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RUSSIA SUSENDS ITS PARTICIPATION IN NEW START:
ARMS CONTROL AND RISK REDUCTION IN THE CURRENT MOMENT

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Suzanne Maloney: Good morning, I'm Suzanne Maloney, vice president and director of Foreign Policy here at the Brookings Institution. Thank you so much for joining us today for this important and timely discussion about the implications of the deterioration of relations between the United States and Russia for arms control and nuclear security. In a speech last week marking the first anniversary of his brutal invasion of Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Moscow would suspend its participation in the New START treaty. After the demise of landmark agreements such as the Anti-Ballistic Missile and Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaties, New START is the last remaining nuclear arms control agreement between Washington and Moscow. Putin's latest move reduces prospects for a follow-on agreement to replace New START when it expires in February 2026, a prospect that was already substantially diminished as a result of the war in Ukraine.

Russia's decision has drawn widespread condemnation, including from President Biden. The precarious state of New START has amplified concerns here in Washington and around the world about the future of arms control, the possibility of a destabilizing nuclear arms competition among the world's major powers, and the risk of armed conflict escalating to the nuclear level. Joining us today to address Russia's New START suspension and prospects for arms control and risk reduction in the current environment is Mallory Stewart, who serves as assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance. She will be delivering keynote remarks here from the podium and following her presentation, there will be a discussion moderated by my colleague Robert Einhorn on the implications of Russia's suspension of its participation in the New START Treaty.

Let me briefly introduce our distinguished speakers. Assistant Secretary Stewart joined the Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance in 2022 after serving as special assistant to President Biden and senior Director for Arms Control, Disarmament and Nonproliferation at the National Security Council since January 2021. She previously served as a senior manager at the Center for Global Security and Cooperation at Sandia National Laboratories, as deputy Assistant Secretary in the ABC Bureau at the Department of State and as an attorney at the State's Office of the Legal Adviser. Assistant Secretary Stewart was also the lead lawyer on the negotiations that led to the 2013 US-Russian Framework for the Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons.

Bob Einhorn is a senior fellow in the Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy and Technology at Brookings Foreign Policy. During the Obama administration, Bob served as special

advisor for nonproliferation and arms control at the State Department, a position that was specifically created by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. He also served as assistant Secretary of State for nonproliferation during the Bill Clinton administration and has held many other positions both in government and in academia working on nonproliferation issues.

Before I hand the mic over to Assistant Secretary Stewart, I would like to note that we are streaming live and on the record today. For those of you who are joining us virtually, you can submit your questions to events at Brookings dot edu or using the hashtag new start suspension on social media. For those in person, we will have a Q&A period at the end of our event today and staff will come around with microphones for you to join the conversation. Thank you. And the floor is now yours, Assistant Secretary.

Mallory Stewart: Thank you to the Brookings Institution for having me here today. Thank you all for being here. As you know, we have just passed the one-year anniversary of Russia's illegal and unconscionable continuing invasion of Ukraine. Last week, we learned that President Putin had chosen to hold the one remaining bilateral nuclear arms control treaty between the United States and Russia hostage to his expansionist goals. As President Biden recently highlighted, Putin's decision is a mistake. Russia's announced suspension of New START will not deter the United States or its allies and partners from supporting Ukraine. In fact, Moscow's decision and its continuing nuclear threats will only reinforce how important standing behind Ukraine remains for the United States and the global community.

President Biden has made it clear that no matter what else is happening in the world, the United States is ready to pursue critical arms control measures. The president said this not despite the security threats that exist, but because of them. Arms control isn't something that you cast aside when tensions are on the rise. On the contrary, the value of arms control is greatest when conditions are ripe for miscalculation, escalation and spiraling arms races. That is why Russia's announcement last week that it is suspending its participation in New START is so troubling. We are watching carefully to see what Russia actually does in the wake of President Putin's announcement and we are engaging with Russian officials to get a more detailed explanation of their actions. Most importantly, we will make sure that under these new circumstances, we remain postured to defend the United States and our allies.

Given the misinformation that continues to flow from Moscow, it is important to highlight how we arrived at this point. When this administration began, we and the Russian Federation extended New START for the full five years allowed under the agreement because both sides saw that it was clearly in the security interests of our respective countries. And Russian officials have affirmed their support for New START many times because like us, they understand that neither country is better off in a world where the two largest nuclear powers no longer engage in stabilizing forms of transparency.

This only underscores what an unfortunate step Putin's announced suspension is. His actions threaten not only the viability of New START, but also the future of U.S. Russian nuclear arms control. Furthermore, Putin's desire to promote instability and to manipulate nuclear risks is more likely to drive countries to band closer together for their common defense. And it certainly will not compel the United States to back down in its support for Ukraine.

In terms of how we got here, let me outline Russia's noncompliance with New START, which began long before Putin announced his intention to suspend the treaty. During the pandemic, the United States and Russia mutually accepted a pause to New START inspections. In June of 2022, that understanding lapsed after it became clear to both parties that we could resume inspections while keeping our inspectors and the inspected parties safe. In August of 2022, Russia refused to comply with its obligation under New START to facilitate inspection activities on its territory, and Russia has maintained that position since then. Contrary to Russian assertions, there is nothing preventing Russian inspectors from traveling to the United States and conducting inspections.

Since the summer of 2022, we have made crystal clear to Russia that we are prepared to honor our obligation to host Russian inspectors. Russian state aircraft have viable air routes to transport inspectors to the United States, and Russian inspectors can also use commercial air travel to reach United States territory under the treaty. We put significant time and effort into engaging Russia, other countries and private entities to ensure Russia can fully exercise its inspection rights.

Just to make sure there's absolutely no confusion on this point, there are no transit visa requirements, overflight restrictions or financial or other sanctions that prevent Russia from fully exercising its treaty rights. If Russia has valid concerns about a specific Russian facility subject to inspection activities, there are treaty provisions that can be invoked, but Russia's blanket denial of inspections at all Russian facilities is not allowed under the treaty.

Moving into this past fall and winter, Russia also did not comply with the New START Treaty obligation to convene a session of the treaty implementation body, the Bilateral Consultative Commission, the BCC, in accordance with the treaty mandated timeline. We did have a BCC session set for late November. Let me emphasize here that all the issues Russia identified for discussion were on our agenda. Delegation lists had been exchanged and both sides were prepared to get on planes and travel to the meeting. Unfortunately, Moscow pulled the plug on the meeting at the last minute and has not proposed another time.

