Mr. Riki Ellison:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, from a overcast Day in Washington DC, in Alexandria, Virginia. Welcome to our 60th Congressional Roundtable on Saving Ukraine. I'm Riki Ellison. I'm the founder and chairman of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance. That's over 20 years old, but more importantly, 40 years ago was part of the critical thinking for Strategic Defense Initiative, getting out of college back in 1980, and working during my NFL career on the ground-based Interceptor systems and so forth on it. It is phenomenal to see that the fruits of that vision from President Reagan, from the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989, with Missile Defense having a part of that, to just recently, two weeks ago, on the spectacular performance of an integrated air missile defense and defending Israel with a joint combined group. Now, looking at how Ukraine is surviving through Missile Defense. There is a lot of vision and application to this.

We have just come back from Warsaw, Poland, the last three or four days, where no place in the European theater or in the NATO theater feels the urgency of what is going on directly across in Ukraine than Poland, Romania and the Baltics. They have a different viewpoint, an urgency viewpoint, that came to life. We were there last week on Victory Day, World War II, 1945, no better placed to understand how important it is for coalition. No better place than Poland to understand how critical that is for survival and to deter that aspect. We held our European Missile Defender of the Year 2024. First time ever, a Polish armed forces earned that award.

But we also took the time to honor seven Ukrainian combat missile defenders. Remarkable, two crews and one individual first set the pace on shooting down a cruise missile and a Shahed with a Stinger missile. One crew, made up of three, was awarded for shooting down 22 Shaheds last year. One crew was given the award for using three rounds of 50 Cal, taken out a $13 million air-launched cruise missile. Remarkable.

But it brings us in our travels to the facts that Ukraine's in trouble and there's serious consideration from our war fighters, from our allies, that Ukraine may not survive this summer. You've seen a lot of this coming up in the press here in Washington DC, National Security Advisor, the pundits, the think tanks, have come up on urgency. We're not here to explain why that happened because there's a lot of reasons for that, but we got to figure out how we can do everything we can to save Ukraine for the next couple months as they get through this year.

This is a war of attrition. It's just symbolic that it's gone back to trench warfare with drones. As a war of attrition, they're winning that war because the cost of those drones are $10,000 and $25,000, and we're shooting those things down with million dollar defense. We've got to be able to find ways, and I believe, Ukraine, we've got the best here on technologies on how to do that cheaper, faster, quicker. This will be an open discussion and we'll let each one of our participants open up with seven minutes of remarks or so on this. We are very fortunate to have practitioners here, not think tank guys. Or excuse me, Mark, I'm sorry, practitioners, war fighters and actually people, decision makers and influencers, from Ukraine in Ukraine today.

I want to start off with a NATO perspective as that is the collective group that is focused and contributing the most to Ukraine. We have Brigadier General Chris Sage. He is the Director for IMD Joint Air Power and Space for NATO Headquarters. He's been in NATO off and on for seven years. What I love about him, he's been a pilot in a plane and has shot down a drone from a plane. I'm going to give him a little love on that aspect of it. Chris, thank you for being here and I look forward to your remarks on the situation we have in Ukraine. All yours, Chris.

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:

Well, thanks, Riki. It's an honor to be here amongst the greats of Missile Defense and those that care about this mission, those that care about the Alliance, and those that care about Ukraine, because over this last week that's been the focus within the headquarters of NATO Alliance. It's the sense of urgency. It's the fact that time is of the essence, as you mentioned. On my desk, I keep a little pad where it counts up what day of the conflict we're in. I think today is day number 814, and that's 814 days where our Ukrainian friends have not been able to sleep at peace in their beds.

Oh, by the way, what affects Ukraine affects Europe and what affects Europe affects the Alliance. That's also one of the themes and one of the things that I emphasize when I talk to people in the headquarters that an investment in Ukraine right now is an investment in European or in Alliance security. We can never take that for granted. Right now, in NATO, we're in a phase where we're sort of building up the plans, the future plans, after the peace dividend of 30 years, the regional plans as we're calling them, as part of defense and deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic area. The guidance from the Secretary General, the guidance from the senior military leadership right now, is to accept some level of risk in order to help Ukraine with their defenses because, ultimately, that helps our defenses. Even if that means that in the short term, we have to accept a little bit of risk within the nations of the Alliance.

I believe it's important always to define why we're doing what we're doing. From an IAMD perspective, by the way, I'm very fortunate to be in this new organization now that I was allowed to stand up two years ago with a specific focus on multi-domain operations. But forefront of that effort has been integrated air and missile defense as well as space, as well as electromagnetic warfare, all the pieces that are important to this fight.

But first of all, from a Ukraine perspective and even from an Alliance perspective, when we look at what's required, we have to build out the architecture. But first of all, we have to stop the bleeding. We have to match the threat then with equal defensive capabilities, and then we can talk, after we do those two things, about turning the tide to gain the offensive. In order to do that, if we have this logical string through the process, we have to be eyes wide open about the threat.

I know we're going to hear from Alexey later. Who's going to remind us of how real that threat is, how the enemy is adapting and how, oh, by the way, they are ramping up, the enemy is ramping up, their drone production. We're in February of '23. There was approximately 100 drones employed in that month. Now, fast-forward to April of '24, oh, almost 6,000 drones employed. The enemy is adapting, the enemy is ramping up, and it's time for the Alliance to think about how we defend every inch of Alliance territory. Obviously, that also translates into helping Ukraine defend their territory.

We also have to be eyes wide open right now about the dwindling stockpiles. I think you hit on this and it's a reality, it's something we talked about with the Chiefs of Defense over the last week. We had every CHOD, every senior military leader, in the NATO headquarters building yesterday. We talked about the need to basically double down on supply and the required weapons, whether that's ammunition, shells, but definitely missiles, Effectors, and missile defense systems, whether that's Patriot, NASAMS, SAMP/T, you name it.

To your point earlier, I like to point out a lot of times that, because we had a Ukrainian session yesterday where we had the two-star come, the chief of staff for Ukrainian Armed forces came and gave us an overview. He gave us the good, the bad and the ugly, but he reminded us that every time an operator has to make a decision whether to fire a Patriot at a drone, I mean, that's a strategic decision and that's one that we're trying to shift away from where the Ukrainians have all of the assets required to innovate to then match a weapon with weapon based on the threat versus wasting high-end weapon systems on low-end threats.

