

National Institute for Deterrence Studies & Peter Huessy Seminar

*Nuclear Strategy at the Crossroads with Hon. Frank Miller and Amb. Eric Edelman*

March 20, 2026 Time: 10:00-11:00 AM (Eastern)

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**Webinar Transcript**

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**How to cite:**

National Institute for Deterrence Studies, Huessy Seminar: “Nuclear Strategy at the Crossroads with Hon. Frank Miller and Amb. Eric Edelman.”  
YouTube video. Accessed March 20, 2026. <https://youtu.be/dMmH1jPO7bo>.

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**Abstract:**

This Huessy Seminar, hosted by the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, examines the strategic implications of a rapidly changing nuclear environment marked by simultaneous challenges from Russia and China and growing strain on U.S. extended deterrence. Featuring The Honorable Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric S. Edelman, the discussion explores how assumptions that shaped U.S. nuclear strategy in the early 2010s no longer reflect today’s threat landscape.

Miller argues that U.S. deterrence policy has reached a crossroads, emphasizing the gap between stated policy and force implementation. He outlines near-term steps to strengthen deterrence through increased capacity of existing systems and longer-term adjustments to the strategic modernization program, while addressing misconceptions about modernization and arms control. Edelman focuses on alliance credibility and the health of the global nonproliferation regime, warning that erosion of extended deterrence may lead to “friendly proliferation” among U.S. allies. He highlights the strategic consequences of declaratory policy, allied reassurance, and the need for renewed national debate on deterrence and nonproliferation.

Moderated by Peter Huessy, the seminar concludes with a robust question-and-answer session addressing regional nuclear forces, dual-capable systems, missile defense, and the increasingly

blurred line between conventional and nuclear conflict.

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## Executive Summary

The National Institute for Deterrence Studies (NIDS) Huessy Seminar, “**Nuclear Strategy at the Crossroads**,” brought together The Honorable Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric S. Edelman for a high-level examination of the United States’ nuclear deterrence posture amid intensifying strategic competition with Russia and China. Moderated by Peter Huessy, the discussion assessed whether current U.S. policy, force structure, and alliance commitments are sufficient for today’s security environment—and what actions are required to restore credibility and stability.

### Key Findings and Themes

- **Deterrence Environment Has Fundamentally Changed**  
The speakers argued that U.S. nuclear forces and planning assumptions remain anchored in a post-Cold War environment that no longer exists. Russia has completed extensive modernization of both strategic and non-strategic nuclear forces, while China continues a rapid and opaque expansion of its nuclear arsenal. The United States now faces the unprecedented challenge of deterring **two peer nuclear competitors simultaneously**.
- **Policy–Implementation Gap**  
Miller emphasized that declaratory policy alone is insufficient. While recent U.S. strategies acknowledge the need to deter Russia and China concurrently, force implementation has not kept pace. No new U.S. strategic nuclear platforms have yet been deployed, and the current “program of record” was designed for a vastly different threat environment.
- **Urgent Near-Term Actions Available**  
The seminar highlighted practical steps that could be taken quickly to strengthen deterrence, including increasing the capacity of existing systems (“uploading” warheads), accelerating regional nuclear capabilities, and reassessing force structure ceilings. Longer-term measures include expanding strategic force inventories and advancing regional and standoff capabilities to enhance extended deterrence.
- **Extended Deterrence and Alliance Confidence at Risk**  
Ambassador Edelman warned that uncertainty surrounding U.S. reliability is eroding allied confidence, particularly in Europe and the Indo-Pacific. This erosion raises the risk of “**friendly proliferation**,” as allies consider independent nuclear options if extended deterrence is perceived as weakening.
- **Nonproliferation Stakes Are Rising**  
While rogue-state proliferation remains a concern, the seminar underscored that allied proliferation now poses a significant threat to the global nonproliferation regime.

Edelman called for a renewed national debate—and potentially a new commission—on the role of extended deterrence in preventing proliferation and sustaining alliance cohesion.

- **Conventional–Nuclear Blurring and Missile Defense**

The discussion highlighted how advances in dual-capable systems, hypersonic weapons, cyber operations, and missile defense are blurring traditional boundaries between conventional and nuclear conflict. Integrated air and missile defense was identified as a critical component of modern deterrence, raising the threshold for adversary aggression.

## Conclusion

The seminar concluded that the United States is at a strategic inflection point. Without timely action to align policy, forces, and alliance commitments with today's threat realities, deterrence credibility—and the stability it underpins—may continue to erode. The speakers emphasized urgency, alliance reassurance, and informed public debate as essential to sustaining effective deterrence and preventing both adversary aggression and allied nuclear proliferation.

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## Unabridged Transcript

*(Note: A.I. assisted, there will invariably be some word errors in the following transcript.)*

00:00:13:10 - 00:00:38:15

Kimberly Cherington

Good morning, and thanks to those of you who have joined us live today. We truly value your participation and appreciate you taking the time out of your day to be part of this important discussion. I'm Kimberly Cherrington, and on behalf of the National Institute for Deterrence Studies, or NIDS, it's my pleasure to welcome you to today's seminar with our special guest, the honorable Frank Miller and Ambassador Eric Edelman.

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Kimberly Cherington

Mr. Miller served for 31 years in the US government, including 22 years in the Department of Defense, serving under seven secretaries in a series of progressively senior positions and four years as special Assistant to President George W Bush and Senior Director for Defense Policy and Arms Control in the National Security Council staff. Mr. Miller is currently a principal at the Scowcroft Group.

00:01:05:15 - 00:01:37:12

Kimberly Cherington

Ambassador Edelman retired from the U.S. Foreign Services in 2009 and currently serves as the counselor at the center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He's a senior fellow at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. He's held senior roles in multiple congressional appointed

defense reviews, including chairing the National Defense Strategy Commission and serving as vice chair of the 2022 National Defense Strategy Commission.

