once the new systems in the modernization program start being deployed, they may wish to constrain those, and they may wish to bargain seriously about arms control. But that's in the future. Right now, it's quite clear that they have no interest in arms control either.

00:29:50:05 - 00:30:01:13

Frank Miller

Putin regime, except perhaps in getting us to freeze our nuclear weapons at current levels so that we're below the deterrent requirements that we need. And our credibility, sir.

00:30:01:14 - 00:30:20:03

James Petrosky

Yeah. Thank you for that answer. I have a follow up. But before you sort of intrigued me, just a little bit more. If I can press this issue, then in the absence of treaties that are either functional or ones that we are involved in, you know, what is what is our only other arms or what are our other answers?

00:30:20:03 - 00:30:32:12

James Petrosky

And, in deterring these two, countries, you know, aside from, you know, as Peter said, an arms race or at least increasing our arms and our deterrence, what are the other options?

00:30:32:14 - 00:30:58:04

Frank Miller

The option is to have a flexible, modern deterrent force, which clearly meets our deterrent requirements. Full stop period. You know, we need to replace aging systems. We need to build up to the level that the that the military, guided by civilian leadership, believes is necessary to hold Jinping and Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong un, at risk simultaneously.

00:30:58:05 - 00:31:26:00

Frank Miller

And that's what we need. After that, it's gravy. However, as Eric also pointed out, we need to do something about the regional balance. We are woefully inadequate in our regional deterrence

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posture, and systems such as... command need to be accelerated because we only have dual capable aircraft in Europe right now. And nothing in the Pacific in terms of regional posture in place day to day.

00:31:26:02 - 00:31:57:10

Eric Edelman

Yeah. If I could just add to what Frank said, you know, our former colleague in government, David Cooper, has written a paper on the lost art of the bargaining chip. I mean, for those who would like to get back to the, you know, arms control table, and as Frank pointed out in his comments, we Americans tend to see arms control as a positive good in and of itself, as opposed to, a measure for, you know, for constraining our adversaries from things we don't want them to do.

00:31:57:10 - 00:32:24:05

Eric Edelman

And, and allowing us to still maintain a, reasonable deterrent capability. But the way to get there, if you want to get the Chinese or the Russians back to the table, it's for us to have capabilities that are of concern to them that they would like to see limited and weak, and in turn can say, well, we're willing to do X or Y if you do, you know, A and B, but we're not even close to that point right now.

00:32:24:05 - 00:32:27:13

Eric Edelman

I don't think.

00:32:27:15 - 00:32:47:14

James Petrosky

Thank you. At risk of taking up some of our other listeners, though, I do I, I, in our audience, I do want to ask because it follows on directly with that my previous question that I posed to which is how does the balance let me start out by saying, I feel that the Russians fear our conventional weapons more than our nuclear weapons.

00:32:47:14 - 00:33:05:07

James Petrosky

That's just my posture. But how does the balance of conventional and nuclear weapons change for the U.S. deterrence as China increases their dependence on nuclear weapons? How do we balance that out on that side?

00:33:05:08 - 00:33:44:09

Eric Edelman

I think it's certainly true that the Russians, have been highly motivated by their fear of our conventional capabilities, which we have demonstrated, you know, repeatedly since 1990 and 1991. I mean, there's a bit of a paradox there, though. I mean, it's that that, you know, for those who say we should, you know, deemphasize our nuclear capabilities, and put all of our effort into conventional capabilities, as you point out, it's precisely those conventional capabilities that have driven them to develop greater nuclear capability and to rely more on it, in their defense policy.

00:33:44:10 - 00:34:08:06

Eric Edelman

So we have to have a balanced approach, in my view, we need conventional capabilities for a range of, of missions that we may have to undertake, but we need a fundamental deterrent that is at work every day to, keep our adversaries for thinking that this might be the day that they want to launch either a conventional or a nuclear conflict.

00:34:08:08 - 00:34:34:04

Eric Edelman

And, one thing we haven't talked about, which is my one of my pet rocks right now, is the need as we move forward with our nuclear modernization, to move forward with that, command and control, modernization that has to go along with those new, systems. It, too, has been, I would say, neglected over the last 30 years.