Russia has continued to assert that it is the United States that is not in compliance with the treaty and that is not true. The United States remains in full compliance with the New START treaty, including the treaty's numerical limits. Russia has alleged concerns with respect to US conversion of submarine launched ballistic missiles, SLBM launchers and heavy bombers. New START provides for inspections of converted items to confirm the results of conversions, and we have mutually identified a confidence-building measure to resolve Russia's concerns regarding the SLBM conversions, and we are prepared to implement that. But it does require Russian inspection at a relevant U.S. facility, an available option again that Russia is currently choosing not to exercise.

Again, the U.S. has remained ready to host Russian inspectors at U.S. facilities specifically so that Russia can verify the conversions. And we have been ready to engage in the BCC to discuss any implementation concerns Russia has under the treaty. Russia's noncompliance with inspection and BCC provisions is problematic, and President Putin's suspension of the treaty is not in anyone's interest. But the good news is that there are readily, these are readily fixable problems should Moscow choose to return to the benefits of transparency, stability and nuclear risk reduction.

Beyond the provisions of the treaty, Russia has now asserted that the security environment today is different than it was when New START was concluded. There is no arguing that point. The treaty was signed in 2010, prior to Russia's unprovoked and unlawful invasion of Ukraine in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2021, 2022. It is Russia that launched without provocation an invasion of its neighbor. Far from fostering these unfavorable conditions, the United States actively worked to avoid them, including by holding an extraordinary session of the U.S. Russian Strategic Stability Dialogue in January of 2022. The strong U.S. international response to Russia's unprovoked, full-scale invasion of Ukraine does not absolve Russia of its responsibility to fulfill its legal obligations

under New START. And again, no Russian actions related to New START will stop us from supporting Ukraine.

In his suspension announcement, Putin also invoked perceived nuclear threats from U.S. allies, and he raised the specter of nuclear testing. First, the nuclear arsenals of our allies existed in 2010 when we were negotiating New START, in 2021 when we extended the treaty. Russia understood this and nonetheless recognized the utility of New START for bilateral relations and global stability. Second, on testing, no other nation except North Korea is engaged in threats about nuclear testing. So it seems the only reason Putin brought up the matter was to inject more fear into a pronouncement already intended to frighten.

Overall, Putin's defense of a decision on New START's suspension defies logic and reason. The United States will continue to aid Ukraine in the face of Russia's efforts to subjugate it. But that reality does not affect the utility of New START or Russia's ability to continue participation under the treaty. Transparency and predictability around strategic nuclear forces is good for bilateral and global stability, period. Putin was not forced to suspend participation; it was his choice, and he can and should reverse it.

The United States remains ready to work constructively with Russia to fully implement New START. That is because we continue to view nuclear arms control as a means to strengthen U.S. ally and global security. And we will continue, and we encourage the international community to join us in emphasizing for Moscow the risks that this irresponsible decision poses for Russia. Certainly, nuclear arms control promotes stability that is predicated on predictability and transparency. But broader arms control measures can also reduce and help identify and address destabilizing activities. They can define responsible behavior so that the world can more clearly recognize irresponsible behavior to either avoid it or to hold accountable those responsible for it. And finally, by stabilizing regions and domains through transparency and accountability, arms control can prevent unnecessary and costly arms races and hopefully eventually allow for disarmament.

Let me give you some examples of what we are working on to help stabilize the global geopolitical environment. I will start with the People's Republic of China. The PRC's rapid nuclear weapons build up raises questions about its intent and policies and reinforces the importance of pursuing practical measures to reduce nuclear risks. Additionally, the PRC is developing and modernizing their conventional forces and counterspace capabilities. While we will continue to

maintain our abilities to defend against and to deter a range of threats to ourselves, our allies and partners, we also seek to engage the PRC on risk reduction through improved crisis communication, information sharing and measures of restraint, even more important, during this intensified period of competition and which again is deeply in the PRC interests as well, so that they can avoid misunderstandings, miscalculations and misperceptions, especially in a world filled with false narratives.

As I mentioned, we are also working with the international community to define what responsible behavior is, especially in gray zones and regarding technologies that could have strategic effects. Outer space, for example, is an essential domain driving prosperity and security for all states, weather and weather forecasting, position navigation and timing or communications. The U.S. believes that the most practical, near-term solutions to enhancing space stability and security include developing national security space related norms of responsible behavior.

One of the easiest and quickest ways to reduce threats to our astronauts and our space assets is to reduce the intentional creation of debris. That's why we worked in the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution calling on states to commit not to conduct destructive direct ascent ASAT missile testing. Despite Russian and Chinese opposition, 155 states voted yes on this resolution. Not only is this a demonstration of the international community's desire that such reckless acts never occur again but is also the first of what we hope will be many more norms of responsible behavior to anticipate and address pressing threats to space security.

In January, we submitted to the U.N. a proposal for new norms of responsible behavior, which we look forward to discussing with countries in the coming months. We see similar opportunities when it comes to emerging technologies. Artificial intelligence is a transformational general-purpose technology that has altered our ambitions and insights in positive ways. From a national security perspective, however, we want to ensure that we and all countries develop and use AI in our militaries in a responsible manner.

Absent a consensus in this area, states may rush to harness AI without a careful approach and could deploy systems with unpredictable consequences. As Undersecretary Bonnie Jenkins said earlier this month when announcing the U.S. political declaration on responsible military use of artificial intelligence and autonomy, we have an obligation to create strong norms of responsible behavior concerning military uses of AI in a way that keeps in mind that applications of AI by militaries

will undoubtedly change in the coming years. We believe that having states commit to these norms will help reduce risk while also effectively harnessing the benefits of such technologies. We look forward to continuing to work with partners to develop what responsible use of AI in the military arena looks like for the global community.

Beyond AI, the Arms Control Bureau is looking at implications on strategic stability from technologies like quantum computing, geoengineering and deepfakes. A key element in our approach and indeed in many arms control arrangements is being able to see and confirm and even demonstrate to the world what is happening regarding covered programs and technologies. We are constantly trying to improve our ability to collect, detect, deter and verify. Our work includes technically focused practical efforts such as the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, IPNDV, which increases international capacity and awareness of verification issues critical to disarmament. The partnership focuses on practical hands-on activities like exercises and tactical demonstrations, which allow the partners to test in realistic scenarios the verification processes, procedures, techniques and technologies that we've developed over the last six years.