00:01:37:13 - 00:02:02:03

Kimberly Cherington

In two weeks, we will welcome Lieutenant General Jason Armagost and look forward to his updates from the Air Force Global Strike Command. To register for that event and all of our upcoming events, we invite you to visit our website at [www.thinkdeterrence.com](http://www.thinkdeterrence.com) where we also house videos and transcripts of all of our past seminars throughout today's presentation.

00:02:02:03 - 00:02:27:01

Kimberly Cherington

We encourage you to submit your questions in the chat or the Q&A button at the top of your screen. We will address your questions in the Q&A portion of today's seminar. Now I'm pleased to introduce our host and moderator for today's discussion, the esteemed, Mr. Peter Huessy, president of Geostrategic Analysis and a senior fellow here at NIDS.

00:02:27:02 - 00:02:29:06

Kimberly Cherington

Peter, over to you.

00:02:29:07 - 00:02:51:13

Peter Huessy

Thank you very much, Kimberly. And I want to welcome Ambassador Edelman and Frank Miller, who are two long-serving people who have, they're at the top of the list when you want to know what's going on in the nuclear business. And that's why I've asked them to come and talk today to give us an overview from 40,000ft and to say the why are we where we are and where are we?

00:02:51:14 - 00:03:16:06

Peter Huessy

And in particular, probably the issue of highest importance right now is extended deterrence, which they both will address in part. Frank Miller will go first and then hear from Ambassador Edelman. I just want to make a note to people that on May 15th, Admiral Todd Weeks will be speaking at the Capital Hill Club in person over breakfast.

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Peter Huessy

And to address the issues around this has been. I urge you to sign up. I want to thank all our sponsors that are attending today, as well as some of our special guests. And so, Frank Miller, over to you, sir.

00:03:31:09 - 00:03:56:10

Frank Miller

Thanks, Peter. And hello to everybody. Pleasure to be here, especially with my friend and colleague Eric Edelman. So our session today is titled *Nuclear Strategy at the Crossroads*. And when you get to a crossroad, you're going to take one, one path or another with the tip of the hat to Robert Frost. You know, path not taken, the path taken to make all the difference.

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Frank Miller

So how did we get to this crossroads? Well, actually, it starts about 20 odd years ago in the Bush 43 administration. We were obviously involved, deeply in Southwest Asia, but as the Bush administration came to an end, we entered a period of time which George Will has famously described as being a holiday from history.

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Frank Miller

We forgot about the past. President Bush looked into Putin's eyes and saw his soul, something later amended by John McCain. In a famous flight. But, we saw no need to modernize our nuclear triad, which the U.S. had inherited from the Reagan administration. Russia was deemed not to be a nuclear threat, and China wasn't even in discussion.

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Frank Miller

Beginning in 2010, after the new Start treaty was negotiated, signed, ratified 2011. Entered into force. The United States did essentially nothing to modernize its strategic nuclear forces. On the other hand, President Putin began a major modernization program and has to date modernized 97%. According to his statements of his land based forces, his air force issues, and his, strategic submarine force.

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Frank Miller

And importantly, he has built up a huge number of regional nuclear systems. He's also been using those systems, to threaten, to intimidate, to blackmail our NATO allies. And during this period of time, President Xi began a massive buildup of Chinese military forces, both conventional and nuclear. We all know that he's building nuclear forces. We had no idea where the ceiling is on all of that.

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Frank Miller

As all of this is progressing. People begin to take notice as to what's happening. President Putin, backed by his nuclear capabilities, takes Crimea in 2014. In 2022, he breaks yet another treaty and attacks Ukraine. So, we then see the Russian Chinese treaty without limits. Friendship without limits. Which takes actual form by having Chinese Russian exercises and joint statements and military cooperation.

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Frank Miller

So, by 2022, this situation began to look like we had entered into a world very different from the one that we had assumed was going to be our future. And while many people were saying things, I think it's not unfair to say that Eric and I in September of 2022, were among the very first in a SAS hearing, Senate Armed Services Committee hearing to say we need to be ready to deter Russia and China simultaneously.

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Frank Miller

That would be new, that would be different, and that would be important in 2023. The Strategic Posture

Commission, a congressionally, charter commission, came out and said that we needed to be able and ready to deter Russia and China simultaneously. And then the panel that Eric chaired the next year said the same thing. By 2024, the Biden administration had made the need to deter Russia and China simultaneously part of U.S. strategic policy.

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Frank Miller

We haven't heard that officially in any unclassified form for the current administration. But there's reason to believe that that belief is, in fact, embedded in some of the things that they are going they're doing. So where are we? Because policy not implemented is almost worthless. And one of the big mistakes that so-called strategists make is to think that once they've written a policy document, they have done their work and can go home.

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Frank Miller

Where are we today? Russia and China are maintaining their modern strategic and regional force. China is still building. And yet after a U.S. strategic modernization program, now called euphemistically, the program of Record was initiated in 2011 as the Senate's price for signing on to the new Start treaty, no new U.S. strategic nuclear platform has been deployed. We delayed.

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Frank Miller

We studied. We reconfigured. We're now building a new SBN class. We're now building the B-21 bomber, which has had a couple of test flights in of which to now exist. And you're all familiar with the problems with the follow on to the Minuteman. The center, though not the missile as much. The infrastructure, but no new U.S. strategic nuclear platforms have been deployed, and the program of record was designed in 2010 for the world of 2010, which is to say, no Russian threat, no Chinese threat.

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Frank Miller

I won't hit it too hard except to say 2026 is not 2010. So, there is a need now for the United States government to recognize this change and take positive actions to take the policy of deterring Russia and China simultaneously into some sort of meaningful set up program. The first, recommended both by the Strategic Posture Commission and by the panel that that Eric chaired, is that to close the current gap of a force that was designed mostly to deter Russia and one designed to deter Russia and China simultaneously, is to add additional warheads to the current force.

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Frank Miller

And we can do that by uploading warheads on the Ohio class spans, by opening up tubes that were neutered on those boats so that we fell with under, New Start limits and by uploading some bomber weapons and some ICBM weapons. The administration hasn't done that. There is a rumor that even though new start expired, the administration agreed in a secret deal with, with Moscow to maintain new start limits.

