

Foundation for Defense of Democracies hosts a discussion: "Rogue Proliferators: Nonproliferation Threats Posed by Iran, Syria, Russia, and North Korea"

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Speakers: Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation C.S. Eliot Kang

Michael Allen, former Special Assistant to the President and NSC Senior Director for Counterproliferation Strategy

Anthony Ruggiero, Senior Director of FDD's Nonproliferation and Biodefense Program and former Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and NSC Senior Director for Counterproliferation and Biodefense

Andrea Stricker, FDD Research Fellow and Deputy Director of Nonproliferation and Biodefense Program, Foundation for Defense of Democracies

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SCHANZER: OK, welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining us today for this event here at Foundation For Defense of Democracies. I'm Jonathan Schanzer, FDD's senior vice president for research. And we're glad to have you here in person as well as tuning in online for what should be a terrific event.

A little context for today: my colleagues Anthony Ruggiero and Andrea Stricker were not planning to be in Washington this morning. They instead intended to be at the Hague as official NGO representatives at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons annual conference. The OPCW is of course a 193- [sic 193] member intergovernmental body that, in theory at least, works to rid the world of chemical weapons. Unfortunately, rogue regimes whitewash the development and even the use of chemical weapons. They interfere with OPCW functions, and while they are unable to co-opt it, they exploit the weaknesses, which leads us to this morning.

And Anthony and Andrea are here rather than at the Hague because their attendance at the OPCW conference was blocked. We suspect that it was Iran, Syria and/or Russia that managed to veto their attendance. So instead we decided to have our own event with all of you to discuss the chemical weapons and proliferation concerns associated with Iran, with Syria, with Russia and with North Korea.

We watch with particular concern right now as Russia continues its illegal assault on Ukraine, while threatening to wield its nuclear arsenal. The United States and allied powers must find ways to hold Russia and others to account.

So I'm hopeful that today's event will spawn ideas for how to do just that. This conversation also gives us the opportunity to officially welcome four newly minted advisory board members to FDD's nonproliferation and biodefense program. We're honored to have Ambassador Jackie Wolcott serve as the program's chair, a position she has held since the program launched in June.

Today we're also pleased to announce the addition of four former senior officials to our board. They are Bob Joseph, Susan Koch, Charlie Kupperman and Brent Park. The combined nonpartisan government experience of these dedicated professionals will bolster FDD's in-house expertise on nonproliferation and biodefense. Their strategic guidance will aid our work on biodefense and pandemic preparedness, nuclear nonproliferation, of course chemical weapons and WMD vehicles and conventional long-range capability strikes.

Headlining today's event, I am pleased to introduce Dr. Eliot Kang, the assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, also known as ISN. Dr. Kang is a career member of the senior executive service. He previously served as ISN's acting assistant secretary and principal deputy assistant secretary. He joined the State Department in 2003 and served in the Bureaus of Political Military Affairs and Arms Control. He is the recipient of numerous State Department awards.

And we are grateful for your service, and we eagerly await your remarks today.

Before we begin, let me just also briefly introduce the rest of today's speakers. Immediately following this morning's keynote we will have an expert lineup join the stage, or, actually, they're already on the stage, so they're just going to just start talking.

First we have Michael Allen, who previously served as special assistant to the president and senior director for counterproliferation strategy at the National Security Council. Michael is currently managing director of Beacon Global Strategies.

Welcome.

We're also proud to feature FDD senior fellow and senior director of our nonproliferation program Anthony Ruggiero. Anthony has served in various U.S. government posts for nearly 20 years, including most recently as deputy assistant to the president and NSC senior director for counterproliferation and biodefense.

And finally, we welcome Andrea Stricker, FDD research fellow and deputy director of FDD's nonproliferation and biodefense program. Before joining FDD, Andrea spent 12 years at the good ISIS -- not the bad one -- producing technical assessments on nuclear proliferation.

Today's panel will be moderated by the very talented Vivian Salama. Vivian covers national security for The Wall Street Journal. She has written on U.S. foreign policy and national security issues for nearly two decades, reporting from more than 75 countries.