00:34:34:05 - 00:35:14:08

Eric Edelman

And our adversaries are demonstrating some very alarming capabilities. Whether it's the direct ascent, satellite anti-satellite systems that both Russia and, the PRC have tested, Russia's reported interest in putting a nuclear weapon in space and its refusal recently to, at the UN Security Council reaffirm the Outer Space Treaty. Or whether it's the FOBs that the, the fractional orbital bombardment system that the Chinese, tested two years ago or three years ago now.

00:35:14:08 - 00:35:45:14

Eric Edelman

And, and the fact that the Russians have that capability as well, as President Putin, discussed in his, 2018 Federation Council speech announcing all of his exotic new systems, all of those systems are systems that only make sense if you're thinking about, a potential, low or no notice decapitation strike, against your adversaries and C3.

00:35:45:14 - 00:35:49:05

Eric Edelman

So, I think we've got to worry about that as well.

00:35:49:06 - 00:36:20:04

Frank Miller

I emphasized two points. One is, is the nuclear force is the backbone of our entire deterrent posture, conventional space, cyber. It's the backbone. Second of all, it's the cost. People talk about, well, you know, you put all this money into nuclear, you won't have a conventional capability.

00:36:20:06 - 00:36:52:11

Frank Miller

Our defense spending on nuclear is about seven, eight 9% of the total defense budget. And that's for the modernization and for the current operations of our existing nuclear forces. So, the amount devoted to nuclear is not particularly large compared to what we're spending on other things. And that's another one of these canards that out there that oh my gosh, we're spending so much on nuclear that we can't afford to do our conventional upgrades and our modernization and bringing in advanced technology.

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00:36:52:11 - 00:36:56:13

Frank Miller

That's just simply not true. The numbers don't sustain that.

00:36:56:15 - 00:37:36:00

Eric Edelman

And if I could just add one other point here, which is that, you know, Frank, I served on the Strategic Posture Commission. I co-chaired the National Defense Strategy Commission with former Representative Jane Harman, which also came to a unanimous bipartisan conclusion. And both of those reports have stressed the fact that we are facing, you know, a challenge that is really unprecedented in terms of the intensifying cooperation among our adversaries, particularly Russia and China, but also North Korea and Iran, three of whom are our nuclear powers.

00:37:36:00 - 00:38:04:02

Eric Edelman

And the fourth is a nuclear aspirant. And given the scope of that challenge, we are not just perhaps underspending on our nuclear deterrent. We are underspending in general on defense. I mean, if you believe this is as big a challenge as we faced in the Cold War, we are, you know, seriously, Underspending, on defense, and need to, make some, some large investments.

00:38:04:02 - 00:38:28:07

Eric Edelman

And I think you're beginning to see that, breakthrough on the Hill and certainly, yesterday, Senator McConnell's comments, at the Senate Appropriations Committee as he, when they were having their markup and, they were adding actually to the administration's defense request, I think is testimony to more and more people understanding that.

00:38:28:08 - 00:38:33:03

James Petrosky

Thank you. Gentlemen. Peter, I'm going to turn it back to you for our other attendees.

00:38:33:04 - 00:38:59:08

Peter Huessy

Good. Thank you. I have a question that I've spoken with you. Frank, about which I think is interesting. And, I had Rose Gottemoeller come out and talk to us, and I wanted to continue. So the rose, this isn't, I'm not attacking you, but you did lay out what you thought was we wouldn't continue with New Start.

00:38:59:08 - 00:39:24:04

Peter Huessy

But there are some folks who think, well, maybe you did, but indirectly. And that's what I'd like to have Frank address, because that gets to the uploading issue and whether it's better just to keep it the 1550 level and see where we go from here. So, Frank, would you address this question is could you read what Rose put in the, foreign partner of the U.S.?

00:39:24:07 - 00:39:34:14

Peter Huessy

I think it was Foreign Affairs magazine. She also laid that out in her speech to our group a couple, a number of weeks ago. So, would you to an analyze that as you can go?

00:39:34:15 - 00:40:03:08

Frank Miller

Well, first, you know, Rose is an old friend. I mean, we've worked together literally for decades. She's accomplished a tremendous amount. And I, I deeply respect her. So, nothing I say has anything to do with, with, a personal point of view at all. I don't want to emphasize that. Second, I could only repeat what Eric and I have been saying, which is New Start, constrains us to 1550.