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Frank Miller

We don't know the truth on that, but whatever it is, we need to get on to upload. The second thing that we need to do is to change the program of record, which the Strategic Posture Commission said was necessary but not sufficient to increase the numbers of strategic forces that we are thinking about building. That means removing the cap on the Columbia class SSBN from a minimum of 12 to something higher.

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Frank Miller

My preference would be 16 boats at a minimum. And to start putting money in for... 13 and 14, we need to officially raise the number of B21s that we intend to buy. It's still at 100. The outgoing and incoming head of strategic command each said we need at least 140 odd B21s, but the administration has taken no steps on that.

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Frank Miller

And with respect to regional nuclear deterrence, there are a host of systems which we must add quickly, but which are on a fairly slow pace. One of those is the sea launch nuclear cruise missile. We need this to have extended deterrence undergirded in the Pacific and in the Atlantic. We need to begin working on a standoff weapon or our dual capable aircraft.

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Frank Miller

The aircraft that we share with our allies in the DCA role, because flying over the heavily defended Russian and Chinese targets that they hold at risk is not going to be viable until the mid 2030s. So, a standoff weapon is necessary, and we need to start thinking about a system that's a ground launch system that can hold Russian targets at risk, something like a Fajr-3.

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Frank Miller

So, there's no urgency in our system. We're still at the 2010 targets, and we need to do something now. All the things that I mentioned are things I would recommend to the administration to move out on smartly. And for those on this presentation who are saying we want arms control. I mean, you let you guys let New Start expire.

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Frank Miller

Miller and Edelman have been talking about killing New Start. Let me make a couple of points. First, new start only talked about strategic nuclear weapons. Intercontinental weapons. No war is going to start over the poles. It's going to start in the theater. And so, all nuclear weapons need to be accounted for in the next arms control treaty.

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Frank Miller

And indeed, the Senate put that in its articles of ratification. Do start there's nonsensical talk about the U.S. modernization program creating a new arms race. And the things that I have advocated adding to that.

Russia and China have already modernized. For us to start to catch up is not a new arms race. Third, there will be objection to taking systems, perhaps like the Army's Dark Knight and making it nuclear capable, saying that dual capable systems are inherently destabilizing.

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Frank Miller

It's an interesting American concept, European concept, but it's not a Russian concept, and it's not a Chinese concept. If you look at their systems that are deployed, almost all are dual capable. And finally, if you want to give Mr. Putin an incentive to sign some new treaty, you don't do it by simply talking about it. The starkest evidence for this was the INF treaty, when the Russians completely stonewalled NATO attempts to create a treaty on INF weapons until the ground launch cruise operation got in place, at which point the Russians got serious about arms control.

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Frank Miller

So if you want an arms control treaty, you have to give something to the Russians that they fear and then let them negotiate from there. So, I'm going to stop here. As I say, I think it's all about urgency. It's all about implementing things that we've talked about but haven't yet done. Thank you.

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Peter Huessy

Thank you very much, Frank, I appreciate it. Extraordinary remarks. Ambassador Edelman, again, welcome to the Peter Hussey NIDS Seminar series. We always enjoy hearing from you. And take it away, sir, it's, you're on the table.

00:15:14:00 - 00:15:44:09

Eric Edelman

Thank you. Peter. It is great to be back, in front of this audience with my frequent coauthor and partner in crime, Frank Miller. And, just as the lawyers would say, I want to stipulate before I start my own remarks, that I agree with everything that Frank said in his, including words and, the and associate myself completely with them as, as, Frank mentioned, we're at a crossroads.

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Eric Edelman

And so, I want to take as, as my proof text for this particular sermon, the great philosopher Yogi Berra, who said, when you come to a fork in the road, take it. You know, Frank mentioned that he and I have argued and I think the last time we were on this platform, we were arguing, a year ago, maybe a little, less than a year ago in favor of allowing New Start to expire that has now, taken place.

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Eric Edelman

And Frank, as adverted to the potential that there may be some kind of gentlemen's understanding, which we don't know about, but the agreement is gone and that is left, the NPT as the last major monument of what some people call the golden age of, of arms control. I think common wisdom was it the potential of an Iranian nuclear weapon was the biggest threat to the NPT.

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Eric Edelman

Which I would argue, by the way, is the most significant and most lasting achievement of the so-called golden age of arms control. I think it's worth recalling that President Kennedy in, the spring of 1963, after the Cuban Missile Crisis, was asked what it was that kept him up at night. And his answer was, what keeps me up at night is the idea that we will have by the end of this decade, which would have been 1970, you know, 20 or maybe 30 nuclear weapons powers.

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Eric Edelman

And how will we manage that? Okay, we're now 60 years on from Kennedy's press conference. We have nine nuclear weapon states and that only is a result of a lot of hard work that people did, to, keep the lid on proliferation, as a result of the NPT and the institutional structure that emerged from that for limiting proliferation.

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Eric Edelman

But I would argue that while we focused for a long time on the peril of rogue state proliferation, Libya, Iraq, Iran, of course, today the NPT is more in peril because of the potential risk of friendly proliferation. And it's at risk of friendly proliferation because I think the underpinnings of extended U.S. nuclear deterrence are being eroded because of concerns about the reliability of the United States as a guarantor of other countries security, that is to say, the positive, security assurances we have offered in the form of our alliance structure, is becoming imperiled.

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Eric Edelman

I would note that in the current NDS there is not at least the unclassified version, there's not a single reference to US nuclear, extended deterrence. I'm told that there is, such a reference in the classified edition, but, but none in the public edition. The concerns that allies have expressed in the wake of the president's threats against Greenland repeated speculation and threats about the endurance of NATO, the willingness of the administration to remain in NATO, concerns about how much our Asian allies are contributing to their own defense has raised concerns, both in Europe and in Asia, about the reliability of U.S. security guarantees.