I was encouraged to see the two-star, the chief of staff of the Ukrainian forces, laid out a list of his asks of what's most important right now, for not only the Alliance and Alliance nations, but also other nations that are helping. But he laid them out from a priority perspective, which I thought was very helpful. Number one was, or he defined the problem, was an absence of air superiority. That was an army guy talking so I thought the fact that he mentioned that shows the lessons learned without air superiority, you basically devolve into just a grinding trench warfare war of attrition.

Number two, right underneath air superiority was an absence of armament, needed armament in ammo, but specifically weapons for the air defense systems, EW capabilities, electromagnetic warfare capabilities, and then obviously, offensive UAVs as the Ukrainians now take the fight to the enemy.

I'll wrap up here by sort of talking just briefly about what we're doing within the Alliance. First and foremost, along with Assistant Secretary General Chum, who you know very well, we're on this team where we're effectively, Tom Goffus and I are on this team where we're working directly for the Secretary General to sort of beat the bushes for donations for sales, whatever's required for the high-end systems. But our goal is to not only find those systems, convince those allies and non-allies to donate and/or sell, but also to donate pieces and parts of systems so that we can then rely on that Ukrainian innovation to put those systems together into a reliable defensive network. We're also pushing nations to not just promise but to promise and then deliver with an actual timeline, versus in the old days where they would make lots of promises but not necessarily follow up.

And so, a few principles that I took away from this week as we talked to these various high-level groups, not only the Chiefs of defense, but the day before that, I had a session along with ASG Tom Goffus with the ambassadors of NATO, where we specifically talked about, it was an education session on counter A2/AD. Basically, how do you take down the enemy's integrated air and missile defense and then balance that with our own IAMD? You need the offense and the defense.

But here are a couple of the lessons learned from that session. First of all, we cannot fire promises at the enemy. I thought that was a pretty witty statement that somebody made. We cannot fire promises at the enemy. We must review our focus on standardization because what we're seeing in the Alliance is as equipment and other types of weapon systems are being donated to Ukraine, we have to get it right so that the pieces and parts fit together so that we're operating under the same standards, we're operating under the same equipment. We know that's been an ongoing problem specifically with the artillery shells.

And then, last but not least, we're all aware, and I'm sure we'll talk about that some today is industry capacity continues to be a problem that NATO is highlighting. NATO, from a political perspective, is leaning in from a military perspective, is leaning in to help solve that problem. The last thing that I'll say as I wrap up is I'm very, very proud of the fact that our organization

within NATO is focused on what we call the rotational model. That's taking 30 years or 20 to 30 years of NATO mindset of where we're doing air policing and we're doing an occasional exercise with surface-based air missile defense, but really frankly, from a very light perspective. Now, we're translating that into the rotational model where we're going to deploy active units, combat units, both in the air and on the ground, integrate together. Oh, by the way, if needed, while they're on the forward line of defense on the eastern flank, they could transition immediately to that air defense role and be ready to take the fight to the enemy if required.

We've gotten that passed through the headquarters. It's now going to be announced at the NATO Summit in July, and that's a huge step forward for the Alliance for Missile Defense. Riki, thanks for the time.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thanks, Chris.

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:

Happy to answer questions later. Back to you.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thanks, Chris. I got a couple of questions for you. We've seen the increase in defense spending astronomical with Poland, 4%, and it looks like those Eastern European countries are increasing there. Can we say that for the rest of NATO on this? Number one, what is the cost to NATO if Ukraine loses to Russia? The refugees, the millions coming over, what is the defense spending would be required now if they take Ukraine and they're on the border of NATO? Is there something to that, the return on investment instead of now, later is going to be multiple times more? Can you speak to that if we lose Ukraine to what it's going to cost NATO?

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:

Absolutely, Riki. On your first question, the good news is we went from the Wales Summit back in 2016 where it was aspirational towards 2% to now the Secretary General making it very clear for this summit, 2% is now the floor. Just by my own count, when I look at the country, Poland's a great example of a country that's really stepping up, even countries like France, are now announcing that they're going to be close to the 2% and hopefully over, but I'll let those nations speak for themselves.

But when you look at the Eastern flank and the great example that those nations are setting, from my count though, when I just look across the nations based on their old data and then the emerging data, I think we're going to be north of 20, 20 pushing towards 25 of the 32 allies, which is a positive. And then, when you see nations like Poland, like you said, that are going well above that, I think this idea that 2% is the minimum and that we need to start looking well beyond that is going to be the theme of the NATO Summit in Washington in July.

That's a good news story and it's impressive to see how some of these countries have stepped up to set that standard. Some of the smaller countries, sometimes I hear that they will say, "Well, we don't have much to offer," but they do. They have a lot to offer. It may not be in personnel, but it may be in their niche capability that they can offer, whether that's a small country like Luxembourg from their space capabilities to even, I'll tell you, the Netherlands is really stepping up on what they're providing, on what they're offering.

You probably know, it's in the news, so it's open. But Germany, a couple of weeks ago, made it public, and they doubled down on that this week, that they're going to offer their third Patriot system to Ukraine, which it doesn't sound like much, but except when you look at, they only have 12 systems total, so it's one quarter of their national supply. Germany has really been a leader. By making that decision that has really allowed them to now sort of encourage, if you will, the other nations to step up not only with high-end modern systems, but even some of the older Soviet systems. There's some nations out there with S-300s and other similar systems.

To your second question, Riki, I mean that's a touchdown question, a grand slam, because you're exactly right. That's why I started off with the phrase of an investment in Ukraine security is a direct investment in the Alliance's security, but at a huge multiple to your point. I mean, the cost of having to fight the Alliance to go to an Article 5 high-end fight is a fraction of the cost in donations and manpower material, not manpower now, but material that nations are being asked to spend now. The good news is the nations get that. The Alliance gets that.