Finally, just a few words about FDD. For more than 20 years we have operated as a nonpartisan research institute exclusively focused on national security and foreign policy. For more information on our work and FDD's nonproliferation and biodefense program we encourage you to visit our website [FDD.org](http://FDD.org). You can also also follow us on Twitter @FDD.

So with that, Assistant Secretary, welcome to our stage.

KANG: Good morning. Thank you, Jonathan.

And thanks for the invite, Anthony.

It's great to be here and particularly see many colleagues from the past. So, you know, many of you have worked with me over the years putting our collective shoulder to work in the effort to prevent, stop and counter and then, if possible, roll back proliferation challenges. But despite our unceasing effort across multiple administrations, we have not been able to declare victory against certainly deleting proliferators around the world. Still, we fight on with determination.

However, things have gotten harder, particularly in recent years, because of Russia, once a key supporter of the international nonproliferation order.

Now, the Soviet Union was a key negotiator of and party to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, the biological weapons convention and chemical weapons convention. And with the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia worked with us on numerous important nonproliferation efforts, like the missile technology control regime, nuclear supplier group, and was invited to join the Wassenaar Arrangement, which replaced COCOM, which was obviously targeting the Soviet Union and its bloc.

And Russia also supported many of the programs that have been the forefront of multilateral nonproliferation efforts and, of course, U.N. Security Council sanctions regimes. In recent years Russia has worked to undermine these and other important nonproliferation pillars and norms and practices.

For example, in 2018, Russia attempted to poison Sergei Skripal and his daughter using nerve agent, leading to U.S. sanctions. Then again in 2020, Russia used chemical weapons in an attempt to assassinate Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, leading to U.S. imposition of sanctions on entities related to Russia's chemical and biological weapons program.

And the nuclear world, at least one pillar that they've been traditionally strong in supporting. And in August of this year, in the closing hours of NPT Review Conference, Russia alone blocked consensus on the final outcome document. It chose to do so after years of preparation and weeks of negotiations among state parties concerning all manners of difficult issues, all working together to try to reach consensus.

Think about it. Russia stood alone, not supported by China, Syria, not Cuba, not even Belarus. All of nearly 150 NPT parties gathered in New York were prepared to accept the final draft document.

And furthermore, in recent years, Russia has gone from supporting the IAEA to questioning its impartiality and independence and has tried to constrain how IAEA monitors peaceful nuclear programs. At the recent June Board of Governors meeting, and again in the recent November meeting, Russia and the PRC were the only no-votes on resolution insisting that Iran resolve outstanding safeguard issues at the IAEA cited for number of years.

Indeed, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, including continued calculated attacks on Ukraine's energy grid and the seizure of Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant have challenged the nuclear nonproliferation regime in new ways. Not only did Russia renege on its security assurances to Ukraine when Ukraine joined the NPT, but it continues to infringe on Ukraine's right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Russia's own action disabused the global community of any pretense that Russia is a responsible supplier of nuclear products.

Now, another example of Russia's egregious behavior is abuse of Article V and Article VI process under the Biological Weapons Convention. Russia has launched baseless allegations against the United States and Ukraine in an effort to create political smokescreen for its actions in Ukraine. In the process, Russia impugned threat reduction programs that Russia itself has been part of for over a decade.

Russia requested Article V meeting that was convened in September of this year, and in the end, of course, the gathering supported -- got this support from only seven other countries out of 89 that were present in this specious contention that the United States and Ukraine were developing biological weapons. And Russia's Article VI efforts in November also failed, as the U.N. Security Council dismissed Russia's false claims.

But Russia is at it again. The BWC Review Conference taking place right now in Geneva, and in an attempt to support its unjustified war, Russia has undermined the BWC itself and distracting from the important work of strengthening the BWC.

Now, Russia's efforts to undermine multilateral nonproliferation efforts is not limited to specific treaties. Where Russia once supported and the adoption of U.N. Security Council resolutions that impose tough sanctions and other restrictive measures on proliferators like Iran. Today, Russia's not only doing little to implement and enforce these obligations; it's actually actively violating them by acquiring prohibited items itself.

