Under Secretary of Defense James N. Miller
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Ellen [Tauscher], thank you so much for that very kind introduction.

You were a great partner as Under Secretary of State and an incredible leader on the House Armed Services Committee. We have all very much missed working with you in government. It's wonderful to see you doing so much – and so well – on the outside, and we thank you for your continued contributions.

Thanks also to Fred [Kempe], to Barry [Pavel], and to Ian [Brzezinski] – and to the entire Atlantic Council team – for hosting this event.

It is always an honor to join this great organization, which has contributed so much to our national understanding of security and diplomatic issues over the years.

Most recently, as Ellen noted, the Council has contributed a Secretary of Defense.

Chuck Hagel, of course, was chairman of the Atlantic Council from 2009 until quite recently becoming my new boss.

The Council's loss is a tremendous gain for the Defense Department – and, indeed, for the nation. We'll do our very best to take care of Chuck Hagel.

And we'd better take care of him, because the current lineup of security and fiscal challenges that we have could be enough to cause any Secretary of Defense to start eyeing the exits.

Of all the challenges that we are facing – and there are many – few are more important or more timely than the one we are here today to discuss, missile defense.

Ballistic missile defense is, without question, one of the most important national-security issues that we face today. Its importance has been evident in the actions of this administration from the beginning.

One of the efforts of the Obama administration in 2009 was to kick off the first-ever Ballistic Missile Defense Review.

That review and subsequent Presidential guidance set the priorities for missile defense. Those priorities are unchanged today.

Our number-one priority for missile defense is to ensure that we are able to defend the U.S. homeland against the threat of limited ballistic-missile attack.

Number two – and very close behind it, and intimately related – is a focus on regional missile defense. And that's to defend U.S.

forces, allies and partners – and to help enable our allies and partners to defend themselves.

This commitment to the defense of our allies and partners – including in NATO, in East Asia, and in the Middle East, each of which you all will talk about today – is an unshakeable constant of U.S. policy.

I want to start today by talking about the threat – and as we look at the threat today, North Korea and Iran of course stand out.

That is not only because of the nature of their regimes, but also because of their continuing efforts to develop additional capabilities, including long-range missiles – and their continued efforts to have a nuclear-weapons capability.

I'll talk first about North Korea.

The sanctions that the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved on March 7, in the aftermath of North Korea's most recent nuclear test, are just the latest sign of how seriously the international community takes the threat from North Korea.

North Korea's neighbors – and the global community – are unified in their condemnation of the regime's behavior. It was noteworthy – and a healthy sign and perhaps important, I think – that China joined the United States in drafting these new UN sanctions.

And as National Security Advisor Tom Donilon noted in a speech yesterday to the Asia Society, "We welcome China's support … and its continued insistence that North Korea completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandon its WMD and ballistic-missile programs."

For some time, North Korea has pursued missiles that threaten its neighbors – and our allies, and our forces – in South Korea and Japan. More recently, it has begun working on long-range missile technology.

This past December, North Korea conducted a Taepo Dong-2 launch and managed to put a satellite into orbit. And as you all know, a space-launch vehicle incorporates many of the same technologies required for development of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Our concern about Pyongyang's potential ICBM capability is compounded by the regime's focus on developing nuclear weapons. North Korea's third nuclear test last month is obviously a serious concern for all nations.

North Korea's shrill public pronouncements underscore the need for the U.S. to continue to take prudent steps to defeat any future North Korean ICBM.

Then there is Iran. That nation's continued efforts to develop nuclear capabilities – and long-range ballistic missiles – are not as advanced as those of North Korea.

Nonetheless, we are very closely monitoring the status of Iran, with a steadfast commitment to the prevention of Iran's attainment of nuclear weapons.

As you all know well, Iran is proceeding with uranium enrichment in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions.

As with North Korea, the gravest threat here is the possible confluence of future nuclear capability with ballistic-missile technology.

Iran already has the largest ballistic-missile inventory in the Middle East – and is fielding those missiles in increased numbers.

Iran has modified the Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missile to extend its claimed range to some 2,000 kilometers.

Unlike North Korea, Iran has not stated an intent to develop ICBM's. However, like North Korea, Iran has used a space-launch vehicle – for Iran, the Safir-2 – to place a satellite in orbit, demonstrating some of the key technologies required for ICBM development.

I would like to now turn to some of the things that we are doing as we focus on these evolving threats from both North Korea and Iran.

We'll talk about each of the regions, but let's start with homeland defense.

The U.S. homeland is currently protected against possible limited ICBM attacks from states like North Korea and Iran by the Ground-based Midcourse Defense – or GMD – system.

This GMD system consists of 30 Ground-Based Interceptors – or GBI's – in Alaska and California. It includes early-warning radars and a sophisticated command-and-control architecture.

Of course, we need to ensure that these capabilities continue to be able to meet potential threats in the future, and so we continue to improve the capacity and functionality of our GBI's; of our sensors; and of our command-and-control system. Those improvements continue today, and they will in the future.