I was very encouraged when I met with the ambassadors two days ago, and we walked them through an IAMD exercise and a counter A2/AD exercise. I will say that of all these topics, the one that concerns me the most right now at this moment is the industrial capacity to ramp up production specifically on these high end systems, which is why nations are being encouraged to accept a little bit of risk now to donate those systems, and then hopefully, be backfilled.

We're also looking at partners around the world, Riki, partners around the world that have purchased systems, Patriot, whether that's countries in the Middle East or the Indo-Pacific theater. Back to you.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thanks, Chris. Just one more. Last week in Poland, the reality of losing that would be 15 million refugees coming into Poland from Ukraine. I mean, just putting that cost is evident there. Let's go a little bit further. I want to go a little bit further with your air policing versus air defense because that policy now, and you've got missiles, Russian cruise missiles, and drones over NATO territory. Are we shifting as a NATO Alliance from air policing to air defense due to what we've seen in Ukraine?

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:

Yeah, Riki, very timely question because, this week, we specifically with the CHODs, with our Chairman of the joint Chiefs and all the Chiefs of Defense for all the nations, we specifically talked about the executability of the plans. Part of that is what we call a posture level system in

peacetime where we basically ramp up the level of alert, if you will, for our air policing assets or our air defense assets as well as our integrated air and missile defense assets.

What we did this week and what we discussed was to make sure that SACEUR has the authorities that he needs to not only move forces into place, both in the air and on the ground, but also then to activate them to the state that they need to be in if the enemy is escalating, if there's an impending threat, and then obviously if we transition, if we cross the rubicon over into conflict.

The reality is the mindset has shifted, and even though we're not obviously going to sit in an air defense posture today, the goal is to be able to have that flexibility to quickly shift, but with resources in place, with authorities for SACEUR, and making sure all the politicians and all the military leaders understand what's required to make that happen. But what undergirds that ability to shift to air defense, like you talked about in a timely manner though, is having an integrated network not only of sensors but of the proper radars, of the Effectors. But that's from the surface to space across the Alliance, 360 degrees, specifically for now on the Eastern flank, and that's what we're laser focused on at NATO right now.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thanks, Chris. It's a hell of a jump from the last 20 years, right?

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:

Sure.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

I mean, that has not been addressed and it is now being addressed. I would go further than you've got to have both ballistic missile defense, hypersonic glide, and IMD and drone all together. We're not even there yet, but that has to be done in Europe. It has to be.

Well, thank you. Thank you. We have just a great honor, great friend, a great man. I like to think of him as our modern-day Guggenheim physicist, Alexey Boyarsky, and he's in Ukraine. I think he's in Ukraine, but he is born in Ukraine, obviously. He is a professor of physics at Leiden University. He's had 30 years of scientific work on dark matter and neutron and particle physics. He is the Chief Technology Advisor to the Air Defense Office of the Land Force Command of the Ukrainian Air Force, as well as advisor to the Ministry of the Digital Transformation to the Vice Prime Minister Fedorov and advisor to the Deputy Commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Welcome, Alexey, great to see you. You were with us in Warsaw last week. It's great to have you here to give us a real perspective from a Ukrainian and from the Ukrainian viewpoint of survivability of your nation over this summer and what you require for that. All yours.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:

Riki, thank you very much. It's an honor to be here. Everything what I will say, I will say as a civilian and not a governmental employee, so it's my own point of view, which I will be super happy to share with you. Although I'm Ukrainian and I love Ukraine, and I have my parents in Ukraine, who are still alive, and my sister and my friends and my students and so on, but still I'm a scientist, so I'm a little bit of a citizen of the world.

I did spend 30 years doing science and thinking about 12 billion years old universe and particles and so on. I can ask myself from a perspective of humanity, not from Ukrainian, why should people care about this war? Why people in America, in the Netherlands, in Switzerland, why they all should care about this war? There are many aspects of that. There is what you said, practical, how many refugees are you going to have in the case when Ukraine does not survive?

There is another aspect. Let us remember the history of Putin. Putin started his rule in Russia by having the war in Chechnya, and this was considered as internal Russian business, although it was a terrible war with cities destroyed with artillery and air force with tens of thousands of people killed. It was everything that we observe now in Ukraine already there, but the case, there was an excuse. In 2008, Putin invaded Georgia. It was not Russian internal business. Again, it started with all the same destroying villages, cities, killing civilians. The reaction of the west and the civilized world was that, at the end, it encouraged Putin. He thought that it went good enough for him, and his next step was invading Crimea, to annexing it and invading the eastern part of Ukraine.

He was moving ahead step by step, and every next step was more serious than the previous one. It was much easier to stop him in 2008 than in 2014. In 2014, it was much cheaper and much easier to stop him than it is now. If you do simple extrapolation. Can you imagine that if he feels that he did it, that he made it to today, will he stop? It's very, very hard to imagine that. This is another way to look at this question.

Yet another way to look at it, it's a bit philosophical if you want, there are and there were different wars in the history of humankind. There were religious wars. There were wars for disputed territory. There were all kinds of conflicts. But this is a perfect example of the following situation. Normal people want to do something in their lives. They want to create. You want to build a house. You want to give birth to a child. You want to plant a tree. You want to create business. You want to find new knowledge. You want to develop new technology, whatever, but people try to create and build. There are other people who want to dominate and control other people, and this is their only goal. What does Russia want from Ukraine in this war? They want only one thing. They want to come and force Ukrainian people to do not what they want, but what Putin wants. As simple as that.

Ukraine is not the perfect state. You might like or not like what our government does. You may think that people are making mistakes. Some are more efficient, less efficient. Some people talk about corruption, although this problem is exaggerated. Yeah, it's just normal country, normal people with all these weakness, good and strong and weak sides. But these are normal people who simply want to live out their lives, and the enemy does not want us to do that. They want us to be slaves. They want us really to do what Putin wants, what they will want. It's very simple. It's like evil and good.

I think if this war is lost, it will not be only lost by Ukraine, it will be lost by civilization. It'll mean that in 21st century, our business is not to find a way to reach the stars or to complete the standard model of particle physics or to know the origin of the universe or create artificial intelligence. In 21st century, it's possible that someone comes to a peaceful country and simply tries to enslave its people. I think it's very important to say.