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Eric Edelman

And I would argue and we can maybe talk about this in the Q&A, that there is a potential that the Gulf states in the current war with Iran are also, developing concerns about the ability of the United States, to, to defend them. And as a result, we're seeing a lot of efforts at self-help by allies to try and fill a gap that they see emerging in US extended nuclear deterrence.

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Eric Edelman

You see that in some of the conversations that the French and the UK have had about shoring up European nuclear deterrence. You see it in discussions that the Germans are having with the French and the UK and of course, the biggest example is President Macron's, speech at Ile-Longue, where he talked about,

France providing forward deterrence, which somehow is meant to, substitute for the backstop of U.S., extended deterrence.

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Eric Edelman

I mean, Frank and I have already expressed ourselves on, on the fact that, the UK and France cannot really provide the kind of deterrence that the United States has provided traditionally for its, European allies, I suspect will have more to say about that in the future. But this is an ongoing and very serious discussion in Europe.

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Eric Edelman

You see it in, actions taken by, the Nordic states. I'm a former U.S. ambassador to Finland, and I draw attention to the fact the Finnish parliament just, passed a law that would allow, for the first time, nuclear weapons to be stationed on Finnish soil. That is, you know, incredible departure, from Finland's past.

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Eric Edelman

I think it, goes as to recall that until the 1970s, Sweden had an active nuclear weapons program. And there's now discussion in Sweden about whether that needs to be resurrected. One could say the same about the Republic of Korea, of course. And Australia. And I think these are facts that we have tended to forget, because we have, you know, benefited so much from the NPT regime and from U.S. extended nuclear deterrence.

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Eric Edelman

You know our extended nuclear deterrent was initially conceived, first of all, as a way to protect our allies when they were still recovering from, the war in Europe, and to offset Soviet conventional superiority at that time. But as my colleague at Johns Hopkins, Frank Gavin, has pointed out, it was also very consciously a strategy of inhibition to prevent other nations from developing nuclear capabilities.

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Eric Edelman

Some critics have derided that as America's, you know, support for nuclear apartheid. Arguing that Americans did not want others to have nuclear weapons because they thought they were the only ones who could really manage nuclear weapons. You know, I plead guilty to that. I think that that has stood us in good stead throughout the post-World War Two era.

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Eric Edelman

I would note that, you know, the United States wasn't even very enthusiastic about the UK and France having nuclear weapons, but, our own cooperative, efforts with the UK and France, and Frank is the real expert on that, were in part to keep them inside the tent and, as part of the broader extended deterrent rather than allowing them to try and substitute for it.

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Eric Edelman

Before we let extended nuclear deterrence fall by the wayside because of the concerns that have been created about us reliability. I don't think we should let it just, go away. You know, as one might say, a bit of absence of mind. I think we need to have a national discussion and consideration of whether US national security would, in fact, be enhanced.

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Eric Edelman

In a world of heavily proliferated world. My colleagues at CSBA in Montgomery and Toshi Yoshihara done some terrific work, which I hope will soon be published on the difficulties of friendly proliferation in Asia. But I think we need a broader national conversation. And there's a precedent for that. In the wake of China's testing of a nuclear weapon in 1964, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Roswell Kilpatrick, who had been, deputy secretary of defense, to chair a committee inside the US government, an interagency study of what role proliferation should play in US national security.

Eric Edelman

Should it be a central concern? And, with only one dissent that I'm aware of, everybody agreed that the idea of, proliferation, including, quote, friendly proliferation, was not, in U.S. national security interests. There's a school of thought, in the academy. I'm sure a lot of people in this call are old enough to remember, although some may not be, the Adelphi paper written by the late Kenneth Waltz that argued that the more nuclear powers there were, the better, and that a highly proliferated world would be a highly stable world.

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Eric Edelman

I think Frank will attest that in our 30 years of government service, no senior official ever expressed that view on the contrary, there are a lot of concern about the prospect of proliferation and the ability to manage a world with, a large number of nuclear powers. So my modest proposal, would be that the Congress of the United States think about actually, appointing a commission that would be the successor to the Kilpatrick committee to consider the role of extended nuclear deterrence and nonproliferation in US national security policy going forward so that we can have a really thorough airing of the issues and a public debate and discussion, including by,

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Eric Edelman

the people's elected representatives. So why don't I stop there and,

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Frank Miller

Hopefully we can take some questions.

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Peter Huessy

Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. And thank you. I'm going to...

00:26:08:01 - 00:26:41:12

Peter Huessy

I want to ask a question to both Frank and the ambassador about something that they both alluded to... mentioned. But I want to emphasize it then. That is Frank, I want to start with you. Would you walk through each of those actions you think the United States could take now? And I think relatively quickly to increase the deterrent capability that the Posture Commission said we needed to increase, because what were you the program of record was necessary but not adequate.

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Peter Huessy

And I want you to walk through that again for me, in terms... for the audience and in particular with respect to one is uploading. The second thing is building new forces, both strategic and non-strategic.

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Frank Miller

Okay. Well sadly, you know, given the fact that that urgency is not a term that translates into DoD acquisition policy, all we can do in the near term is to increase the capability of existing systems. So, we can make the four tubes on each of the Ohio class boats operational. We can load them with Trident missiles.

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Frank Miller

And that adds that adds to the force. We can put more warheads on each of our, Floyd Trident missiles. And that would increase the size of the force. We could increase the number of warheads on a selected number of Minuteman three systems. And recent tests of Minuteman have been done with multiple warheads. So that that is doable, right?

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Frank Miller

For the near term, that's all that's necessary. But not that all that's there, that's all that can be accomplished. On the regional side, we can try to pull to the left as much as possible the sea launch, cruise missile, nuclear sea launch, cruise missile slip command, which again is toddling along at pace to be deployed by the early to mid 2030s, which is late to need for the longer term.