We have also postured a near-term hedge. By finishing Missile Field Number Two at Ft. Greely, Alaska, and being prepared to complete Missile Field Number One at Ft. Greely, we have the ability to swiftly deploy up to 14 additional Ground-Based Interceptors if needed.

And as directed by Congress, we are initiating environmental-impact studies for three alternative sites for deploying additional GBI's in the U.S. if needed.

These studies will allow us to shorten the timeline to build a new missile field on the East Coast or to add interceptors in Alaska, should either approach become necessary due to further future increases in the threat from Iran and North Korea.

Let me be clear: We have not made a decision to go forward with a new East Coast missile field. We are initiating studies, at the direction of Congress, in the event the threat progresses to the point where that makes sense in the future.

Three important points relating to our homeland ballistic-missile defense capabilities:

First, in developing and deploying BMD capabilities to defeat potential North Korean and Iranian ICBM's, we are not assuming – and we are not accepting – that these countries will ultimately deploy nuclear-tipped ICBM's.

We have made clear that our policy is to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

And while we seek a diplomatic solution, the President has also made clear vis-à-vis Iran that all options are on the table in order to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

Nor do we accept a nuclear-capable North Korea. Our policy is to roll back the North Korean nuclear program. The UN sanctions put in place last week are a part of this approach.

Second, we are capable of defending against any ballistic-missile threat to our homeland that may emerge from North Korea or Iran. And it is our stated policy to retain this advantageous position.

As we think about our homeland missile-defense posture, we do not have a "just in time" policy. Our policy is to stay ahead of the threat – and to continue to ensure that we are ahead of any potential future Iranian or North Korean ICBM capability.

What that means is that if Iran or North Korea attempt to develop and deploy ICBM's, they will find an effective BMD system waiting for them.

Our homeland ballistic-missile defense capabilities are intended in part to make it clear to both Iran and North Korea that if they develop ICBM's, they will not be able to threaten the United States. Our missile defenses will defeat them.

In this way, our missile-defense approach supports our diplomatic efforts and sanctions by reducing North Korea's and Iran's incentives to develop ICBM's and pursue nuclear weapons. We will not allow them to hold us at risk.

Third, we do not have a "rope-a-dope" policy. Missile defense is an integral part of our policy for dealing with the threat of North Korea and of Iran, but it is far from the only part.

As National Security Advisor Tom Donilon said yesterday, we will draw upon the full range of our capabilities to protect against, and to respond to, the threat posed to us and to our allies by North Korea. The same is true of Iran.

Missile defense is a very important arrow in our quiver. But it is not the only one.

Let me now turn from homeland defense, and related issues, to the question of regional missile defenses.

Again, let's start with North Korea, and with our regional efforts in the Asia-Pacific to address this threat.

The cornerstone of our security and diplomacy in the region has historically been our very strong bilateral alliances, including with South Korea, Japan, and Australia. All three of these nations play an important role in our regional efforts to achieve effective missile defense.

South Korea obviously has an immediate, proximate stake in preventing missile strikes from the North. We have worked very closely with Seoul to ensure that we maintain the capacity to do just that.

The United States deploys Patriot Advanced Capability 3 – or PAC-3 – batteries in South Korea to defend U.S. and South Korean forces.

In addition, South Korea is taking steps to enhance its own air and missile defense systems, which include sea- and land-based sensors – and currently include Patriot PAC-2 batteries.

We have been consulting closely with our strong South Korean ally about how they can upgrade their missile-defense capabilities. We are mutually committed to sustain and strengthen protection against the North Korean missile threat.

Another vital U.S. ally with an obvious interest in defending against North Korean missile attacks is Japan.

Japan has acquired its own layered missile-defense system, which includes Aegis BMD ships with Standard Missile-3 interceptors; PAC-3 fire units; early-warning radars, and sophisticated command-and-control systems.

In addition, Japan is a critical international partner for BMD development.

One of our most significant cooperative efforts with Japan is the co-development of an advanced version of the SM-3 interceptor, the SM-3 Block IIA. In addition, we have deployed a TPY-2 radar – which provides early warning and tracking – to Japan, and we have announced our intention to deploy a second TPY-2 to Japan as well.

My mention of Australia as part of this troika with Japan and South Korea a moment ago may have struck some as odd, given that nation's distance from North Korea, but you can't talk about our missile-defense efforts in the Pacific without talking about the Australians.

We signed a memorandum of agreement with the Australians on missile-defense cooperation in 2004, and have formed a close partnership on missile-defense research and development – most notably with regard to sensors.

In addition, Australia is involved in one of our two trilateral discussions on missile-defense in the Pacific. One of these tri-lats is among the U.S., Australia, and Japan; the second tri-lat is with the U.S., South Korea, and Japan.

These trilateral discussions and relationships are part of our efforts to expand international missile-defense cooperation, strengthen regional-security architectures, and build partner capacity.

We have already seen the value of these multilateral approaches. For example, Japan, South Korea and the U.S. successfully tracked two near-simultaneous launches of ballistic-missile targets as part of the multilateral Pacific Dragon exercise last summer. In December, we cooperated very closely in tracking the North Korean Taepo Dong-2 missile launch.