Now, from this point of view, what does it mean to win this war for Ukraine and, as I try to argue, for the civilization? It means that, first, Russia will not feel encouraged. Russia will not feel like this was a successful step that can be followed by next one. It's not about the territory. It's not about where the line goes. It's about achieving the situation when Russia feels that they lost this round and they don't want to continue. It's extremely important.

Second, the victory in this war is when people in Ukraine will be able to live their lives like they want and build houses, give birth to children, plant trees, create businesses, develop technologies, do science, and not being afraid of someone who will come, torture you, and enslave them, and this has to be guaranteed. These two things from the global and local Ukrainian point of view would mean the victor in this war, in my opinion.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Alexey, what do you need for those two things? What do you need from the west? What do you need from NATO to do those two things?

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:

Yes, I'm coming to that. Of course, there is an obvious and less obvious part. There is high end, if you want, and low end part. Of course, I can say what everyone can say, we need air superiority or at least air equality. Gliding bombs are big problem on the front line. They're pushing on our forces, and we need at least to be able to push the launchers of those gliding bombs further away, and at least in this way, to achieve air equality. What is about logistics? We need to have-

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Can I just clear, Alexey? I'm going to ask, say, are we restricted on providing anti-battery capability or anti-strike capability to give them an ability to strike the S-400s, S-300s and what he's talking about, glide bombs? Is that restricted from NATO, restricted from the United States?

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:

The individual nations are allowed to donate what they wish. The Alliance is only encouraging them to do so, and then some level of coordination amongst the nations is the restriction that for them to use certain weapon systems outside Ukrainian borders is a national decision from the donating nation.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Okay. Alexey.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:

The next obvious thing is that war is about logistics. You need weapons that are long-range enough to cut the enemy's logistics. This is, again, has a concern about the questions that Riki asked. We have to do it not only on the occupied, but also on the enemy's territory from the war logic point of view. The sort of crucial component, as it was discussed, we need high-end air defense assets to be able to counteract ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles and so on.

Everyone knows that this is important, and about this I can add only that time is crucial during the war. What could do the job in 2022? Now, we need 10 times more. Not giving this kind of help in time results in the necessity to give 10 times more in one year. Pure logic tells us that time is a crucial component here.

But apart from these high-end things, there are other things. Our war is changing every month and every week. I remember at the beginning of the war, we were buying commercial drones and trying to add a grenade to them. They were first experiments, which I remember very well. Now, we have hundreds of thousands. This became a crucial component of the war from both sides. We learned during this that war, that classical air defense, is not sufficient, that we need to have not only an anti-ballistic missile layer, we need also a layer that would prevent high-end air defense efforts to be used against cheap, scalable drones and be protected by that additional layer.

This kind of technologies did not exist before this war. Most of them appear very fast on the fly due to continuous and very fast innovation. This part can be called asymmetric because this is something that, to a large extent, Ukrainian companies, Ukrainian people, are creating themselves. To help us on this side, what is crucially important is that our partners have to realize that this war, it's not a time for business.

Of course, every country wants to invest in their own industry. Every country wants to deliver products that industries of that country produces. However, from this war point of view, sometimes it's much more, especially when emerging asymmetric technologies are concerned, it's much more efficient to help Ukrainians to do their jobs themselves. How? First of all, components. We have enormous difficulties buying very simple components from the US. On the third year of the world, we are still having troubles with licenses with companies who are simply afraid to deal with Ukraine. We are getting American companies who refuse to sell their components to us.

Also, sometimes it's very important, very efficient, if a Ukrainian company would cooperate with a western company to adopt a product that could be used but not in its original form, in a new way in this war. Again, this is extremely difficult and we are losing time. We need help on that. Very simply, sometimes, Denmark recently gave an example, it's much more efficient for partner countries to spend, let's say, 10 million Euros buying from a new emerging Ukrainian producer rather than investing $100 million or Euros buying from industries that still lives in a different

time dimension, that is functioning much slower with Christmas break, with weekends, vacations, holidays and so on. This kind of asymmetric work technology could go much faster if our interaction in this area would be more efficient and streamlined. This is what I probably would say.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Awesome. Thank you, Alexey, for that clear definition of that. Just for the public for us, just talk, I don't want to get too involved with it, but when they cleanse Eastern Ukraine, when the Russians cleanse it, what is that? And harder question, can we take back all Eastern Ukraine and Crimea from Russia or is that not doable? I know you've got a heartthrob on it. It's hard to ask you this, but that's a strong question. They've trenched themselves in there and then looks like a Stalinist gulag thing. But explain to us, because you're a Ukrainian, you understand what's going on in Eastern Europe. I mean, in eastern Ukraine.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:

Well, first of all, I want to say that there is a myth in many western countries. I recently was in Italy, and I've heard this explicitly, that many people believe that there is some kind of civil war or civil conflict in Ukraine, that this is about of Russian or Ukrainian-speaking parts of population. This is an obstacle from getting Eastern Ukraine back.

This is entirely completely wrong because the cities, the part of Ukraine that is struggling, suffering from the worst most, is the Russian-speaking part. Kharkiv is completely Russian. It used to be completely Russian-speaking city close to the Russian border. Now, this is one of the strongest bastions of our resistance. People of Kharkiv, they are very strong in their hate and anger and anti-Russian sentiments, anti-Putin I would say. The same is true for Odessa. A large part of our armed forces are coming from Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine. All this language questions are completely irrelevant. It's not about that and it's not an obstacle at all. People of Eastern Ukraine, they see by their own eyes what Putin's Russian Federation is doing to them.

From the military point of view, in my opinion, of course, it's very difficult because the eastern part of Ukraine has a good supply from Russia. It all depends on what I started from. If we have air superiority, or even not superiority but at least air equality, if we have tools allowing to cut logistics, of course, it is completely, entirely possible to get back the territories.