Similarly, the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament or CEND initiative provides a space in which members can have frank informal discussions that are integral to advancing the goal of nuclear risk reduction, arms control and disarmament. The new voices and partners that we have heard from in both of these contexts have been crucial to our understanding of different threat perceptions, confidence building mechanisms, and even security challenges.

In my position at the Arms Control Bureau at the U.S. State Department, I'm very familiar with the refrain that now is not the time for arms control. The logic behind that refrain is understandable. Arms control requires partners, and it is hard to think about cooperation when we are in the middle of one of the most significant challenges to European security since World War Two. It is hard to think about how we sit down with Russian officials while their government persists in treaty noncompliance, and while their forces engage in, in significant challenges to the civilian population committing war crimes on a daily basis. I

It can seem like we should focus all our efforts on overcoming challenges to alliance and partnership unity in the face of food, energy and equipment shortages directly resulting from Russia's war against Ukraine. But those thoughts ignore the reality that if we cannot find ways to manage

nuclear risks, then we must all, we will all face the results and the dangers together. The United States, our allies and partners, as well as Russia and all other nations, must prevent this.

This is exactly the time we most need arms control. Whether it is in the form of risk reduction, crisis communications stabilization mechanisms such as confidence and security, building measures, norm building or legally binding agreements, history has repeatedly shown that when the risk of miscalculation is at its height, that is when the arms control toolkit can be most essential. The United States will not sit back and allow nuclear instability to metastasize. Whether through working to preserve New START to improve our defense posture or to prepare the ground for future arms control arrangements, we will continue to do what our President has asked us to do: lead efforts to safeguard this country and the world from nuclear threats. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Robert Einhorn: Mallory, thank you very much for joining us today. Thank you for your very clear overview of Biden administration reaction to Putin's suspension of Russia's participation and also the outlook you see, for arms control and risk reduction going forward. I have some of my own questions for you. We have a large group of online viewers, several of them have already submitted questions, and I will weave their questions into our conversation. And then after we've spoken for a while, I think we'll give our audience here in person and the online audience additional opportunities to pose questions to you. And just a reminder, if our online audience wishes to pose questions, please send them to events at Brookings dot edu and to tweet at hashtag new start suspension and you see the address up on the screen.

So let me, let me start by saying, you know, do we really have a clear idea of the activities that Russia intends to suspend under Putin's announcement? I mean, it is clear they're still not going to permit inspections, you know, on their territory. The Russian foreign ministry issued a statement in which it said they will continue to abide by the quantitative limitations of New START. And they also said they will continue to provide notifications of launches of SLBM, submarine launched ballistic missiles and ICBMs in accordance with a Soviet era, US-Soviet 1988 agreement.

But to my knowledge, they've, they haven't said anything about all of the notifications, the data exchanges, all of that, which gives us, give us a much clearer understanding of Russian strategic activities. You mentioned that we have approached the Russians to try to get answers. Have we gotten any clarification? What's your, your assessment of the activities that they're going to suspend?

Mallory Stewart: So aside from the information that you just recounted, we haven't received any formal notifications with respect to the treaty that suspends additional notifications, right. So we're following, as you are, what the Russian government has said through its, you know, speeches and communications beyond the formal treaty notification process. The suspension hasn't been officially effective yet in the sense that we're still receiving notifications as recently as today under the treaty, regular notifications. But we expect that as soon as that suspension has been formalized, that those will stop pursuant to what we've heard from our Russian colleagues. So we're trying to follow up with them to truly understand what else could be included in the suspension and what could be continued. But right now, we expect it will just be the launch notifications under that 1988 agreement and that they said they will abide by the actual numerical limitations.

Robert Einhorn: Whatever they're prepared to do, is the Biden administration prepared to continue providing the New START mandated notifications regardless of what the Russians do?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah. We're looking at the available options right now. I think it really will depend how this suspension is affected, how it moves forward, what the reasons that they actually formally provide us for it and what they end up providing in terms of information. I think, you know, we're not sure right now it's very much an open question since we haven't seen their formal notification. So we need to figure out what we're going to be able to do once we understand what they're intending to do.

Robert Einhorn: We have a question on this subject from an online, an online audience member. It's David Wishard of the Government Accountability Office, and he asks whether Russia's suspension—perhaps of these notifications, we don't know how extensive they will be— but whether Russia's suspension will reduce the ability of the United States to acquire critical information affecting US security. Can the United States get what it needs through its own national technical means, through open sources, through other methods of gathering information? You know, again, of course, you don't know the extent of their suspension, but are we concerned that we're going to lose track regarding Russian strategic activities?

Mallory Stewart: So, you know, as we've been arguing to Russia and as we made the case clearly when we discuss their noncompliance, inspections are crucial for both countries. And the BCC, which is set up to discuss implementation questions and compliance concerns, is crucial as well to be able to allow for the continuing functioning of the treaty. So those two elements that had already been

not complied with by Russia's behavior before this announced suspension have already impacted our ability to truly to implement the treaty, impacted our ability to understand what's going on on the ground.

I think further, again, depending on what they end up providing in terms of notifications under the suspension, further diminishment of information, information from a transparency structure that the treaty provides for will, will not be helpful to the stability and security of either side. And that's really what we're trying to sort of understand here, is that it's in Russian interest as well to receive this information from us, just as it's in our interests to receive the information from them on a reciprocal basis.

Robert Einhorn: You mentioned that the State Department issued a finding a couple of weeks ago that Russia was not complying with some important New START obligations, in particular to, to allow it to facilitate inspections on their territory to meet in the New START implementation body, the BCC. But in response to the State Department's charges, the Russians have come back and said the United States is in material breach of its New START obligations. And you mentioned Russian concerns about its ability to come to the United States for inspection.

You also mentioned concerns about conversion, which is this very serious accusation because, you know, you know, conversion done right ensures that a country abides by its quantitative limitations. And essentially the Russians are raising the question of whether the United States is abiding by the, by the treaty's limits. Could you explain a little bit the conversion issue? What, what are they concerned about? What American systems did they believe we're not converting appropriately.

Mallory Stewart: Yeah. So as I mentioned, it's the SLBM launchers and the heavy bombers that they're concerned we haven't converted sufficiently to not allow them to be included essentially under the new cap, under the New START limitation. So they want to ensure that the heavy bombers can't carry once they're converted, they can't carry nuclear weapons and similar limitations about the SLBM launchers. I will say that we had worked out a transparent, transparency and confidence building measure with the Russians that only needs an inspection of the SLBM launchers to allow them to confirm that it addresses their concerns. So in other words, they're alleging that we are breaching the treaty, but they're not allowing us to show them how we are not breaching the treaty, which the inspection provisions in the BCC are specifically set up to address these kind of questions.