Frank Miller

The administration could say we want 16 Columbia SSBNs. We want 150 or 200 B-1 bombers. And then industry can be put to work. Certainly the bombers we can increase the numbers. Building submarines is long hard work. I don't think we can increase the numbers of SSPNs as quickly, but General Dynamics and Il are working hard to try to recover the time that was lost as a result of, of Covid.

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Frank Miller

And it's...We should be taking steps now ourselves with the Brits, with the Germans to develop a standoff weapon for the F-35s that are in the nuclear capable DCA role. That's really critical. And we ought to be investigating whether or not we could say put a nuclear warhead in the Army dark night, Navy conventional prop strike system.

Frank Miller

Those will not even if we go ahead immediately will not bear fruit? Probably till 2030. But those are steps we could take, which would improve our capability then. But I think the word is urgency. Our friend Keith Paine once went through the Strategic Posture Commission report, and he said urgency was used 40 times. I won't sign up to that number.

00:29:43:05 - 00:29:54:00

Frank Miller

But the fact is business as usual, which is what we are doing and have been doing, is simply not the answer. Given what Russia and China are up to.

00:29:54:01 - 00:30:22:00

Peter Huessy

Mr. Ambassador, I'm going to turn to you, and I don't know if you can fix your video because it's frozen, but we can hear you at least. And that is, again, I want to, because this is something you're very good at. What are the actions that the US could take to better reassure our allies with respect to extended deterrence, both with respect to policy statements and decisions, as well as budgetary elements?

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Peter Huessy

As the budget is going to be submitted, hopefully, and taken up by Congress fairly soon. Yeah. You're back.

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Eric Edelman

Well, yeah. Well, let me let me just say that the most, useful thing that we could do to reassure our allies would be to stop calling into question the value of our alliances, and that, you know, that's a, issue for the president and for his administration. The secretary of defense, you know, secretary of defense, his comments, the other day about our ungrateful allies at the same time that the administration is seeking to get them to contribute to reopening the, you know, the Gulf.

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Eric Edelman

I mean, it just seems to me to be diplomatic malpractice of the of the first order. So, I mean, a lot of this problem, Peter, we've created, and I want to be, you know, bipartisan about this. It's not just the Trump administration. I think our European allies felt distinctly unheard, during the Obama administration, as well.

00:31:32:08 - 00:32:00:06

Eric Edelman

So, I think this is a problem that, you know, goes back beyond the inauguration of President Trump in, in 2017. It's been building for a decade. And, you know, when you're in a hole, you know, the first law of holes is stop digging. So, I would, you know, advocate. You know, a lot of this is declaratory policy on the programmatic side, I think, Frank, you know, made the right point.

00:32:00:06 - 00:32:27:00

Eric Edelman

SCMN-N is what, you know, our allies in, in Asia are looking to send a signal that that we care about, about extended nuclear deterrence. In the 2010 Nuclear Posture Review, when the Obama administration killed the SCMN-N they were at, at some pains to say that they had consulted with our Japanese allies and that they were, quote, okay, with this.

00:32:27:01 - 00:33:03:10

Eric Edelman

I think those of us who talk to, you know, Japanese, colleagues during that period of time heard, litany of complaints about how the administration didn't understand what they were actually saying. They were being very polite, but it was obviously taken as a serious sign of lack of interest in the issue. Now, that happened to be occurring in a, context, as Frank mentioned earlier, where concerned, you know, we're not as high as they have now become about, both, Russia and China and, and the US is willingness to stand by its security guarantees.

00:33:03:11 - 00:33:23:06

Eric Edelman

But it's an indication, I think, of how, prolonged this problem has been and how it has built up over time. So it's like a man, I think would be an important one. And as Frank mentioned, having a standoff weapon for the F-35 would be another good example. Anything we can do to get our allies more involved.

00:33:23:06 - 00:33:48:07

Eric Edelman

Frank and I have written about, including, some of the newer NATO allies in the NATO nuclear mission, whether that's Poland or the Nordics. There are things we can do and should be doing, to strengthen, you know, extended nuclear deterrence. I just don't think it's getting much thought or attention from the current administration.

00:33:48:09 - 00:34:05:00

Peter Huessy

We have two questions coming up. Which is kind of interesting. One is from Bill Courtney. To what extent might the addition of a nuclear mission to Dark Eagle be controversial with the allies or the US Army? Either of you can take that on?

00:34:05:01 - 00:34:08:15

Frank Miller

Well, you know, there's nothing we do, but go ahead.

00:34:09:01 - 00:34:51:10

Eric Edelman

Well, I was just going to say. I mean, Bill is, you know, a friend and colleague of longstanding, at my, my reading, first of all, is that the Russians, have already done this, right. They've deployed Iskander to Kaliningrad, which hold part of our alliance at risk. It's a dual capable system. The Arash...missile, which they've used a couple of times now in the Ukraine war was the subject of a lot of contention, because it was a violation of the INF treaty, which led us to get out of the treaty and the fact that they're using it, it's also dual capable.

00:34:51:11 - 00:35:23:13

Eric Edelman

So, the predicate has already been set for an offsetting US capability. You know, the Germans have already accepted the idea of the US deploying conventionally armed missiles. In Germany. I don't think it's a reach, in fact, for them to be willing to take, a nuclear, armed, intermediate range missile. I think the UK is another potential place where we could place it.

00:35:23:13 - 00:35:57:08

Eric Edelman

But there, you know, other countries in Europe as well that might be willing to, to host, look, if we did this, we would have to have, as we did in the late 1970s, an alliance wide discussion. We would have to work it, through the, something like the high level group, that we had, that led to the dual, you know, the dual decision, dual track decision of 1979 and then the implementation in the in the Reagan administration.

00:35:57:09 - 00:36:22:10

Eric Edelman

It's not that these things can't be done, it's just that they require a lot of hard work and a lot of diplomatic effort, which we frankly have, you know, lost a lot of muscle memory on and have lost a lot of capability in, in part because of budget cuts, DOGE and other things. We've lost a lot of the ability to do this, and we need to rebuild those capabilities.