But what I will say now is my own point of view, is not point of view of our government or all people of Ukraine, but in my opinion, while it is possible and it would be fair and completely correct to get the 1999 borders of Ukraine back, it's not the most crucial point. The most crucial point to guarantee safety for the people of Ukraine in the future. Guarantees their right to live normal life as a part of the civilized world and to make sure that Putin and his followers feel that it was a very wrong decision to start this war and they do not feel encouraged. This is the main goal. How to achieve it, at which line, in my opinion, it's not the most important question.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thank you, Alexey. Just a phenomenal presentation. We don't hear that. The press doesn't hear that. You gave it to us straight, and I appreciate that. We really appreciate that.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:

Thank you.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thank you. Now, we pass it over to former OSD head of policy, retired, John Rood. John Rood's been in Poland, been there, understands it. He was with us two years ago when this war broke out. We did a virtual, right here on this, John, and you have been right on two years ago to where we're at now. I know you're bringing off of exactly what Alexey has stated, but welcome and the floor is yours, John.

Mr. John Rood:

Well, thank you, Riki, for having me. Having been to Kyiv and other parts of Ukraine such as Crimea, when I look at the images today, it breaks my heart to see some of the impact that the Russian aggression has had. Alexey, very well done. My compliments to you in your remarks. I think you've got, obviously, a front row seat, but you are participating in the conflict and the lessons and the messages you're sending, I think, are very important.

As Riki said, when the Russian invasion began two years ago, and I hesitate to say it began two years ago because Russian aggression has really been underway for about 10 years, since 2014, in various parts of Ukraine, it just grew to a higher level, a much more intense level of conflict that we haven't seen since World War II.

And so, Riki convened a virtual roundtable like this in the days after the invasion. My concern then was, and my concern now is, I think that it has not been understood the critical importance of this conflict to the scale that is important. Western nations and my country and our present leaders, my president that is currently in office, President Biden, have been slow, I think, to recognize that this is not a short-term conflict, is not something that can be abated slowly, but is in the context of a 20 year or more effort by Vladimir Putin to reconstitute many of the things that exist in the Soviet Union.

We've seen violence and conflict being used as a tactic, more than a tactic, a strategy, that President Putin has employed over that period of time, whether that was in Chechnya, Georgia, areas of the former Soviet Union. In some cases, like the invasion of Crimea, just an invasion and an occupation of the other area. In other cases, activities behind the lines, if you will, operations, whether that be done by intelligence people or what he calls his little green men, this hybrid warfare that has included violence. That hasn't just extended as a tool to areas of the

former Soviet Union. Assassinating opposition figures in London, elsewhere in Europe, Russian officials or former opponents of Putin disappearing or being killed around the world.

This is a lesson that has been taught for hundreds of years that violence, once used as a tool of foreign policy or objectives, those sorts of authoritarians tend to feel very comfortable using that. I dislike this notion that there is a phase of diplomacy, there's a phase of conflict. These people that you're dealing with, that are authoritarians, conflate that. Sun Tzu taught about that, diplomacy and war are part of the same tactics. We have to adapt our thinking to that.

But coming back to where we stand today, I think, to start with some fundamental points, the conflict in Ukraine is critically important, obviously, for the future of our Ukrainian friends. But it's also critically important to the United States as a critical national security issue, in my opinion, and that of the Western Alliance and this view that we have a principle that has governed our country and that we encourage others to follow around the world as a leader from the United States, that individual freedoms, individual liberties, that the government exists at the consent of the people, that the fundamental point, we give the government permission as the people to do what it chooses to do. That's the opposite of what authoritarians believe.

We put out, when I was the Undersecretary of Defense for policy in 2018, for the first time, a new national defense strategy that described the major conflict in the world and our primary concern as the United States as a return of great power competition, that we were in a phase, an ideological competition, with China, Russia and nations like that about what is the proper form of governance. China's very open in saying the Communist party of China and their form of governance is the superior form of governance, and this is the right way that peoples around the world should be governed.

And so, when Alexey was talking about the ability for people to exercise free choice, to choose what they want to do, to exercise free speech and other things, we're having vigorous debates about that in this country right now, but it pales in comparison to what these authoritarians might view as an area of debate. And so, we have to understand there's an ideological conflict underway that was somewhat controversial in 2018 when we rolled out that national defense strategy. But I don't think any serious national security person today would disagree with that.

And so, throughout the conflict, when it began two years ago, Riki pointed out when I looked over some of the things we talked about then, one of my concerns was that the Biden administration seemed to be incrementally increasing the level of support provided to Ukraine instead of providing decisive capabilities, instead of thinking that more force and greater capabilities applied earlier in the conflict would lead to peace.

I think there's a misunderstanding that Putin is very good at using a playbook that KGB operatives have been taught since the beginning of time, which is plausible deniability, plausible stories. For example, Alexey pointed out, saying, I'm seeking as an objective to protect Russian-speaking people around the world. Well, that's of course false. I mean, simply false. These Russian-speaking people are not seeking his protection nor do they wish to be part of the Russian Federation.

But it's the same thing that Adolf Hitler said in World War II, quite frankly, where he said his objective was to protect German-speaking people. And so, you see the similar application. History doesn't repeat itself exactly, but it does rhyme. We're seeing a very similar prospect there. But it does create confusion. It does create plausible explanations. When Putin feigns interest in a peace treaty, he has no sincerity there. Peace treaty perhaps on his terms, but the

only thing that's going to produce a cessation of a major conflict is once Putin and Russian forces can no longer impose their will through force. Enough force has to be delivered, enough defense, such that they cannot impose their will. That's another principle that Sun Tzu or Clausewitz taught, but is not being applied sufficiently.

And so, one of the things that I would argue, I argued then, I'd argue two years ago, I'd argue now in the conflict, this artificial distinction and where the present Biden administration has been pressuring the Ukrainians not to take the fight into Russia, to restrict intercepts of Russian aircraft to Ukrainian airspace and other things, I argued then, I'd argue now that's not an appropriate way to think about this conflict. You're ceding the initiative to the attackers to, at the time and place of their choosing, to initiate force and to initiate combat operations, forcing the Russians to defend their supply lines that are in Russia, forcing the Russians to defend their depots, their airspace, and not just to simply loiter in Russian airspace and launch weapons into Ukraine, I think, has been a mistake and remains a mistake.