So Russia's expanding its defense partnership with Iran, particularly Russia's acquisition this year of UAVs from Iran to support Russia's brutal and unjustified war, and these transfers are clearly a violation of missile-related transfer restriction of U.N. Security Council Resolution 2231. In doing so, Russia's not only undermining the Security Council restrictions that itself voted and adopted and is obligated to uphold, but it is contributing to Iran's increasing emergence as a secondary proliferator of UAV technology.

Also, using its role as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, Russia has gone to great length to shield the DPRK from accountability for increasingly provocative behavior. This year alone, DPRK has launched over 60 ballistic missiles, violating a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions that prohibit such launches. Yet Russia, in concert with the PRC, has repeatedly blocked U.N. from taking steps to address DPRK's missile activities, including voting -- vetoing a draft resolution that would have strengthened the current U.N. sanctions regime.

Additionally, Russia does little domestically to enforce relevant U.N. Security Council resolutions on the DPRK, all of which Russia has voted to adopt. For example, Russia continues to allow numerous DPRK laborers to earn income in its jurisdiction in defiance of UNSC 2397, and currently, like the case just discussed regard to Iran, Russia is in the process of acquiring prohibited munitions from the DPRK to support Russia's further invasion of Ukraine.

It's worth noting that Russia's bad example is also covering for and encouraging the PRC's bad behavior. The PRC, too, is subverting the international nonproliferation order and trying to reshape the international order in its favor. A good example is the PRC's so-called peaceful uses resolution in the U.N. General Assembly that tries to frame nonproliferation regimes as obstacles to many countries' access to technologies for peaceful uses. We believe this resolution is a part of a long-term effort by the PRC to undermine the export

control regimes in order to gain easier access to the sensitive technologies that it desires for its advanced weapons programs.

So how do we address these many proliferation challenges made worse by Russia? We have seen that export controls are effective and important nonproliferation tools. It is critical that we keep export controls up-to-date with new technology controls and policy initiatives. But given the rapid evolution of emerging technologies, we must redouble our efforts on a number of fronts.

And to be sure, Russia stands to play spoiler. It has limited incentive to approve control list changes and can single-handedly block new controls, like in the Wassenaar Arrangement, which Russia is a member.

We must seize opportunity to reenergize nonproliferation export control regimes and continue our efforts to ensure that we're doing all we can in these fora Wassenaar, NSG and MTRC, to focus on the most pressing proliferation challenges.

So working multilaterally and bilaterally with traditional allies as well as nontraditional partners, we must forge awareness and consensus when we can and act if necessary on national basis with others.

Now, striking the balance will be difficult, but ensuring that we do not let Russia or other countries act in bad faith and undermine the international nonproliferation framework should be our central focus in coming months, and perhaps years.

Also, we must continue to apply pressure and impose real cost on Russia for its malign activities. Robustly implementing sanctions, export controls, and other measures in conjunctions with our allies and partners is the surest way to make certain Putin cannot exploit foreign technologies and revenues to support his war machine.

As we keep control lists current and match the pace of technological change in the areas such as computing, electronics manufacturing and material processing, we must certainly enforce these measures.

So here working with developing countries of the world is absolutely critical. We must continue to lead the way and assist developing countries to build and strengthen their strategic trade control programs and implement U.N. Security Council resolutions.

At the same time, we must make sure that mechanisms are in place to promote peaceful uses, such as the IAEA Peaceful Uses Initiative, and they have to be effective and recognized and sustainably funded.

Now all of this is hard work and requires substantial resources. But there is hope. Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine has resulted in greater cooperation in the international community on many export control and sanctions actions against Russia. This cooperation, making it more difficult for Russia to get the supplies that it need for its arms industries is clearly hampering its war effort. And the international coalition opposed to Russia's brutal invasion is holding strong, as witnessed by the various U.N. Security Council, U.N. General Assembly, G7, and IAEA measures and statement condemning Russia sanctions and countering Russia's disinformation.

And in response to use of -- Russia's use of energy industry to exert leverage over the customers, the European Union imposed sanctions on Russian oil and gas,

and the G7 publicly declared in June that we should reduce our dependence on Russian nuclear energy supplies and cooperate to help countries identify alternatives to such Russian supplies.

These efforts will not only deny revenues to support Russia's war efforts, but they will contribute to counterproliferation efforts against the likes of Iran and the DPRK.