00:36:22:10 - 00:36:30:06

Eric Edelman

I think, you know, in light of the incredible challenges that Frank has laid out in his remarks that are in front of us.

00:36:30:07 - 00:37:08:02

Frank Miller

I mean, I agree about anything. Eric said it just speak to two additional points. One is and there's nothing that we do that with nuclear that isn't controversial to somebody or another. But our friends in the arms control community have this in, in my opinion, just completely wrong. I mean, the notion that a US tool capable system will raise Russian concerns about the first weapon being fired, being nuclear tipped flies in the face of the evidence that the Russians and Chinese deployed tool capable systems, with all of their military capabilities.

00:37:08:03 - 00:37:32:05

Frank Miller

And for us to say, oh, well, we're going to be pure because they don't believe it when they do, in fact, believe it just misses the whole point. Deterrence is about understanding what the enemy thinks and does, not what we do. And the second point is, Eric and I have been accused at various points of never having met no arms control agreement we didn't like.

00:37:32:06 - 00:37:57:13

Frank Miller

The fact of the matter is we were both involved in INF, we were involved in START One. We helped craft START Two, we were involved in President Bush 43, Treaty of Moscow, which actually took weapons

levels down below New start. But the lesson in all of that is you've got to give the other guy an incentive to negotiate.

00:37:57:15 - 00:38:20:09

Frank Miller

And you only do that when you deploy a system that the other guy doesn't like. And that brings him to the table. And there's a long history to all of that. And if you're not familiar with it, go read it before you come jumping on Eric and me for trying to create new arms races. It's just simply historically false.

00:38:20:11 - 00:39:01:05

Peter Huessy

Yeah, I would echo what Frank just said. And ambassador, is that, NIPP the National Institute of Public Policy that keep ban runs has done an extraordinary, booklet. I think it was last year by Dave Trachtenberg and others about the history of arms control. And I, I do want to do two things, just as a... I would like to say hello to some people that are joining us today, Frank Rose, who's been a, dear longtime friend for decades and all the work you've done, ambassador Linton Brooks, who has been a speaker at this series of for a number of times, and that, Admiral Butler from formerly from Lockheed

00:39:01:05 - 00:39:29:13

Peter Huessy

Martin, who was one of my first sponsors, way, way back. And, Jack Weinstein, who was head of A-10, the U.S. Air Force general, retired. Welcome, Jack. Nice to see you. And, Dan Cook from an NNSA. And then in particular, Madelyn Creedon, who not only has been a speaker for us, but, someone that I work with when she was on Capitol Hill and then with the NNSA and, extraordinary.

00:39:29:14 - 00:39:56:03

Peter Huessy

And also co-chair, I believe, of the Posture Commission. So, I want to welcome them and also just to say hello to and sponsor, let's thank you to our sponsors, Moog and AIPEC, Bechtel, General Dynamics, Textron, Northrop Grumman, Tech Source, JRC and Systems Planning and Analysis. I may have missed a couple, but I just wanted to say thank you to these people because we can't do this without their help.

00:39:56:04 - 00:40:12:07

Peter Huessy

And so, we have a question that, Frank, you've kind of answered, and so is Eric. But I want to let you elaborate on it. The question comes from James Wilson is where would you put the Pershing threes?

00:40:12:08 - 00:40:34:12

Frank Miller

Right. I, I think the Dark Knight is or is a Dark Eagle I get the name computer is originally designed, at this point to go into Germany. There are other places where you could put it. I think I would put it in a place where you can take advantage of its longer range.

00:40:34:14 - 00:40:58:12

Frank Miller

And as, as Eric suggested, it either could be a decision taken by the entire alliance as the 79 decision was,

or you could get agreement in principle from, NATO for the United States to work bilaterally with, with a series of host countries, in the Pacific. I think I would put it, on, on U.S. territory.

Frank Miller

I might, put it in the Philippines again, depending on negotiations. I think probably putting the non a non-nuclear, strictly non-nuclear version, by might be something that you could put into, into Japan and you could put a dual capable version into Korea. But you need to have the vision to be able to say, this is a system that helps deter Russian use against our allies.

00:41:31:07 - 00:41:41:05

Frank Miller

And therefore, allies should be interested in helping host it, since the Russian threat is there and it's palpably there.

00:41:41:07 - 00:42:02:13

Peter Huessy

There's a question I find it's quite interesting. It's a little long. Let me read it to you, gentlemen. It's from Patrick Baum. Is it feasible to link extended deterrence from conventional deterrence in the minds of our allies? And he notes that it seems to me that pushing NATO to take a greater role in their own conventional defense does not necessarily undermine extended deterrence.

00:42:02:14 - 00:42:07:14

Peter Huessy

Either Frank or Eric can go ahead and look at that.

Eric Edelman

Well, I agree that pushing them to take a greater role in conventional defenses does not undermine, extended deterrence. I think the greater problem is lack of certainty about what the US is willing to, to do beyond, asking them to take on a greater role. I mean, the problem with the ends that I find is that it says the US will, you know, provide the sort of limited but critical capabilities to supplement what allies do without identifying exactly what that is and how that how that would work.

00:42:48:07 - 00:43:24:00

Eric Edelman

I think the reality is there's a broader issue. I think that's kind of, subsumed in the question, which is the linkage between conventional and nuclear deterrence and, fearful that the line is it's blurring almost to, you know, eradication, because of the development of modern conventional capabilities. You know, we're seeing, in the, in real time in the Gulf War or the Iran War, Gulf War three, whatever you want to call it.

00:43:24:01 - 00:44:05:01

Eric Edelman

The, the use of, ballistic missiles, the use of cruise missiles, the use of drones to attack, capabilities. I don't think it's out of the question that we will, you know, we we already see it. We see the, Russian and Chinese both working on, on hypersonic, missiles meant to, you know, escape our, our missile defenses, etc. that, could be either in a conventional or in nuclear mode, but could be used against US conventional or other US nuclear weapons, at some point.