The notion that providing long-range systems. We're seeing the impact that ATACMS systems are having on the battlefield. The administration was very reluctant to provide those until recently. Had they been provided earlier in the war, I think greater impact could have been had. It should no longer be restrained to only hitting targets in certain areas. I think this is something the Ukrainians should be given a free hand to conduct the war.

The other thing that I think we've been slow to adapt to has been the nature of warfare has changed and continues to change. Missiles are a primary instrument of warfare. They are not something that is occasionally used or used in small numbers or is part of mutually assured destruction. They are a day-to-day instrument of warfare. I think we've been slow to adapt to the use of drones and other unmanned systems. I argued this in 2018 when I was in the Pentagon that we were too slow as a department, too slow as a United States force and with our allies.

Now, fast-forward some five, six years later, you're seeing this applied with thousands of missiles being launched. The Ukrainians have been very plucky, very resilient, in adapting and using low-cost tactics. You've been a champion of many of these, Riki, but there's an adaptive foe on the other side. The Russians are adjusting those tactics. Alexey talking about the use of glide bombs or other things. We should expect more of that. There's going to be a race of innovation.

And so, where we have caught up as a Western alliance in providing certain capabilities or the Ukrainians have developed them, well, the Russian threats not been static. They have continued to advance. They've continued to adapt. We have to increase our pace of innovation and the rate at which materials and supplies are being given.

In my view, we also need to force the Russians to consider threats on other parts of their periphery so their whole force cannot be focused on Ukraine. For example, part of the expansion of NATO into places like Sweden and Finland provides the opportunity for NATO, and for those NATO allies that are more reluctant about confronting the Russians, to participate in very large scale military exercises to the north, massing a hundred or 200,000 NATO troops in that area for combat exercises is a way to make the Russians keep part of their forces and part of their attention elsewhere in a way that, frankly, would probably find some of the allies would be willing to participate in that are not willing to provide more support to Ukraine.

But the stakes, you asked me to talk about the stakes, Riki. I think they're very high and they extend beyond Russia because strategically, at the very top level, the tectonic plates in the global

national security environment have shifted over the last five years. We do see this alignment now between authoritarian states led by China. It's not an accident that Vladimir Putin is in China today meeting with Xi because China trying to assert itself as the dominant global power, as the dominant governing principle with communist party ideals as the proper governing principle, and the role of the individual not being that to give the government permission, but rather the individual being governed and their freedoms and what they can do and say and their social credit and their occupations and other things determined by the state, the party to be particular. China really leading that.

But you see this alignment with Putin viewing China and China's support as decisive in the war. This was never going to be a short term conflict. The Russian forces did not conduct themselves in that way. It's a long term conflict. Things like your ability to produce your industrial potential, attrition rates, those are critical to the conduct of the war. China is probably viewed by Putin as decisive, providing him the ability to decisively win the war.

Interestingly, this emerging alliance with North Korea and Iran all feeling part of this kind of alignment, if you will, this axis amongst authoritarian states. Those have been the primary supporters of the Russian side in the war. We have to view that and see the implications of the conflict, should there be a Russian victory is, I think, these authoritarian states will conclude that they are an emerging block and have the ability to dominate and to impose their will, whether that be on Taiwan or other parts of Europe, which Putin clearly has his eyes on, or in other areas of the world with the Chinese making investments, placing forces abroad, and wanting to be a global, the leading global, national security power, or dominant power not just national security areas, around the world. They don't hide that. They publish it in their documents.

Unfortunately, our media coverage has become very superficial. But if you actually read the documents, the statements that these leaders make, they're very clear about their objectives and their goals and how they view the west and the United States. One, I think if the Russians should be successful in the war, you will see, I think, a revitalized Russia that is more aggressive, that places NATO nations and indeed the United States at greater risk. I think you're also going to see that China and others conclude they've got the democracies and others on the run.

Our system of government has existed some 200 years, but this is all a temporary condition. Actually, the dominant periods of human history have been dominated by authoritarians. We should not take for granted that these things will exist. They are under threat, dire threat in Ukraine as we speak. I think, one, we have to recognize the stakes. Two, we have to adjust our policy, our basic strategy approach, to be more aggressive with the aim of producing stability.

I think it's very unlikely you will see "peace", meaning a cessation of hostility from Russia or Putin towards Ukraine or the former Soviet Union. I think as long as Putin is there, that view will remain, but you can get to a point of stability if Russian forces can no longer impose their will or at least the conflict return to that of a low grade kind of low intensity conflict like we saw in the 2018 period.

Tactics are changing. We have to change our tactics. Our industrial base for missile defense, for air defense, for dealing with drones. far too small, dramatically too small. The investments we are making are good, but they will not close the gap. They're far too tepid. It bothers me greatly that in the United States, our administration has submitted to Congress a budget request that cuts missile defense funding. This is unacceptable in my view, and is not reflective of what is going on in the world today.

We have to understand that the outcome of the conflict is about standing up for our values and the balance of power needs to favor freedom. Authoritarian regimes will not go quietly. We have to have the means to, with force if necessary, resist and accomplish peace through strength. That's probably more than you wanted there, Riki, but just a few thoughts from me to get things going.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thanks, John. That was excellent. If you could just be very clear on what can the US government do now on policy change to create winning condition? I do want to touch on what happens in November. Is this a political issue for the United States presidential election campaign or not? And then, third, I'd like you to, you picked on the US, but you didn't talk to the NATO countries and the other western countries that should be contributing this because of the big cause. It's all US only, which you can't be anymore. This is a global thing here, and we don't have to continue to pay the most share. We always pay the most share here, and that's not fair.

But if you'd just sum it up quickly on those things to be succinct on it, I'd be appreciative.

Mr. John Rood:

Okay. Well, I mean, very briefly on the first part in terms of what we can do now, I think one policy change would be the notion of trying to restrain Ukrainian forces to operating only within Ukrainian borders is one change. I think the ability to take the fight into Russian airspace and to enable it, not just stop opposing it.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Do you think the president of the United States is going to allow that and Congress is going to allow that to happen in the next couple of months or not?

Mr. John Rood:

Well, I'm not predicting the future. I'm arguing what I think the right policy should be.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

All right.