As I mentioned at the beginning, many of have worked together over the years with the goal of preventing, stopping and countering and hopefully rolling back proliferation. And undoubtedly, we have succeeded in some ways.

But the work is never ending. One must have stamina. And I am confident together we will continue to make a difference. Thank you very much.

SALAMA: Thank you very much, Assistant Secretary, for that very thorough overview.

Obviously, a number of challenges here, whether it is implementing existing agreements or establishing new ones, managing emerging technologies, all of these issues and many more that we're hoping to dig into.

But Jonathan, with his intro remarks, kind of scooped me when he mentioned that Anthony and Andrea got the boot from the OPCW Conference this week. And so, I was hoping you could just briefly talk a little bit about what happened there. What were you hoping to accomplish there? And, you know, what -- why did they not want you there, essentially?

RUGGIERO: Thanks for -- thanks for doing this.

I think, you know, we've been very vocal, Andrea and I, about, you know, the problems with Syria and, in particular, Russia in this particular organization. Both of their use of chemical weapons, their denials they're trying to pin it on the opposition and others. But, you know, unfortunately, we're not able to make that case in the Hague, but we'll continue to make that case.

I would say the other point to make is that this is -- there's a lot of issues here in Washington that are very partisan. This is a bipartisan issue. You know, there are things that we started in the Trump administration, like suspending Syria from the organization, that the Biden administration picked up and finished.

So, this is an issue where there's bipartisan somewhat consensus on trying to approach Russia or trying to counter Russia and Syria's chemical weapons use. And it's unfortunate that these rogue regimes try to stop us. But, of course, we'll -- we won't be silenced.

SALAMA: One of the issues, you know, we're -- Russia, obviously, the invasion of Ukraine has upended so many norms and expectations that are essential to the global nuclear proliferation regime. And, you know, there's so much disinformation right now involved in what the Russians are doing. They tried to counter the narrative as much as they can.

And so, I'd love to hear from all of you, just in terms of what we know, what the process is for collecting any kind of concrete evidence or presumed evidence to build a case. I -- and how has this war compared to sort of, you know, other uses of chemical or biological or nuclear weapon -- you know, attempts to

nuclear threats than say Syria or some of the other -- some of the other countries that we're talking about today?

All of you please jump in.

RUGGIERO: Go ahead.

SALAMA: Do you want to start, Andrea?

STRICKER: Sure.

Well, just for background on Russia's chemical weapons program. Despite being a state party of the Chemical Weapons Convention and a member of the OPCW, they maintain a Novichok program, at least there's probably other programs that they maintain. They had supposedly dismantled, declared everything, gotten rid of it all. The Soviet-imposed Soviet program under OPCW verification by 2017.

But we've seen the two proven instances where they tried to attack enemies of the state. The OPCW verified those attacks and provided scientific attribution. The Soviet Union is the only country that's known to have had a program like that. But what's been done to hold Russia accountable so far is mostly through non-OPCW avenues. So there have been sanctions by the U.S., by the U.K., by the E.U.

About a year ago the OPCW tried asking Russia to answer questions for clarification under a CWC mechanism. They predictably presented the organization with around 230 pages of nonsense and denials. So that process went nowhere. OPCW member states have not established an investigation in Russia, and they have to do so via a vote. It's not clear whether that would be productive in the case of Russia. More likely Moscow just wouldn't allow an investigation. And it's not like the IAEA, where we have a strong director general who can go and ask for a short-notice inspection and then it becomes a major breach of a treaty if they refuse.

There is also a mechanism under the CWC called a challenge inspection. That's where one state can request an inspection of another state's facility by the OPCW. Also likely to be a problem with Russia, you can imagine where they would ask for retaliatory challenge inspections if, for example, the United States were to ask for one.

So in order to bypass all of this and the weaknesses in the CWC, Anthony and I have recommended that Russia just face suspension of its voting rights and privileges at the OPCW, similar to how Syria was suspended after seven to eight years of noncompliance.

So Iran and China are other candidates for suspension. All of these countries vote together at the OPCW. They attempt to -- to prevent routine organizational business. Luckily, in the OPCW you have a two-thirds voting structure where decisions are passed by that majority. So we haven't seen a lot of decisions being blocked. But we have -- we have trouble that they've caused. They -- they hold up, you know, just programs of work and things like that.