00:44:05:01 - 00:44:19:07

Eric Edelman

And so, I think the whole line between conventional nuclear deterrence is just becoming increasingly blurred. And I don't think we can think about it anymore in the way we used to, where the clear firebreak between conventional and nuclear.

00:44:19:08 - 00:44:48:15

Frank Miller

Could I just add to what Eric said? I think he said, you know, generations of American scholars and policymakers, have been brought up to think about Herman Card and escalation ladders and Thomas Schelling and even things to doubt. And yeah, that's great, but that's the way the West looks at it. And I would hazard a guess that if you looked at the Russian playbook and don't forget the Russians are already in involved in gray area warfare and sabotage against us right now because you're asking them off.

00:44:48:15 - 00:45:08:14

Frank Miller

The chief of the Russian General Staff says we're at war with the West, and they're creating all sorts of things, whether it's cables or fires or, or, take trying to take down a DHL airplane. We're at war. And if you look at the Russian playbook, if deterrence fails, if they attack the West, it's not going to be a conventional skirmish.

00:45:08:14 - 00:45:32:11

Frank Miller

And maybe if things go along, something else is going to happen raised. It's going to be on day one conventional. It's going to be cyber. It's going to be space, you know. And so, there is there a sense that the everything is blurring here. And we need to be able to think about deterrence by thinking about how the enemy will attack and what we can do to tell the enemy that's not going to work.

00:45:32:11 - 00:45:51:09

Frank Miller

And in fact, it makes things worse for you. And so Eric's right, but we we've got to get out of this mirror imaging mindset where we said, yep, that's right. Well, let's step three on Khan's ladder. And, you know, let's see if we can stop them from going a step forward. It just it doesn't make sense. At least that is Frank.

00:45:51:09 - 00:46:06:13

Peter Huessy

We have a question, which is kind of interesting about you've been involved, deeply involved in the US relationship with Great Britain, particularly with respect to the submarine deterrent.

00:46:06:14 - 00:46:14:05

Peter Huessy

Where a relationship between the two countries, and particularly between the prime minister and the president.

00:46:14:06 - 00:46:38:00

Frank Miller

You'll have to ask the prime minister, the president I, I not privy to that. I read about it in the press. But I was in London Monday and Tuesday of this week, and I can say that the relations on the nuclear deterrent between civilian officials in the UK and civilian officials in the US are very strong.

00:46:38:01 - 00:47:09:12

Frank Miller

And at the same thing is true with respect to the military, leadership, and rank and file who are working on, on Trident and U.S. warheads, to include an NSA. So, you know, the core of the relationship is strong. And I would go one step further to say, the press tends to talk about the special relationship, as you know, what did the president I think I guess it was Obama.

00:47:09:12 - 00:47:36:13

Frank Miller

Eric kind of got or gave a box of DVDs that wasn't compatible on the U.S. or British, system. But look, the special relationship is something live. It's like a marriage. It continues. It's civil servants, it's military people. It's the intelligence community. It's the diplomatic community. It's the military community, and it's broad and it's deep, and it's the it's the closest thing we have with any country in the world.

00:47:36:15 - 00:48:17:02

Frank Miller

So, the special relationship is good, you know. Does it get buffered about, from time to time? Buffeted from time to time? Yeah. I mean, somebody recall Suez? Somebody recalls when the Brits would not go into Vietnam. I mean, sure, I mean, politics, particularly at the top, have some impact on things. But at the same time, the special relationship, in my judgment, remains strong, notwithstanding Eric's point that there are doubts about the degree of commitment at the very top.

00:48:17:03 - 00:48:38:04

Peter Huessy

I have a question from, John Walsh on who, as you know, worked for President Biden and, nuclear matters and Armstrong here. Here's his question. Can the either of the speakers lay out clearly what they seek to deter Russia and China from doing, and how new or more weapons will be more effective at deterring those actions? I'll have Frank start.

00:48:38:04 - 00:48:47:03

Peter Huessy

I know, Frank, this is this is not really a grenade under...., but it's a good question.

00:48:47:04 - 00:48:49:13

Frank Miller

I won't try to characterize your comment.

00:48:49:15 - 00:48:52:08

Peter Huessy

Okay, look, I'm trying to be nice.

00:48:52:09 - 00:49:27:14

Frank Miller

For goodness sake. Putin's military says they're at war against us. We know that they are doing things, as I said a few minutes ago, to interfere with our communications, to destroy key facilities, to carry out attacks with banned substances like, like chemical weapons. We know that they are planning, planning, if necessary, on their part to take chunks of NATO territory.

00:49:28:00 - 00:50:00:08

Frank Miller

What we want Russia and China to do is to stay within their own borders and not to attack our allies or our interests or ourselves. It's that simple. And you just watch what they do, and. And John knows it. These are not for our friends. And if it requires us to have military and diplomatic and intelligence capabilities to say to them, don't you touch us or our allies, that's what we need to do.

00:50:00:08 - 00:50:25:06

Frank Miller

We need to have, the history of what Russia has done since 2010 is, it's instructive. And you can say that the Chinese are being very simple and just trying to protect themselves. And that's why Xi is engaged in this massive military buildup. And sure, that's exactly why Hitler was engaged in a massive military buildup in the in the 30s, because he was afraid that that Britain and France would rouse themselves from their slumber and attack him.

Peter Huessy

Frank Miller

But, you know, I mean, let's wake up and smell the coffee in the in the phrase. But, Eric, I mean, you must have things you want to say on this.

00:50:32:15 - 00:51:16:01

Eric Edelman

Oh, I the point I would make is, I worry that we are moving away from a period of time when people had a very visceral sense of the danger of nuclear weapons use. I think the last person I knew who had actually personally witnessed an atmospheric nuclear test, was the late, Andy Marshall, and if you think about President Putin's pretty promiscuous, I would say use of nuclear threats.