Mr. John Rood:

I mean, predicting the future, it doesn't appear to be where President Biden's viewpoint stands at the moment, so I wouldn't predict it, but it's what I would encourage him to adopt and his administration, because I think it will give the Ukrainians the ability to force the Russians to defend in other areas. That's a principle of warfare, you have to take the initiative. I think I would like to see that policy change.

I agree with you. The NATO allies have not provided enough. Some have been leaders, others have not. It's easy to pick on the Europeans so I didn't, but to be quite frank, their track record here in supporting the Ukrainians leaves a lot to be desired, particularly since they are under threat.

I think those in Eastern Europe or Central Europe have been better, as a general matter. That's a gross overgeneralization because they see the threat and it's right across the border. But they will regret the fire building, there is a fire building outside of NATO, waiting until it gets to be a raging inferno to contribute more is a mistake and is very short-sighted. That's another policy change we could make to be much more aggressive with the allies in insisting that they do more and exhorting them to do more.

But I think in terms of other particular capabilities, there are some greater capabilities that could be provided, and I've been surprised that the US government has been reluctant to do so. The Russians have been effective in Putin, in particular, at threatening dire consequences, but I've always thought that's kind of crocodile tears. This is a major conflict. Do you think he'd be more aggressive in Ukraine, apply greater force or threaten NATO more? They should have, I think, been more stout-hearted in confronting that and saying that we don't need to be cowed by these threats and provide the capabilities to bring the war to a cessation.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

John, the cow is he threatens nuclear regional strike and we back down. That's what the history is. And so, we don't give Ukraine what they need because we are not going to call that bluff out.

Mr. John Rood:

Well, I agree with you, but I think it's a mistake to be cowed by that.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Okay, thank you, John. I'd like to get to our board member, Mark Montgomery, to put a couple comments on. I think we have some questions, Mark, I'm not sure, but please step in here on this great discussion.

RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery:

Thanks. All very good stuff. The questions that we got have been answered by the speakers, and I want to be respectful of time. I just have two quick thoughts. One, I mean, I love the great operational discussion when we kicked it off, but there's still a massive disconnect.

The operation discussions around the cost per intercept, the idea we have to drive it down, but there's still a very big disconnect between the operators who realize we've got to drive this cost down because they live with O&M budgets and resupply budgets. You can only imagine how much we spent in the Saudi and Jordanian deserts three weeks ago, shooting down 80 plus drones with probably more than 100 air-to-air weapons. I think we did one guns intercept in there. I think all the rest were missiles. We'll just say that's going to be in the $100 million range of expenditure, maybe slightly less, maybe slightly more. That's not good. Shooting down eighty 20 to $40,000 weapons, you don't have to be a mathematician to go, that was a bad return on investment. Operators get it.

I'm not sure I'm seeing that in the procurement. I don't see the prioritization, the drive, to the $100,000 Interceptor for air-to-air intercepts. When you look at the Army's developmental system, it's called IFPC, IMD Force Protection System. The round in there has gone between $600,000 and a million, depending on which round you use, and they've been working that system for a decade. There's been no effort to drive that down. The Navy's the same way. Most of our weapons systems are in the $800,000 to $3.2 million range. Patriots, $3 million plus. I mean, these are too expensive. The procurement people are rewarded for executing the existing program of record. They're not rewarded for creativity and ingenuity. They get fired for creativity and ingenuity when it fails.

We still have a zero defect procurement system, which means if we somehow allow your system to fail, which we usually don't, we'll just give you more money and more time. IFPC, IBCS, the list goes on of systems that are just taking forever and costing more money that are, literally, decades behind delivery. No one's being held accountable for that, and no one gets rewarded for ingenuity. If you bring DOD a cheap option, a low cost option, they will remind you how they have a significantly higher cost option that they're going to push as a program a record. We've seen that with acoustic decoys and stuff.

Until we fix that fundamental mismatch between what the operators see as overly expensive return on investment and what procurement takes forward. We're buying today the weapons for three, five, and seven years from now. I don't see low cost intercepts in there. When I hear the army say, "Oh no, no, we've got this Coyote drone thing," I have to remind myself, "Well, it's a shoot shoot doctrine with $150,000 a round weapon." That does not strike me as low cost, just a data point. That is, by the way, when the Army brags about low cost, that $300,000 intercepts, they're low cost. Let's call it what it is. There's a procurement operator mismatch, and that is an expensive mismatch.

The second thing is, it is a sad, sad, sad day when we describe NATO as more agile than the United States. NATO is currently more agile than the United States in responding to these air defense issues. When an organization of 28 countries that can't agree that the sun came up in the morning, or 30 now, can suddenly move faster on air defense initiatives, something is wrong in the United States system. I can't explain where it's coming from. I think part of it comes from a part of DOD, known as CAPE, who've inserted themselves inappropriately into policy decisions. Part of it comes from services, like I said, committed to programs of record. Part of it comes from just a lack of ingenuity, not by the pilots or the shooters, not by O-4s and O-5s and E-6s, E-

7s, but a lack of ingenuity at the SES level, GS-15 level flag and O-6 level, to really make the kind of changes that are necessary.

The British would start playing that song, the world's turned upside down, at this point. To me, those are the two big takeaways. If we do not fix these problems, develop agility, prioritize low cost, we are going to lose this race with the Russians, Chinese and Iranians.

I'll give you one last thought. Not everything can be cheap, I get that. If you're going to intercept a IRBM that's coming in at Mach 9 or an extremely high altitude, I'm not breaking out a $50,000 Interceptor. That's not Iron Dome. That's not a Tamir. There are expensive shots. What you can't do is have every shot be an expensive shot. You have to make them spend money on expensive weapons that then you shoot down the expensive weapons. But when they build stuff cheap, you got to be able to shoot it down cheap.

What happens is people get in these, "Well, now, you're saying you're against hypersonic missiles." No, they're going to build a $10 million hypersonic missile to fire at me, I'll probably have to build a $10 million Interceptor. I can play that economic game with their military. I can't play the game where they spend $20,000 and I spend $1.2 million.