So we'd worked out a TCBM with them. They're not taking advantage of the inspection right and we're encouraging them to do so, to confirm that we can demonstrate this conversion is sufficient and establishes that that our, our, our equipment cannot be used for purposes that we're prohibited from using it. So there's a, there's a path forward, and they should take advantage of inspections and they should allow their inspectors to confirm that these conversions are sufficient, but without inspections and without continuing BCCs, we can't establish the continuing operation in the manner that they're suggesting we need to do. So it's really a catch 22 in a sense, that they're accusing us of being in violation, and yet they're not taking advantage of their right to confirm that we are doing the right thing.

Robert Einhorn: Okay. You mentioned, Mallory, nuclear testing. The, Putin actually said that Russia could resume nuclear testing if the United States resume nuclear testing. This kind of came out of the blue. To my knowledge, no one in the US government is talking about resuming nuclear testing. So why did, why did Putin raise this issue? Was it simply a political, you know, more a nuclear scare mongering? Or was it, you know, some indication that Russia itself is considering the resumption of nuclear testing, where, had had it, how is this read in the US government?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, I mean, we were scratching our heads about that as well. We didn't understand where it came from. I think we have sort of kicked around all of the ideas that you've mentioned. But, you know, we definitely settled on, as I mentioned, a consensus that to the extent that the suspension announcement was destabilizing and intended to cause some degree of fear that maybe adding in the nuclear testing would further sort of lend strength to, you know, President Putin's efforts to destabilize and to sort of grow concerns in the international community about this decision.

Robert Einhorn: So the Russians have said in a number of ways that the New START suspension is reversible. On the other hand, they say that as long as the United States and the West seek Russia's strategic defeat, there can't be a return to business as usual. In light of this, what are the prospects for engaging with Russia now, whether it's resuming the strategic stability dialogue that was suspended because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, whether it's rescheduling the BCC meeting that the Russians abruptly canceled at the last minute, or whether it's beginning negotiations on a follow-on agreement that would replace New START when it expires in February 2026.

And, you know, in that connection, we also have a question online. This one comes from Ed Levine of the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation. He, you know, Ed believes that the

Russian suspension was not nearly as extensive as it could have been. And he asks whether this suggests that Russia still understands the need for arms control. And I'll add to Ed's question. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that New START's contribution to strengthening international security and strategic stability has not been exhausted. What does all this mean for prospects of negotiations on a New START follow on. Are the Russians still interested in arms control?

Mallory Stewart: So we very much hope so. It's obviously in their domestic interest and in our interest and in the global security interest for us to continue to have these discussions. We have obligations under our international commitments to try to find ways to reduce nuclear risk and to stabilize the, the global environment. And so, you know, what we have said, what President Putin sort of has, has, has reminded the community is that the US government is willing to meet on arms control with Russia. The, you know, President Biden has said it, Secretary Blinken just recently said it last week. We will meet with them. We need to meet with them. It's, it's something that both countries need to do to continue to focus on international stability and risk reduction.

The context in which we meet now is is, is sort of up to, to a certain degree, available mechanisms, right. If Russia is not allowing the BCC to continue, is there another context in which, you know, we can meet in a good faith context to have these conversations. And that's what's so troubling is that, you know, the communications we've heard from Putin seem to place in doubt the assumptions that we've already, always had, that they do value arms control and they've demonstrated this value for decades, I think by tying it to Ukraine right now, tying it to an immovable object in the sense that our support for Ukraine will not be limited by their New START decision, they are really placing in doubt their support for the treaty itself.

And so trying to figure out how we come to the table and talk about next steps in arms control and what we need to talk about right now with respect to New START is challenging, but we're willing to do it and we need to have good faith partners to join us on this. And we've been communicating this to Russia again through our president, through the secretary of state, through Undersecretary Jenkins as recently as, as today, we have said we are willing to meet on this. We just need to understand, you know, where these communications are coming from, what the intent behind the communications that that Putin has most recently put out are and how we address our obligations moving forward to reduce nuclear risk.

So, yes, we are ready. We just need to understand what context in which we'll be able to meet with them. And as, as our president said, we require a good faith partner to sort of figure out how we can push forward in this arena.

Robert Einhorn: Okay. Let's say the Russians do agree to sit down and talk to us, and they're prepared to consider replacing New START with a follow-on arrangement. Has the Biden administration already decided what its objectives are for a follow-on agreement? The Trump administration had talked about one limit regarding all nuclear weapons, deployed, non-deployed, strategic, non-strategic and so forth. And you know, of course the US Congress in ratifying New START, expressed its strong desire that a follow-on agreement deal with non-strategic systems in which Russia's assumed to have a large advantage.

The Biden administration I don't think, has said on the record, but there have been discussions, I believe, about having an aggregate of all nuclear weapons. Could you give us a sense, has the Biden administration adopted an approach, a framework for pursuing a follow-on agreement? And you could you share some of its elements with us?

Mallory Stewart: So I think we should be clear that the first step to any discussion, a follow on to New START requires compliance with New START. And I think that's the point that we've been trying to make this week, last week, and even all of January when we're discussing Russian noncompliance, which has been, again, continuing since they failed to allow inspections and they failed to engage in a BCC, we need to implement New START to be able to figure out how to push beyond New START. But you're correct. We're thinking about all of these things. We have been talking about trying to more comprehensively address the Russian strategic stockpile, including their, their large amount of tactical nuclear weapons. We are taking into account the existing challenges in the global community, we're looking at this all through the integrated deterrence approach that our, our Department of Defense has been discussing.

You know, we're not, we're not looking at this in a vacuum, but we need compliance with New START first. And that's really the struggle right now, is to understand how we bring Russia back into compliance and how they truly understand why it's in their interest to comply. So before we get ahead of ourselves, that's the question that we're really trying to address right now.

Robert Einhorn: Okay. Let's assuming, let's assume we, we can get over that hurdle. You mentioned that you seem to be saying that the administration has looked at this idea of trying to limit

all nuclear weapons. That poses new challenges, especially verification. Simply verifying that the Russians have limited their non-strategic weapons also involves significant challenges. How far are we and, and our partners internationally and you mentioned this multilateral consideration of this issue, how far are we in being able to get a handle on these problems and, and if certain elements of a new agreement can be verified with high confidence, is there some way of segregating those issues and dealing with them in some fashion and dealing with the more verifiable elements separately?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, I mean, you're right to point out that this doesn't have to be all done in one fell swoop. And you're right to point out the verification challenges, the significant verification challenges that all of these sort of issues will represent, especially in an environment in which, you know, we're walking away from traditional instruments of arms control and, and traditional verification architecture. So, you know, through a lot of our multilateral efforts, the IPNDV the CEND, also working with the Stockholm Initiative to understand what the concerns are, what the capacities are, where technologies could be developed, what we continue to hear from, from the partners, but also new voices to sort of explain what their concerns are. We're trying to take it all in.