But we are seeing -- so Syria having been suspended, it's improved the operations of the organization. They have been able to pass budgets and things like that more. And this conference of states parties at the OPCW, Russia is being sidelined in influence as well. They -- they were not elected to be a vice chairman, for example.

So I think there -- there's progress there. Suspension definitely does have a positive effect. Both an arrangement like the CWC, unless that is fundamentally strengthened, then it just makes sense to sideline the violators and pursue accountability other ways.

SALAMA: But for the rest of you, do actions like this suspension, say, from the OPCW or from any -- I mean, let's even say from the U.N. Security Council. Does something like that, or do sanctions actually curtail Russia's ability to use and to develop any kind of chemical, biological, nuclear weapons?

I mean, sanctions, for example, you know, the argument by the administration is maybe you're not seeing a short-term effect, but you might see a longer-term effect.

Do you believe that the international community has rallied in a way that it will actually impact Russia's ability?

Or are they finding ways to get around all of these measures in a way that is not going to essentially stop them from proceeding with whatever proliferation activities they want?

ALLEN: Well, I can jump in here. I think export controls are a good measure by which the United States can begin to ratchet back on proliferating technologies, if you will.

But I think, in Russia's case, much of their capability is indigenous. Much of it goes back to capabilities that they built during the days of the Soviet Union. So while I think it can help degrade especially the conventional weapons arsenals that the Russians have, that are so clearly in dire need now, I don't see it having an immediate effect on Russia.

I mean, when you listen to what Eliot said, one of the more compelling things that he said is that he said "Russia's malign activities" -- and in the Bush National Security Council was always about the very phrase "Iran's malign activities." And I think the geopolitical competition, this age that we're now in, arguably is not good for the nonproliferation regime.

One, we know Russia wants to have a security veto over Europe. They've started a war. And it's a nearly inescapable conclusion, or at least a reasonable conclusion, for Iran and other rogue states to make, that they too need a nuclear weapon because it's given Putin some measure of protection for his regime. Because we certainly, the United States, has asked the Ukrainians not to ringer or to strike targets within Russia.

So I think it's one of the conclusions of this war is that other rogue proliferators may decide, "After all, you know what, maybe I won't go into an Iranian nuclear deal with a willing Biden administration because I really need to get this over the line faster."

With regard to China, it was an article of faith in the Bush administration, and I think for other administrations, that we needed the Chinese to help us in our maximum pressure campaigns. They were maybe somewhat helpful. But now, arguably, the Chinese like that we're somewhat distracted by the North Koreans because, if we're wasting time-share and mind-share on trying to figure out what to do about the North Koreans, we're spending less time on a pivot to Asia to try and deter them from invading Taiwan.

So I think the age of geopolitical competition arguably is harming the counterproliferation regime.

SALAMA: We're talking about rogue states here. But even rogue states have friends. I mean, I certainly, you know, years of covering the Middle East, you know, the Syrians managed -- no matter how much the world tried to isolate them, they still managed to find other countries that would help them, fuel their military, fuel their activities, their domestic activities, to try to put down any kind of resistance.

And certainly the Russians, we've seen the same thing, where, despite the fact -- despite how the West has tried to rally the global community to isolate Russia, it still manages. It's also managed to try to, kind of, be self-sufficient over the years because it's been used to years and years of sanctions and -- and what-not.

And so, you know, where does that stand for -- for Russia, particularly? And then we can start expanding to other countries as well. But, maybe, Anthony, you can chime in about, you know, where -- where does Russia stand as far as getting outside assistance for its ability to, you know, continue with its nonproliferation activities?

RUGGIERO: Sure, I mean...

SALAMA: Or proliferation activities...

(CROSSTALK)

RUGGIERO: Right, I would just pick up where Michael left off and Eliot left off, which is the next logical step, in terms of counterproliferation, nonproliferation, whatever you call it, is, you know, for the last 20-so years, there was an expectation that Russia and China, we can bring them into the fold, bring them into some of these organizations, or at least have them adhere to some of these controls.