Anyway, if we're going to get to success on this, we could do it. There are so many lessons learned to be culled from the air defense experience in Ukraine that will make us successful if we open up our aperture to be ingenious and successful. Riki, I think we answered all the questions in there. I know we're way past time, but I pass it to you.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Okay, Mark, just from your perspective, just from your inner workings with Congress, how do we save Ukraine? These are big things you just talked, but directly in the next couple months, what else can we do to help them?

RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery:

Number one thing was the money. The number two thing, the $60 billion.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

They've got the money, right? We've given them the money?

RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery:

Money helps. Well, what's happening is the USAI, from previous things, that's delivering now. Now, presidential drawdown authority from the law that was passed a ago, that's starting to deliver.

Look, there was a gap. There was a gap of PDA. There'll now be a gap of USAI about 12 months from now. There's going to be another bad patch where we didn't order things four months ago, three months ago, two months ago. We can work our way through these, I think. We've put additional significant pressure on Ukraine unnecessarily, and you can hold the Republicans and Congress responsible for that. Equally, this insane policy of making every weapons system a four month process to get to, whether it's the M1-81, the F-16, the GMLRS, guided missile launcher rocket system, the ATACMS, and then the ATACMS unitary round, the administration's killing Ukraine.

I think we've worked our way through the first one with the money. I think with the second one, with the law change on ATACMS, made the administration seeing it come, they went ahead and released them. Now, the final thing comes in the ability to strike. Look, if we learned something from Kharkiv, it's that letting an enemy concentrate all his forces four kilometers across the border so he can make a short run into a close town, that's clinical insanity. You have to let the Ukrainians strike the Russians when they're concentrating for an attack in the direct proximity of Ukraine.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Mark, how do we do that? Does Congress do that if the president doesn't want to do that?

RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery:

You can't pass laws to direct operations. You can though pressurize other things that the president values to get him to be smarter about Ukraine. Look, what the Republicans needed to do was pass the damn Ukraine assistance bill, so that wasn't the only talking point President Biden had. Now, the questions are how are we supporting them? Why are we supporting them? How are we allowing this completely unacceptable tactical condition to exist just prior to an attack? That's how you get back at them.

In other words, if the Republicans act like adults, which they did, and if they continue to do that, they can turn to Biden and say, "It's time for you to act like an adult and do the right things."

I would take umbrage with one thing. Riki, you're a little hard on Europe. The dollars Europe is putting into defense now are starting to get up there. As a percentage of GDP, many countries exceed us, but collectively, they're getting close to us. They're not at us, and our $60 billion will push us again. We are pulling them. I get that. They're also covering more of the humanitarian assistance and more of the financial support. Our goal at the end of this is where there's a $300 billion rebuild plan to go, "Europe, eat," and not us.

Look, let's not kid ourselves. That first $52 billion was $47 billion spent, $52 billion US assistance to Ukraine was $47 billion built in Arkansas, California, Oklahoma, Texas, Florida. That was US jobs. It was a modernization of the US ground forces in terms of the equipment they own. We got a lot of side benefits, even direct benefits from that. Europe's doing their job, got two new members in, we're doing well. I'm comfortable with Europe. Frankly, I wish we could lead them better in air defense, but we can't.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Thank you. I'm just going back to those 37 years that we've been carrying. I'm with you on them coming in. Okay, I know we went over time, but great discussion. I would like just to do closing remarks with everybody and then we'll finish it up because we are a little bit over time on it. I'll start with, John, you want to go first?

Mr. John Rood:

Well, just thanks, Riki, for getting everyone together. I mean, just a couple of key points to me, takeaways for those in the audience. We really are at a critical time in the war in Ukraine, but it is probably not going to be the last time we're at that critical juncture. Now, assuming we get through this critical juncture successfully.

Recall, we're at a critical time. We all need to provide more support to the Ukrainians that continue to impress with their determination and battlefield performance. But secondly, we have to steel ourselves that if we get through this juncture successfully in supporting the Ukrainians, this is going to be a long conflict and we have to begin thinking accordingly. Thanks for bringing us all together, Riki, in just a critically important time.

Mr. Riki Ellison:

Alexey. You're on mute.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:

Sorry about that. I want just to react a bit on what Mark said. Don't call this new emergent military technologies low cost, call them controllable cost. If you want to spend $10 million, don't spend them at one shot. Distribute it in many shots, but still you can spend the same amount. It's not about the amounts, it's about how you spend them. This way, your industry will like it more. This is closer to the truth, statement number one.

Statement number two about the urgency and delays that was created by American political situation. There is a way to overcome it in this coming critical months. You said correctly that all this money are advance spent on modernization of American Army itself so use what you have in stock. You have a lot of great systems that are a little bit outdated for American Army and that could do a great job in Ukraine, and then they can be substituted.

Another thing, even if you spend a little portion of that American help in Ukraine with Ukrainian companies, it's still extremely useful for American industry and American Army because if you are helping us to build new systems that didn't exist before because the threats did not exist before, you will see how they work. You will know how to build them. You will save a lot of money and a lot of time that you will then use for in the United States.

Mr. Riki Ellison:
Thank you, Alexey. Mark, do you want to close? You're good?

RADM (Ret.) Mark Montgomery:
No, I'm good.

Mr. Riki Ellison:
Chris.

Brig Gen Christopher Sage:
Hey, Riki, I'd just like to finish off with one thought. A couple of thoughts there that Mark and John both hit on. It's this idea, this idea of deterrence. I hope, next time, we can dust off our deterrence manuals a little bit early to understand what we did here over the last couple of years.

What I mean by that is if we had given the Ukrainians everything now that they have today a year and a half ago without restrictions, I guarantee you we'd be in a better place. But this idea that we can slow leak the weapons in, put restrictions on them as the way to control deterrence actually has had the opposite effect. We all know that. But I hope we can have some follow up articles and sessions where we educate the American people and the allies on that notion. Over.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:
Very good point.

Mr. Riki Ellison:
Thank you, everybody. A phenomenal discussion. It has to go that way. We have to go else we're going to lose Ukraine. No question that we have to do the couple things here to enable the funding, to enable the policies to get this in play. Great airing out everything. I appreciate all of you to do this and take your time. Thank you very much. Thank you.

Mr. Alexey Boyarsky:
Thank you.