But understand, we're not, we're not inflexibly looking at one tool or another tool. We're trying to consider everything that's available to us in restraining, you know, the strategic capacities that we're dealing with. And I think, you know, I think, again, we should also figure out what's happening in the broader community, looking to the PRC, looking to our P5 meetings to understand what, what can be done in that context. We're really looking across the board to address a lot of these really challenging issues.

Robert Einhorn: I have other online question, this one from John Wolfstall of Global Zero, John is a former senior director at the NSC for Arms Control and Nonproliferation, which is the job you had before becoming a State Department assistant secretary. John notes that President Reagan declared that the United States would abide by the limits of the unratified Seoul 2 [phonetic] treaty as long as Moscow did the same. John asks, would the Biden administration consider something like the Reagan approach, abiding by New START as long as Russia did the same.

Mallory Stewart: You know what, what I've been trying to say here is that nothing is necessarily off the table. But we do need to understand Russian intents here we need to understand what they're willing to do. We have been reaching out to try to hear from them further to understand their position. But I think John's point is well made, that there is flexibility in how we can approach

some of these issues as long as we are confident that they can be approached in a verifiable manner and confident that they're in our national security interests.

So, you know, as long as we can hear from Russia what they would be interested in engaging in, but to even get to that point, we really do need to have compliance with New START and an understanding that New START is in our bilateral interests and the global security interests. So working through New START to sort of next steps is the path that we think is the most productive so we can reestablish the functioning process of, of the last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between us.

Robert Einhorn: I mean, you know, even if Russia had not invaded Ukraine, even if Russia and US relations had not deteriorated to the extent that they have deteriorated, there would have been all kinds of complications in working out a follow on. US and Russian position simply differ in a number of important respects on treatment of missile defenses, on Russian concerns about American precision guided, long range conventional missiles and so forth. Could you focus on some of those complications and what the U.S. attitude would be in dealing with them?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, I mean, listen, it was going to be a hard negotiation anyway, for sure. And I think everyone recognized that. I think it's made even more difficult now, of course. But, you know, there, there is a fundamental understanding that at least there had been a fundamental understanding, it's in our collective interest to actually engage in these discussions. And so, you know, with respect to the Russian focus on US missile defense or, you know, prompt global strike and our focus on Russia's large stockpile of tactical weapons, there are different things for us to talk about and focus on, and that's recognized.

That said, we don't have to be limited to, you know, one instrument or another or, you know, we don't have to be looking at this through a pure, legally binding if there's stuff to do in the nonbinding context. And so these are hard discussions, but we should figure out sort of how we implement New START and then how we move from New START to the broader conversation. I think establishing some degree to implement the treaty that was, you know, reconfirmed in 2021 and extended for five years by Russia, understanding from them why, you know, their invasion of Ukraine has so drastically changed the situation, it doesn't, doesn't, it doesn't make sense to us when they have been confirming its importance and their diplomats have been saying how New START is

valuable. So we need to understand where they're coming from, what they're looking for, and what's in our own national interest in proceeding.

Robert Einhorn: Here's another question coming in online. It's from Peter Metz of the Massachusetts Peace Action Nuclear Disarmament Working Group. And Peter Metz asks whether it's time to start anew to, to eliminate all nuclear weapons. And I would add or is Obama's vision of a world without nuclear weapons dead or at least pushed to an even more distant aspirational future.

Mallory Stewart: You know, I think, I think one of the biggest challenges we have right now is that if, if one country with nuclear weapons is pushing towards, you know, global zero and no other country with nuclear weapons takes the same approach, it's not a very realistic outlook, right. It's not also stabilizing. And I think we need to figure out how to move towards, you know, our article six obligations in a stabilizing, coherent and sustainable way versus an all or nothing approach. You know, I think what we see from Russia right now when they're claiming that, you know, our assertion of, of the need to have a strategic defeat of Russia and Ukraine somehow changes the environment for arms control is just not credible.

And it's, it's an excuse that is challenging, especially where Secretary Blinken has said if Russia stopped fighting in Ukraine, they could go home and live their lives as, as usual, normal and, and everything would proceed apace. But if Ukraine stopped fighting in Ukraine, they would cease to exist. It's a very different situation. So, you know, the challenge is that if you have one country threatening another country's very existence, claiming that's the reason they can't engage in arms control, it really challenges our ability to move forward with them credibly.

And so we really need to understand, and they need to understand why both New START and the broader arms control architecture, you know, in the multilateral context across the board is in their own interest, stabilizes their own security as well as the global community's. And I just think that's the overarching problem. And you can't sort of say this is the reason that we need to get rid of all nuclear weapons, because you will never hear anyone in Russia or elsewhere or China saying that that's what they want to do right now. I mean, I just think it's not credible to say that's the path forward at this very moment.

Robert Einhorn: Mallory, many experts believe that the likelihood that nuclear weapons will be used now, either intentionally or as a result of miscalculation, misperception that the likelihood has substantially increased in recent years. So should traditional arms control, meaning limiting the

numbers and capabilities of nuclear forces, should that now take a backseat to reducing the risks of nuclear war? And if we should be giving priority to risk reduction measures, what are some of the risk reduction measures we have in mind, you mentioned transparency as one, confidence building. Do we have in mind some specific confidence building and transparency steps that we would put to the Russians and perhaps the Chinese and others as well?

Mallory Stewart: So when I think of arms control, I think actually broadly of risk reduction. But when you mention traditional arms control, I think of sort of the treaty structures, the architectures that have been around for many years, and I think we should look across the board for what can be helpful right now. And as I mentioned in, in the outer space arena, we've been working on norms development, just as we've been doing in AI and military uses, because any stabilizing efforts with the multilateral community, even if Russia is not participating, will help lay the groundwork for understanding what other countries are doing, preventing miscommunication and miscalculation.