00:40:03:09 - 00:40:36:07

Frank Miller

Eric and I believe that 1550 is no longer adequate to deter Russia and China simultaneously. Therefore, new start stands in the way of getting to the force levels necessary to deter Russia and China simultaneously. A point I would make, by the way, that the NATO secretary general and the head of NATO's military forces, the Sakura, have been saying that, you know, a potential conflict which we seek to avoid will likely be, one feature, attacks by Russia and China.

00:40:36:07 - 00:41:00:14

Frank Miller

Whoever goes first, the other might make an opportunistic attack or, as, as, the secretary general would suggest, the Chinese would say, if we're about to start something in the Pacific, please attack NATO so that you distract the, the, the Americans. So again, 5050 is too small today. The amount that we need to grow is modest.

00:41:01:00 - 00:41:11:14

Frank Miller

For now, depending on what China does, it could get larger. But 1550 is just inadequate. But, Eric, you know, roses. As long as I have.

00:41:11:15 - 00:41:37:11

Eric Edelman

And I have the same, high level of respect for her that, that expressed and, I agree with, with Frank, I just, it's hard for me to see right now, how there is much of a prospect for, any arms negotiation. And it's not because I'm opposed to those, it's just because I don't see the will on the other side.

00:41:37:12 - 00:42:13:02

Eric Edelman

To engage in them right now. You know, you've got a pattern of really irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, from, from senior Russian officials. And as Frank pointed out, a very little disposition on the part of the PRC to engage in these kinds of discussions at all. So, in the first instance, it seems to me what we need to do is, first, deal with our own, you know, late to, purpose modernization and make sure it moves forward.

00:42:13:03 - 00:42:46:02

Eric Edelman

And in that, you know, in that spirit, I would say I find it troubling that, you know, The New York Times is reporting that the Department of Defense has taken almost \$1 billion out of the, GPS

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Sentinel program, which has already run into a number of, difficulties, which we can discuss if people want. In order to refurbish that the 747 that got our is gifted to the, to the US government to serve as an Air Force One.

00:42:46:03 - 00:43:06:10

Eric Edelman

I mean, that seems to me to be indicative of a lack of, sense of the urgency of moving forward on our modernization effort and that so I think what has to where we have to have the emphasis, and then we have to think about what is it that incentivizes the our adversaries to actually come to the table.

00:43:06:10 - 00:43:13:01

Eric Edelman

And as Frank and I said, it's capabilities that worry them. And, right now we don't have enough of them.

00:43:13:02 - 00:43:42:07

Frank Miller

And I want to point out one thing, the article that Eric and I wrote and points that we've been making really for years are not saying no arms control at all. I mean, we have said that we need an arms control agreement that captures all nuclear weapons, intercontinental and regional, both and, and we say, you know, if that if the politicians are able to come up with something that does that and gives us freedom to mix under an overall ceiling, that's fine.

00:43:42:07 - 00:43:55:10

Frank Miller

So, we're not saying go away with arms control. We are saying do away with new start. And any constraints that would keep us following new start even after it expires.

00:43:55:11 - 00:44:20:00

Peter Huessy

I think I'm going to ask you to you would mention that. Rose had also said, don't undercut New Start. So, in a sense you're sticking with the treaty, which God bless her. She said, when to I'm not asking for an extension, but you kind of get there if you don't undercut the treaty, correct?

00:44:20:01 - 00:44:24:12

Frank Miller

Well, my view is 1550 is inadequate, a new start. Okay. 5050.

00:44:25:00 - 00:44:36:12

Peter Huessy

Okay. Friend of ours from the Stimson Institute. And a very interesting question. If the.

00:44:36:13 - 00:45:19:11

Peter Huessy

Who waits on a treadmill is the incorrect way of looking at the farms benefits, and he thinks that that is not correct. What intellectual narrative could you lay out that would, capture because you're talking about 70 years since the Russians got nuclear weapons and you're talking, what, 50 since the Chinese. So, I'm not I don't even I don't know if you could find a template that

explains this, but what's your suggestion as to how we ought to reference how we try to remedy that balance without being immediately questioned as, oh, you're starting the arms race.