Going forward, we will continue to emphasize the importance of developing a regional ballistic missile-defense system that includes the sharing of sensor data among allies.

I'd now like to talk a little bit about the regional approaches that we're taking to the Iranian missile threat.

As we saw again last week when Defense Minister Ehud Barak visited Secretary Hagel in the Pentagon, the United States maintains an exceptionally strong defense relationship with Israel – and that very much includes missile defense.

Our missile-defense cooperation with Israel has resulted in one of the most comprehensive missile-defense architectures in the world. Each of the Israeli programs – Iron Dome, David's Sling, and Arrow 3 – fills a critical requirement in a multi-layered architecture that has been designed to protect the Israeli people from missile threats.

And missile defense figured prominently in the Austere Challenge exercise we conducted with Israel in the fall of 2012. This is the largest U.S.-Israeli military exercise in history.

The United States is also working with a number of Gulf Cooperation Council states on missile defense, including supporting the purchase of missile-defense systems through the Foreign Military Sales program.

For example, our strong partner, the United Arab Emirates, is procuring Terminal High Altitude Area Defense batteries, or THAAD's. This is on top of the UAE's earlier purchase of Patriot systems. These capabilities will significantly enhance the UAE's defense against ballistic-missile attack.

Such individual and bilateral efforts are vital to BMD in the region. However – as I hope and expect Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Matt Spence will talk about later today in the forum on BMD in the Middle East – the nature of the threat also demands that we also look at more broadly coordinated regional missile-defense strategies.

That logic is what was behind U.S. Central Command's proposal back in 2008 for regional ballistic missile-defense cooperation as a component of its Gulf Security Architecture. Toward this end, CENTCOM has worked with our GCC partners in broader BMD exercises.

This past year, Air Force Central Command initiated a series of regular exchanges between U.S. and GCC air officers at the Combined Air Operations Center.

Finally, at the inaugural U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum in Riyadh, GCC foreign ministers and then-Secretary of State Clinton highlighted the threat that ballistic missiles pose against critical military and civilian infrastructure. One result of these high-level talks was the formation of a BMD working group to ensure that BMD remains front and center in future U.S.-GCC policy discussions.

While the most proximate targets of a potential Iranian missile attack are in the Middle East, we have recognized for some time, of course, that our NATO allies in Europe – and our forces there – are also at risk.

That recognition drove the adoption of the European Phased Adaptive Approach, or EPAA, in 2009.

We continue to work in very close collaboration with our European allies to develop a highly advanced network of sensors and interceptors – on land and at sea – to protect NATO territory.

This administration has made the missile-defense protection of Europe a central feature of transatlantic security policy. Back in 2010, at NATO's Lisbon Summit, President Obama and his fellow NATO heads of state and government approved a new Strategic Concept, which took the historic step of committing to the defense of European NATO populations and territory against the growing threat of ballistic missiles.

At last year's NATO Summit in Chicago, the assembled leaders announced that the alliance had achieved an interim BMD capability – in other words, an operationally meaningful standing ballistic missile-defense capacity.

During this relatively brief time, we and our NATO allies have worked together to make very impressive progress on the development of collaborative, highly networked missile-defense systems. Vital command-and-control capabilities for missile defense are now operational, including at the U.S. Air Operations Center at Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

The NATO command-and-control backbone – the Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile Defense – has reached an interim operational capability, and will evolve toward full capability between 2018 and 2020.

We are now on track for the next stages in deployment, including Aegis Ashore in Romania in 2015, and Aegis Ashore in Poland in 2018. And, as you all know, we are moving forward with the deployment of four BMD-capable Aegis ships to Rota, Spain.

We continue to carry out exercises designed to hone our alliance missile-defense capabilities. Our main missile-defense exercise involving NATO is Nimble Titan, a biennial, global event. The Nimble Titan 12 exercise included 14 participant nations – including the U.S. and many NATO countries, but also Australia and South Korea.

As we begin planning for Nimble Titan 14, which begins later this year and will carry into 2014, so far we have 21 nations signed on to participate.

I'd like to conclude my remarks with a very basic point: the ballistic-missile threat – to the United States; to our allies and partners; and to our forces overseas – is not static.

To the contrary, it is evolving rapidly – and so we must also adapt.

I have touched upon a number of policies that we and our allies have pursued to address and counter this threat. We have had some very significant successes over the last several years. But this administration has emphasized from the beginning that we cannot afford to stand still.

To the contrary, we need to continually re-evaluate the threat. And we need to adapt as necessary.

As the 2010 Ballistic Missile Defense report said some three years ago: "The threat posed by ballistic missile delivery systems is likely to increase while growing more complex over the next decade."

What we've seen in the last three years bears that out – and we have made clear, starting in 2009, that we will retain the flexibility to adjust and enhance our defenses as the threat and the technology evolve.

The threat is growing more complex, and the United States and our allies and partners need to retain the flexibility to address it proactively – and we need to continue to sustain our policy of staying ahead of the threat.

Our most vital security commitments – the defense of the United States and the protection of our allies and partners and our forces around the world – demand nothing less.

I want to thank again the Atlantic Council for having me here today, and I look forward to your questions.

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