You know, when we see this increasing environment of, of potential destabilization by losing these arms control instruments, that is when we need to look more broadly at stabilizing activities and, again, norms development, transparency and confidence building measures, understanding what good and responsible behavior is in these gray zones so that we can clarify where bad behavior is occurring. And we've seen this kind of effort be effective. Thinking about the efforts that the United States government took to highlight the ASAT testing that the Chinese government did in 2007 were enough to change its behavior so that its subsequent test of the same ASAT did not create as much debris and the debris from the 2007 anti-satellite test will continue to be around for decades to come.

So trying to stabilize the environment, prevent the heightened tension and the miscommunication that exists even with Russia not part of that normative framework will help sort of clarify the behavior that's existing. So our efforts are going to be risk reduction, which again, in my mind is part of arms control, but it'll be broadly across the strategic domain, including space, including AI, including technologies that implicate our strategic capacities and also with nuclear responsible behavior, as we as we discussed in the NPT context, there is a large amount of responsible behavior that nuclear states can follow, and we hope that everyone will follow them.

Robert Einhorn: It, is the, is the era of formal, legally binding arms control agreements over? Are we now into an area of normative arms control. You mentioned space, cyber, AI and so forth. These are issues where, you know, rapidly changing technologies, where problems of verification,

even problems of definition, make it difficult to, to formulate traditional kinds of arms control measures. Are we into a new era now? Is you know, or you know, are START, comprehensive test ban these kinds of, are they things of the past now?

Mallory Stewart: I hope not. I think we should still support them absolutely right. The arms control structures that we have through the NPT, through the Chemical Weapons Convention, all crucially remain important and will continue to be important. I think we should also do the normative exercises, and I think they can be helpful in defining terminology that leads to a legally binding, right. That's the exciting thing about the normative work in the, you know, emerging and disruptive technology arena is that you can help define terminology that can eventually be embodied, hopefully in a legally binding treaty when everyone comes to a common understanding and agreement as to what that terminology means. And we, we saw the evolution of arms control proceed that way historically, right.

With respect to the outer space treaty, there was UN work prior to the outer space treaty that laid the normative underpinnings for our agreements and our understandings of why it's not a good idea to place weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies. And eventually that was codified into a legally binding agreement. So, I mean, maybe it's because I have to stay positive that I refuse to say that the, you know, the, the time of, of legally binding arms control structures is done. I think, you know, we cannot predict the future, but we should certainly work toward establishing the ability to, to enter into those, to our, you know, U.S. national security interests and to the global security interests.

Robert Einhorn: In your introductory remarks, you mentioned the rapidly growing Chinese nuclear threat. Now, my understanding is that the Biden administration has reached out multiple times to China and sought to engage in some kind of discussions, a strategic stability dialogue analogous to what the Biden administration began to do with, with Russia. But these efforts to reach out to the Chinese have been rebuffed every, every time. So what's the plan for engaging with China? You know, China is a permanent member of the Security Council, it's a party to the nonproliferation treaty. We have an obligation to pursue arms control and disarmament. So how, how, how does the United States get China to the table? And if the U.S. could get China to the table, what would be on the U.S. agenda?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, I mean, we have to work with China so that both of us understand it's in our mutual interest to engage in risk reduction efforts so that China understands in their interest to have these conversations, to prevent miscalculation and miscommunication. Certainly this last month, you know, with all the discussion and misunderstandings about what was happening in our near, near-space atmosphere, it would have been helpful to have more lines of communication set up to, to be able to reach out very quickly. These are the kind of moments in which you try to emphasize that communication is helpful, that preventing miscalculation is something that's in their own interest.

And so, you know, one of the very positive interactions that, that I was able to participate in with, with the Chinese government under the Obama administration was the space security dialogue, restarting, you know, these dialogues to understand, you know, mutual threat perceptions, understanding what's happening in the space security arena that impact collective challenges for all of us and our space assets and astronauts. These are in China's interest, especially as well as our own, having, you know, some sort of additional channels of communication between our militaries as, as we had historically trying to work on potential launch notifications to prevent miscommunication, which I know China has with other countries. These are all options that that are very much in Chinese interest.

And so really working to understand what the realm of the possible is in terms of engagements and getting them to appreciate why these are in their interest is something that we're working on right now. And, you know, I think, I think it can't be underestimated that the domestic benefit of having risk reduction in place, arms control mechanisms and risk reduction and transparency and confidence building measures can't be overstated. And we just have to sort of work through the political challenges that I think all countries right now or many countries are struggling with because of this misnomer that arms control is not in the domestic interest.

Robert Einhorn: We, we're clearly approaching a world now, sooner or later, we're going to have two nuclear peer competitors, both Russia and, and now China. And there are experts who, who say that in such a world, new, you know, New START would be too constraining, that in order to deter both China and Russia, the United States would have to field nuclear forces that exceed the limitations of New START. What, could you share with this administration thinking about how we're going to deal with two peer nuclear competitors? And we, can we manage to deter them by

maintaining New START kinds of level or even lower levels? Or has the China factor really said, okay, no more reductions, we can't afford to do that anymore and still have high quality deterrents?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, I mean, as our national security strategy said, we're very aware of approaching this time in which we have to near peer or peer competitors in the strategic arena. And it's something that we're very much thinking about. And there's, you know, considerations going on across the board. I think it's very active in our integrated deterrence approach to understand how we're able to, you know, defend and deter aggression against ourselves and our allies and partners. And I think that's an active conversation that you all can expect is going on and you've seen in the press as well. But you know, what we need to get our heads around is how we maintain the existing structure.

So again, how we, how we bring New START back and how we ensure that Russia sees it in their interest because it doesn't it doesn't make sense to me to say that because we're concerned about additional threats beyond Russia, we should not, you know, stay in a stabilizing and, and security enhancing treaty with Russia. And so trying to figure out how to make sure we maintain New START but also address additional challenges is very much actively being discussed. You know, I can defer to many others more intimately involved in our integrated deterrence strategies and approach. But from my perspective, I've seen, you know, all sorts of considerations and all sorts of, sort of defensive capacities being discussed and making sure that we are able to continue to defend ourselves at the top.

Robert Einhorn: So arms control has always been controversial politically in the United States. But despite all the controversy, both Republican and Democratic administrations have managed to gain approval for legally binding arms control treaties. But is that still possible in today's hyper partisan political climate in the United States, what are more generally, what are the implications of hyper partisanship for the future of arms control?