00:51:16:03 - 00:51:48:03

Eric Edelman

Yeah. You know, he has said that in 2014, at the time of the seizure of Crimea, he was prepared to use nuclear weapons if the West had interfered. We had we had given Ukraine assurances in 1994 and in the Clinton administration that they would be protected against changes to their, to their physical borders at the time, including by Russia.

00:51:48:04 - 00:52:12:14

Eric Edelman

So, although it wasn't a legal obligation, you know, it certainly was a political commitment of sorts, which we might have tried to, to execute. We didn't, but, Putin said he was ready to use nuclear weapons. We've got the whole I think we don't know the full story yet about what happened in the fall of 2022.

Eric Edelman

But, you know, there are at least some Biden administration officials who argue that the intelligence community was saying it was 50/50, that the Russians were ready to use nuclear weapons at that point. I worry that the Chinese leadership is not, you know, populated by, people who have, you know, a real due regard for how dangerous it is to make these threats and to brandish these, these weapons.

00:52:41:13 - 00:53:18:09

Eric Edelman

And so I, I think that it is the better part of wisdom to try and array our nuclear forces in a way that makes it extremely unlikely, that anybody would think to use nuclear weapons or to wake up one day and say, today is the day we're going to, you know, test the proposition that it might be okay to, to take action in the in the hope that it won't, you know, lead to consequences that Schelling outlined in the risk that leave something to chance.

00:53:18:10 - 00:53:23:12

Frank Miller

Let me say one, one thing, please. In addition.

00:53:23:13 - 00:53:53:11

Frank Miller

Our weapons systems are aging. Our colleague from long ago, Clark Murdoch, said, you know, we're getting to a point where it's going to be, replace them or get out of business, out of the deterrence business. That's why we're modernizing the force. The second thing is Putin, of all people, is well aware that there's a difference between the force that we plan for 2010 and the current situation in 2026, that there's a bit of a bit of a deficit.

00:53:53:12 - 00:54:21:07

Frank Miller

If effective deterrence means holding what potential enemy leaderships, value most highly at risk. He knows that we haven't done that. And so, if we have to add a couple of hundred warheads to hold Russia and China at risk simultaneously, that's what we need to do because it means that we have to convince Putin and Xi that the time is not now to carry out some sort of aggression.

00:54:21:09 - 00:54:42:03

Peter Huessy

We have a few minutes left for Frank and Eric. I want to ask you a question. That I addressed just, yesterday in a podcast we did at the Gold institute, with John Wolf... So let's do not General John Wohlstetter and a colleague of ours from Israel. And that is what role do you see?

00:54:42:03 - 00:54:55:00

Peter Huessy

Missile defense plane, whether Golden Dome or however you want to characterize it? In terms of the strategic nuclear and theater and nuclear deterrent.

00:54:55:02 - 00:55:21:14

Frank Miller

I can start I can be very simple. Go ahead, Frank, that you teach a posture commission said that in light of the from, the prodigious use of lipstick lessons by the Russians, we need to create a barrier, which will prevent the Russians from using ballistic missiles against us or our allies up to a point where, general war has, has, has begun.

00:55:22:00 - 00:55:54:07

Frank Miller

And so integrated air and missile defenses, which will raise a barrier to their, use of ballistic missiles, is important. It's it's an element of deterrence that is a 21st century feature. And many people go back and think about missile defense as as Star Wars or whatever. But technology has advanced and we are to SPC recognize that that that you raise the barrier.

00:55:54:10 - 00:56:10:04

Frank Miller

We're not I'm not talking about, an Astrodome, but I'm talking about something that that in fact, in a crisis can make a difference and cause an enemy theater to decide not to strike us or our allies.

00:56:10:05 - 00:56:33:08

Peter Huessy

Thank you. We are now at 10:57. I want to turn it over to our president, Jim Petrosky, if he has a question. And if not, then turn it over to Kimberly to again remind us what our future agenda is. And, I want to thank you all for joining us today. We had almost 200 people who joined us today.

00:56:33:09 - 00:56:37:03

Peter Huessy

And, Jim Petrosky, over to you, sir.

00:56:37:04 - 00:56:56:14

James Petrosky

Thank you very much. And you I'm not going to, I'm not going to add to this. We had so many of our audience asking questions. There's a whole lot more to do this. And we've been trying very hard to do that. So, as we close, I want to thank our special guests and our hosts, Peter Huessy, for our rich and substantive, discussion.

00:56:56:15 - 00:57:20:10

James Petrosky

And, you addressed a lot of the key questions that were raised your posture, assurance, credibility and extended deterrence. And, and you certainly are the experts. And we take, we take, what you say to heart and, it's quite valuable for all of us. I'd also like to thank the sponsors, as curt as, sorry as Peter did, and our audience for, engaging with us on these many questions.

James Petrosky

So let's hope these conversations matter. And you take them somewhere else, and we continue discussions. I like the comment I think Frank made. This needs to be a national discussion. We've got to we've got to sort these things out. And, you certainly are appreciated in your views as well as your

activities here.

James Petrosky

And so, our nation. Thank you. And so with that, I'm going to turn it over to Kimberly to close us out. Kimberly, go ahead.

00:57:46:03 - 00:58:13:05

Kimberly Cherington

Well, thank you, everyone, for being here today. We want to extend our deep appreciation to our speakers for being here. If you're new to NIDS, we are a 501 C3 organization, dedicated to advancing peace and promoting stability through a strong national security and nuclear deterrent. We do this by offering a wide range of deterrence education, from live and virtual events like this one.

00:58:13:07 - 00:58:21:06

Kimberly Cherington

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00:58:21:08 - 00:58:45:12

Kimberly Cherington

And, feel free to email us if you and your colleagues would like to get on our invitation list. And as always, don't forget to like and follow us on social media, on LinkedIn, on X, on, YouTube, and help us spread the word of the good work that we're doing. Thank you all and have a peaceful weekend.

00:58:45:13 - 00:58:53:00

Peter Huessy

Thank you. Ambassador. Mr. ambassador, thank you, Frank Miller. Appreciate it, Eric and Frank. Thank you. You see you soon. Hopefully.