00:45:19:12 - 00:45:51:12

Eric Edelman

You know, I so, way back when, you know, the Office of Net Assessment, back in the early 80s, sponsored a pretty comprehensive study that was, composed of the late, Ernest May and Harvard, John Steinbrenner and Thomas Wolfe, to study the arms competition in the Cold War. To try and determine what?

00:45:51:13 - 00:46:28:01

Eric Edelman

You know, what, what explained. The evolution of forces on both sides and what, you know, what they found. And you referenced the work that Keith Payne and Dave Trachtenberg have done, which in some ways builds intellectually on that earlier work. Was that, you know, on both sides, you know, the evolution of our forces was a product of bureaucratic politics, technological developments, strategic culture that favored one kind of system over another.

00:46:28:02 - 00:46:59:10

Eric Edelman

And the it was not, in fact, a kind of action reaction with each side, you know, developing some particular capability in response to another specific capability. So I think it's a very complex, you know, phenomenon. I mean, there is clearly strategic competition between the two sides. But how they express that in their forces is going to be always a kind of unique output of, the history of the leaders.

00:46:59:10 - 00:47:03:13

Eric Edelman

The, the public support.

00:47:06:02 - 00:47:17:10

Eric Edelman

Technological level of technology and other factors that are, you know, pretty hard to, to measure in any kind of quantitative way.

00:47:17:11 - 00:47:45:03

Frank Miller

You know, I think I think the other thing, Peter, is to get to the root of the, the regime's policies, since the since about 2008, Lattimer, Putin has taken it upon himself to threaten and try to intimidate NATO. Then he went and took Crimea, part of another sovereign country that he had pledged in, in, treaties to respect, and then he invaded Ukraine.

00:47:45:04 - 00:48:20:06

Frank Miller

So, this is an aggressive government that seeks the territory of other countries with China. This is a country that threatens the government of Taiwan. It is seeking to intimidate the Japanese, the Philippines, it's encroaching into other countries, territories, the Philippines, the Vietnam, both countries, routinely, practice dangerous military activities to try to cut off and intimidate U.S. and allied, naval ships and aircraft.

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00:48:20:08 - 00:48:51:08

Frank Miller

So, the question is, why are these countries carrying out these aggressive activities? The United States is seeking to defend the status quo, and that's what we must do. The fact that these other countries are up armed, to make their threats against stability more credible is a dangerous thing. And what they need to do is get back to working together peacefully and taking account of the treaties they've already signed.

00:48:51:09 - 00:49:19:03

Peter Huessy

Interesting. You mentioned there was a proposal recently to... If we don't target the other guy's nuclear forces, he won't feel an incentive to use them early in a crisis. So, we'll get rid of extended nuclear deterrence. We'll get rid of ordinary nuclear deterrence, similar to what Annie Jacobson is talking about. And others, is that we'll just go to attack their conventional forces.

00:49:19:04 - 00:49:43:08

Peter Huessy

Would you expand a little bit, Frank, as to the dangers? I have to point out that that puts their nuclear weapons in a sanctuary from which they then have the initiative to use. So, you kind of a giving them, kind of a blank check to use them as they see fit, because if they trusted us, they said, well, we're not in any danger of losing them, so we will use them whatever we want.

00:49:43:10 - 00:50:03:10

Frank Miller

Well, you know, that's nonsense. It's dangerous nonsense. There's a phrase mirror imaging that says what I think. Therefore, the Russians think there's a phrase that Eric and I are familiar with in the Cold War that said that beneath the heart, beneath the uniform of every Soviet general beats the heart of Iowa farmer. It's nonsense, you know that.

00:50:03:12 - 00:50:23:15

Frank Miller

These are people who are who are killing, hundreds of thousands of their own soldiers who are, who are in, in, in invading other countries. And the notion that that you say that. Oh, well, if you fight a war, we're going to let your nuclear forces and your leadership remain intact, you know. Well, what's wrong with that?

00:50:23:15 - 00:50:45:00

Frank Miller

We don't care about a defense industrial base. We don't care about our soldiers. We've made that very clear. So, I mean, you want to hand in victory. That is just one of the dumbest ideas I've heard a lot that and the other thing is, excuse me, but maybe the Russians and Chinese would shoot first. Anyway, regardless of whether they're nuclear forces, we're held at risk.

00:50:45:02 - 00:51:03:01

Frank Miller

So, this is... this bridge to absurdity is something that ought to be discarded as quickly as possible. It's not worth the paper that it's printed on, but I get emotional about this because I think it's so stupid. Outlet. Eric, bring the discussion back to center stage.