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, it's a challenge. It's certainly a challenge. I think we've seen the erosion of a knowledge set about how important arms control is to domestic security. And the political arena has suggested somehow that negotiations on arms control are somehow more beneficial to our partners in those negotiations than they are to ourselves. And I think that, again, reflects a political narrative that isn't accurate. I think what we have seen, of course, is that walking away from arms control structures, including the JCPOA, have not been to our advantage. And we need to ensure

that, you know, on a bipartisan basis, it's understood why these need to continue and why we need to work to establish more stability through risk reduction. And we will continue to work on that, of course, regardless of the political environment.

But from, from my perspective, the challenges we face from strategic stability and, and nuclear risks are not a four or even an eight-year challenge. And I think making sure everyone appreciates that these are beyond the US political cycle is, is an important message for everyone to convey. So it is a challenge and I think we should all work on it. And we've heard from our partners and allies and that they very much want us to work on it. And I think we need to continue through this path.

I am fascinated by the sort of arms control is dead concept. It doesn't die, it's a tool, it's a stabilizing mechanism. It's not like you can kill it. It needs to be available, and it needs to continue to operate as a, as a functioning and even as a possible mechanism to help moving forward. And you shouldn't say for now and all time, arms control is dead or for now and all time, we can immediately jump into a treaty. I think both positions are not necessarily reflective of reality. So that's what we're working on with our partners and with the Hill and more, more broadly.

Robert Einhorn: Okay. We have about 15 minutes left. We have some time for questions from the audience, more questions online. So please, when I call on you, please state your name, tell us your affiliation, and then pose a short question. So, Amy, we start with you.

Audience Member: Great. Thanks so much. Hi, Mallory. Thanks so much for being here today. A couple of questions. The last time we were in an analogous situation with the Russians and INF treaty compliance, the U.S. subsequently withdrew. Is there any merit to the idea that Putin is pushing the U.S. to similarly withdraw from New START? And then on near space, are you suggesting that it would ideally follow a similar pattern as outer space, with lots of discussions of norms and notifications leading to a treaty? Or is a legally binding treaty just not on the horizon? Thanks.

Mallory Stewart: Thank you, Amy. Clearly, with respect to the INF model, you know, there was a path followed in that context that led to the demise of the treaty. In this context, we are very much hoping to encourage Russia to return to compliance, and we're very much hoping that the international community helps us make this message that New START is in all of our interests and an obligation on the US and Russia to proceed in these stabilizing conversations. So I can't at this point

say there is a, there's a necessary path forward because we're gaining information as to what Russia intended by its suspension and what the suspension will entail. But, you know, the options on the table for us are across the board. And I think it would be very unfortunate for, for national and international security if New START went away. But, you know, at this point, again, without more information, it's hard to say the path forward. But certainly we are encouraging Russia to engage with us in conversations about these issues.

On your second question, I would just say we need more information and that's what we're in the process of doing right now is gathering information about both domestic requirements for notifications but also international requirements, understanding what is happening in the near space domain, across the board internationally so that we're not unilaterally taking steps but really understanding who's doing what and who's notifying whom. Because a lot of this is not, it's not state actor necessarily. Some of it's non-state actor. And, you know, in the, in the weather forecasting arena, this, this capacity is utilized frequently. But also as we've seen, the intel gathering has, has been happening by China and others. And I think we just need to understand what's happening internationally before we sort of lock in even a normative approach so that we can do so in a way that incorporates, you know, the general practice and the information that's already out there.

Robert Einhorn: Daryl.

Audience Member: Hi there. Daryl Kimball, Arms Control Association. Thanks, Mallory. The day after Russia's suspension announcement, the Chinese Foreign Ministry made a statement that said that New START is an important bilateral treaty on nuclear disarmament, etc, etc. China encouraged the two sides to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue and consultation to ensure the treaty's sound implementation. So what's your analysis of China's reasoning behind making a clear and strong statement in support of New START and the timing? And what is the State Department or the administration doing to share its message about the back and forth about Russia's misinformation, about, about why they withdrew and why it's important to return to the negotiating table.

Mallory Stewart: So I can only assume China's intent. But of course, they see, they see the importance of a New START to global stability. Right. It's been mentioned in the NPT arena multiple times. It's been discussed in the P5 context, New START as a bilateral treaty implicates world security. And, and, and that, you know, presumably is why the Chinese government supports it and

hopes it comes back into force. Well, it's in force, but comes back, that Russia comes back into compliance as soon as possible. So I thought the Chinese comments were, were helpful. And hopefully Russia is listening to both China and the international community that see this suspension as destabilizing.

With respect to sharing communications generally, you know, historically, New START communications have been in the classified context. So that sort of was, I think, overlooked when some communications about the BCC and the inspections were made public during the time that that happened primarily by the Russian government. But then we responded. So we're trying to correct the record when it becomes public, but we really are trying to engage with Russia behind the scenes to understand what their thinking is on this and what it means. And we will, of course, be public with this communication when we need to correct the record as we felt we needed to today. And, you know, as Secretary Blinken, Undersecretary Jenkins and even President Biden have discussed New START specifically in the last week. But we're trying to understand from Russia directly without initially going through a very public channel, unless we have to correct the record.

Robert Einhorn: The, you mentioned just now, Mallory, the P5 forum, these are the five permanent members of the Security Council who are also the legitimate nuclear weapons states under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. They have met regularly to talk about NPT issues in preparation for nonproliferation treaty review conferences and so forth. So their agenda has mostly been about NPT issues, but it also has gotten into issues like nuclear doctrine and so forth. Does this forum, I mean, when it's been so difficult to organize bilateral discussions, especially with the Chinese, does this forum of the five permanent members provide an opportunity to engage multilaterally or on the sidelines of such engagement, to engage bilaterally? Is this something the Biden administration is pursuing?

Mallory Stewart: Absolutely. The P5 expert letter, level discussion has been extremely important to share policies, to share nuclear doctrine, to address threat perceptions, to really understand, you know, how the P5 countries are looking at these issues. So it has been very important, and we have pursued it quite actively. As, as a stabilizing opportunity, as a risk reduction context in which we can engage with all five countries to, to be clear on elements where there could be misperception and misunderstanding.

So, you know, we hope it will continue and we have found it very beneficial. And, you know, I think also an important fulfillment of an obligation that we have to work towards reducing nuclear risk in the NPT context. So, so I actually think it's, it's very positive. And even in this context of, of Russia's noncompliance with New START, these kind of P5 conversations have to continue.

Robert Einhorn: Yes, gentleman in the back.

Audience Member: Thank you very much. My name is Hiroo Watanabe from Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun. I guess my question is about the G7 summit in Hiroshima this May. Prime Minister Kishida as a politician from Hiroshima, he's willing to raise nuclear arms control, the NPT treaty as a key issue in the G7 summit. So the United States are, how do you expect G7 and the Japanese leadership can convey a stronger message to the world and how the, how the Biden administration they can cooperate to do that. Thank you.

Mallory Stewart: Yeah, we're working very closely with our G7 partners and with the Japanese government on taking advantage of, you know, the location of the G7 summit and certainly the advantage of the Japanese government's strong leadership on arms control, nonproliferation, risk reduction and truly understanding the dangers of nuclear risk. So it's, it is a very good opportunity to raise awareness globally from the personal and the political experience that the G7 meeting can, can convey. And so you're right to ask about it. It's a good awareness-raising context. It's a good sort of unification moment in which we can all appreciate why we need to work towards reducing nuclear risk. And so I'm very much looking forward to continuing positive communications from that group, but also, you know, to see how we can develop even further in this responsible behavior.

Robert Einhorn: We only have about 5 minutes left, so why don't we take the remaining questions here, here and here. Three more if that's okay with you, Mallory, take them and then you can answer those questions and sum up.

Audience Member: Great. Thanks, sir. Jeff Pryce, Johns Hopkins SAIS. Two questions. One, in Putin's speech on the 21st, he reflected this sort of visceral aversion he has to on-site inspection. He's done it before the Nunn-Lugar context and elsewhere. So and he basically talked about Engels airbase, where they've launched attacks from without saying Engels airbase. So first question is how can we insulate without giving an inch on the Ukraine attack, insulate what's going on there from the verification regime for strategic arms control? And second, the INF treaty having been terminated, there's still unilateral moratoria in place with us and the Russians, and there were talks about

increasing the specificity of that, maybe increasing the verification of that. Obviously, it's not a great time, but I wonder if there's any thoughts about the prospects for sort of solidifying and making more specific the regime on INF intermediate range missiles in Europe.

Robert Einhorn: Could pass it to the gentleman next to you?

Audience Member: Right. Hi, my name is Oystein Bogen, I'm a correspondent for Norwegian National Broadcasting. We're seeing periodically statements out of the Kremlin, different sort of political figures, most notably perhaps Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev basically saber-rattling with nuclear arms, you know, what they could do with it and what they have. How do you tie those statements into, you know, arms control in general and specifically to their suspension? And if such, do you take them seriously?

Robert Einhorn: And gentlemen, back, back there. Yeah.

Audience Member: Hello, I'm Mike from Munich, Germany, and I'm working for the Hanns-Seidel Foundation. And I got a question regarding the Munich Security Conference. So the message is clear, and the West stands together. I think this year was the biggest U.S. delegation at the Munich Security Conference. And the biggest criticism of such events like this conference is that there's so little outcome and no real decisions. I'm always wondering, so war is one of the most sensitive topics you can talk about and how much happens behind the scenes, and it's not published to the public.

Mallory Stewart: Okay, well, so I'm going to make sure I try to remember all these questions but starting with the last one first. A lot happens behind the scenes, right? I think one of my EUR colleagues described the Munich Security Conference as just the, the quickest way to talk to so many countries on a bilateral basis, on the sidelines, and to really have the communications more directly by all being there. So it's usually positive, even if much of the positive progress made in that context isn't public or doesn't actually sort of, doesn't get reflected in a tangible document or even a tangible commitment. But I think the, the benefit of, of everyone meeting and having a huge like-minded presence in trying to work against the destabilizing environment that Russia's invasion has continued.

But again, it's a, it's a positive opportunity for continuing to make sure like-minded are on the same page, so it is it is a huge advantage to have conversations there. So working back from that, I guess jumping over to the inspections context and, and then continuing from there, the information about Engels being a base that could be utilized has not been tied to coming from inspections, of course. And the idea that inspections provide more information than is available just from watching

the news as to where attacks are launched from or to understanding what Russia is doing in targeting Ukraine, I think is really not, is not that credible, right.

We understand that Putin has expressed concern about more information sharing through the inspections than otherwise would be the case without the inspections. But the information that's shared really goes to verification of the treaty and verification of compliance with the treaty, which is what we've been trying to say all along, is that if you have concerns about our compliance, come inspect us under the treaty. And so it seems like a good excuse for him to provide that inspections will potentially give more information that could help, you know, the Ukrainians. But, but it's just not credible because it really is related to verifying New START. And as we discussed, it would help them to, to verify their concerns, their concerns about our conversion activity. So it's in both countries interest to continue this and not credible to suggest otherwise.

With respect to INF and the continuing moratorium, I think we do need to have this comprehensive conversation. It was started at least to a certain degree through the SSD, the strategic stability dialogues that we had with Russia right up until they invaded Ukraine again. And those are important conversations to continue. But it's very hard to talk about what the possibilities are now when we can't convince Russia to comply with New START itself. And it's a challenge to start talking about new mechanisms with them in light of that most recent development. All right, you have to remind me now, because I haven't had enough coffee today.

Robert Einhorn: Nuclear saber-rattling.

Mallory Stewart: Yes, nuclear saber-rattling, of course, it's very difficult. We've been watching closely their, their nuclear posture. It has not changed, nor have we seen the reason to change ours. But it's something that does span the range of politically motivated and in many parts, but also potentially, you know, continuing the destabilization efforts of the international community, trying to sort of argue to those partner nations that are working to support Ukraine, that they shouldn't support Ukraine, right. This nuclear saber-rattling achieves many objectives from Russia, and all of them are destabilizing and unhelpful.

And so while we're watching their nuclear posture closely and it hasn't changed as far as the most recent communication I've heard from the Department of Defense colleagues, it's, it's, it's destabilizing to, to, to continue this type of behavior. And I think most countries see it as so, as such. But of course, it's in their interest, in the Russian's interest to try to prevent the unity of like-minded

nations in pushing back on their aggression. And so it serves several interests, and it's extraordinarily unhelpful trying to push against it.

Robert Einhorn: Well, Mallory, thanks so much for joining us. It's difficult to expose yourself, especially on the record so, so soon after a development like Putin's announcement when the situation has not entirely clarified. But you've done a terrific job, you've covered a lot of ground, and you've helped us understand where we are in the wake of the announcement, but also administration thinking on arms control and risk reduction going forward. So we're in debt to you. We also appreciate very much those who joined us here at Brookings, and as well as the very large audience that viewed this session online. So please help, let's, let's join in thanking Assistant Secretary Mallory Stewart for being here today.