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00:51:03:03 - 00:51:36:08

Eric Edelman

Well, I mean, the history of this is we now know, since the end of the Cold War, that despite having a no first use pledge that, Soviet war plans called for the, use of, theater nuclear weapons early and often. And I think that is just one, you know, indicator of the fact that we the declaratory statements that, you know, the Russians and the Chinese make about their, their nuclear strategy and how they might use these things.

00:51:36:08 - 00:52:14:15

Eric Edelman

We need to treat with a great deal of caution. And, you know, and at the end of the day, as uncomfortable as it is, because these weapons are so dangerous and the destructive power of them is so great. What has worked so far has been that deterrence policies that we have pursued and to say, now we should abandon them as our adversaries are building up, to, to, you know, new levels.

00:52:14:15 - 00:52:32:15

Eric Edelman

And in the case of China and with all sorts of exotic, and weapons that, frankly, serve no real military purpose, to, you know, to depart from what has worked so far seems to me to be the height of folly.

00:52:33:00 - 00:52:58:13

Peter Huessy

Frank, a number of people in that chat function have asked a question about, what we, what we've seen in Korea and in Europe, a matter of having assurances that the United States is serious about extended deterrence. And with both your experiences, what can the U.S. do to make that assurance credible or more credible?

00:52:58:14 - 00:53:28:14

Frank Miller

So, I would say three things and then let Eric put me on the correct course. One is to deploy an adequate number of weapons to make our policy credible. Two, it's to modernize our strategic forces, as rapidly as we can, and to expand the modernization program to allow us to have the same number of required weapons to make the deterrent policy credible.

00:53:28:14 - 00:53:57:08

Frank Miller

Three, it's to provide, regional nuclear forces, both in Asia and in Europe, to offset the Chinese and Russian regional nuclear forces, which we do today, but not as well as we should. And that's just the lead system. And that is the selective end, which I would love to see accelerated if the Defense Department, the Navy and the weapons laboratories can do that.

00:53:57:09 - 00:54:09:06

Frank Miller

Even to do sort of a weapon, sort of an alpha version and then a more sophisticated Bravo version later in the 2030s. But, Eric.

00:54:09:07 - 00:54:25:15

Eric Edelman

Yeah. And I don't see any reason why not. Because we had a, a... and so this is not, you know, kind of we're reinventing the wheel here, and it shouldn't be quite as, you know, take as long and cost as much as for some reason people seem to think it will.

00:54:26:00 - 00:54:27:07

Peter Huessy

Yes.

00:54:27:08 - 00:54:52:10

Eric Edelman

I, I would, I don't have anything to add, actually, to Frank's answer on that question. Peter, if you'd allow me. Because, in your earlier question, you talked about abandoning extended deterrence. Let me just make a couple of comments about that. Look, extended deterrence was one of the most challenging, problems that American leaders faced during the Cold War.

00:54:52:11 - 00:55:33:01

Eric Edelman

And almost every crisis that we had where people really thought nuclear weapons might come into play was the result of an effort to extend deterrence. And at the end of the day, we were successful. It's been a part of U.S. policy, since it's since with the advent of nuclear weapons. And I would say for good reason, because, our extended deterrent has, undoubtedly kept the number of nuclear powers in the world, limited, to the nine countries that have nuclear weapons now, potentially.

00:55:33:01 - 00:55:53:00

Eric Edelman

10th, when, if and when Iran ever gets them. You know, the truth is, President Kennedy, after the Cuban Missile Crisis in the spring of 1963, was asked a question at a press conference about what kept him up at night. And he said it was the prospect that we would have 20 or more nuclear powers by the end of the decade.

00:55:53:00 - 00:56:20:13

Eric Edelman

That was 1973. You know, we don't have a perfect record, obviously, on nonproliferation, but the situation is a lot better than it might be. And for folks who want to give up the idea of extended deterrence, they need to explain why a world with additional nuclear powers would be safer, and one in which they would sleep better at night than the one we inhabit now.

00:56:20:15 - 00:56:44:12

Peter Huessy

Let me ask a quick question. I'm sorry. We have got a few minutes left. Would you both address what role missile defense should play in deterrence? And what about space? And I know that's a big, broad subject, but there are people who say that we shouldn't build Iron Dome. I mean, Golden Dome. And they're worried about what they call militarization of space.

00:56:44:14 - 00:56:47:01

Peter Huessy

Go ahead. Frank.

00:56:47:03 - 00:57:10:06

Frank Miller

Okay. So, so short. Yes. Missile defense can and should play a role. The Strategic Posture Commission is very clear on that. You need to raise the barrier to ballistic missile attacks. Look what's happening to Ukraine today. So, we need a missile defense that doesn't threaten the entire Russian or Chinese deterrent, but which raises the bar that if they're going to attack us, they have to attack us.

00:57:10:06 - 00:57:40:12

Frank Miller

Numbers which will trigger other major actions on our part. And the last thing is that is that technology has improved dramatically since the Reagan SDI can do effective missile defense if we bring in space assets, both seekers and shooters. And I think that we ought to be doing that rather than relying on 1970s arguments about strategic stability, which are outmoded, Mr. ambassador.

00:57:40:13 - 00:57:47:02

Eric Edelman

Just in space. You know, I think the sad reality is space has already been militarized by our adversaries. Sure.

00:57:47:03 - 00:57:47:10

Frank Miller

Yes.

00:57:47:11 - 00:58:11:03

Eric Edelman

And again, and so, to say we, you know, should avoid militarization of space. It's a lovely idea. But in a world where the, Russian Federation refuses to reaffirm the Outer Space Treaty and is threatened to put a nuclear weapon in space, I don't think we can afford to just sit back and, you know, wait for things to happen.

00:58:11:04 - 00:58:37:12

Peter Huessy

Yeah. A Navy admiral once told me. He said we militarized the oceans with the U.S. Navy, and we went from a couple billion dollars' worth of international trade to now it's 32 trillion. So, we made the world the oceans safe for dramatic expanded economic growth and economic growth. So, I did his point was, you know, the Navy's out there, you can call it militarization, but actually it's a very positive thing.

00:58:37:13 - 00:59:02:08

Peter Huessy

So, with that, I want to thank Mr. Ambassador and Frank Miller and Eric Edelman. Extraordinary. Remarks. Today we covered the waterfront. I did want to say a few things about our friends who joined us today, Lockheed Martin and Booz Allen and TechSource, for example, and systems planning and analysis. We have friends here from 810 in the United States Air Force.

00:59:02:09 - 00:59:22:04

Peter Huessy

Also, Stratcom. Also, a shout out to Jim Kowalski, who used to be head of Global Strike Command and then also at Stratcom. I want to thank them both, for being here today and also just an...is every week since 1981, I have been putting out something called the ICBM EOR, which is a weekly nuclear report.

00:59:22:05 - 00:59:41:13

Peter Huessy

If you would like to get a copy, please let me know. Because, even though I came back from England last night at 2:00 in the morning, I'm going to put this together. It'll be out hopefully sometime late tonight or tomorrow. But again, Kimberly, you always do a wonderful job. Jim Petrosky, our president. Thank you for this.

00:59:41:14 - 01:00:12:04

Peter Huessy

And Frank and Eric, it's wonderful to have you. I hope people will take time to read and digest what you've said, because these are really crucial issues, particularly when you see...about every 24 hours is threatening to blow us up, which I take with a little grain of salt. But unfortunately, the Russians have that capability and finally, let me just say, Russia and China see their nuclear and conventional forces as instruments of aggression.

01:00:12:05 - 01:00:44:01

Peter Huessy

We see our nuclear and conventional forces as instruments of stopping aggression. And I think that's a huge difference. And it makes it very complicated, both maintaining deterrence and having any kind of arms control. So, with that, Frank, Eric, thank you very much. We're honored to have your presence. And again, I want to thank all our attendees for those who question, I couldn't get to, we will put them together and send them to both Eric and Frank, and they can, at their leisure, decide to answer them or not.

01:00:44:05 - 01:00:52:00

Speaker 2

But again, thank you. Kimberly, you always do a great job and we will see all of you again at our next Huessy Nuclear Deterrence Seminar.

01:00:52:01 - 01:00:53:12

Frank Miller

Thanks for having us.

01:00:53:14 - 01:00:55:08

Peter Huessy

Thank you.