I think that's the -- the Ukraine War has turned that on its head now. And so there has to be -- and you, kind of, hear it from Eliot's remarks, that we have to think about, in some of these organizations, as Andrea said, there's a voting structure, so we can isolate Russia and China, and we can -- we're going to need to use diplomacy to do that. And we've been successful; the Syria suspension case on -- in the OPCW is a good example. But there are other regimes where it's consensus-based. And Russia's inside the tent. And so how do you accomplish what you're trying to accomplish? Even simple updates of these regimes can be blocked by the Russians, and so that's going to be a conversation that's going to go forward.

I think to your earlier question on implementation of sanctions -- and I'll just add, as Michael did, export controls -- that's the critical part. It's -- it's how -- how much are you caring and feeding these sanctions regimes? And we'll -- we'll talk about North Korea later, but we're not doing it on North Korea, and they're able to get those inputs. They're able to get that money into the regime. We're doing it now on Russia, but a year or two after the Ukraine war, will that continue? And that's a big question. There are a lot of countries out there, some of whom are our allies, that buy, you know, nuclear -- civil nuclear energy and reactors from Russia, from the same organization that's involved in

the -- the ZNPP, the reactor. So how will that change over a year or two as people get tired of these Russia sanctions?

SALAMA: But the difference between Russia and many of these other countries that we're talking about today is that this administration and the previous administration, for that -- for that matter, has decided that Russia is critical to a strategic cooperation agreement to work together, particularly on arms control-related issues. Obviously, we've seen just this week that efforts to kind of revive New START and get a renewed agreement on this, you know, in the works is flailing. The Russians postponed indefinitely the talks to start inspections.

And so the U.S. continues to still find it critical, even in this environment, to engage with the Russians versus a -- a number of other countries where, you know, the North Koreans, the efforts under the previous administration that kind of fell apart, and they hadn't really gone anywhere under the current administration.

You know, how does Russia differ in terms of its place, its seat at the table? And Michael, you -- you picked up on this earlier, but you know, it's obviously got a bigger seat at the table than any of these other countries. And so how -- what is the -- what is their willingness level? I mean, how much is -- what's in it for them to also find an arms-control agreement to -- to -- to establish or create some sort of understanding with the U.S. and Western allies so that it can at least have some sort of arms-control agreement on the table? What's in it for them?

RUGGIERO: Yeah, I mean, that's a great -- quick -- great question, and I think, you know, we have to also realize that Russia has cheated on arms-control agreements too. And so when we engage with them, we have to come from that perspective. I think that provides some insight, if there is some kind of deal between Ukraine and Russia, whether Russia will abide by that. If you read the Biden National Security Strategy, they certainly suggest that they think they can work with the Chinese on things such as pandemic threats, which -- which I think is, in -- in my view, was -- you know, was kind of funny to read, because the Chinese are still hiding the origins of COVID-19 and other things associated with the COVID pandemic.

I -- I -- I think, you know, I go back to my earlier point, which is I -- I do think that the Ukraine war is upending the counterproliferation and nonproliferation approach that we've had for decades, and that after this war that's going to be a real conversation. Because we have a formerly-nuclear state, if you want to call that, in Ukraine that gave up the Soviet nuclear weapons that is attacked by a nuclear state that is also threatening to use those nuclear weapons and, potentially, chemical weapons against that nonnuclear state. That is -- that is something that's going to change the dynamic of the -- our entire deterrence and -- and our approach for the last couple of decades. So I -- I don't think any of us has really -- have really started to peel away at that, and -- and how it's going to be different.

SALAMA: I think we could probably spend an hour talking just about Russia, but I do want to -- I do want to touch upon some of these others, because obviously, there's so much to be learned from every single one of these countries and their -- their unique efforts.

Andrea, you've done a lot of work on Syria in particular, and you mentioned it briefly in -- you know, at the beginning in your remarks just in terms of the

OPCW. You know, what -- what have we learned, if you can kind of get into a bit more detail, about what Syria has taught us in the current environment? You know, what can we take away from that experience? What have you -- what have you been discovering in your own work, you know, with regard to Syria and its own OPCW-related efforts, you know?

STRICKER: Yeah. So there -- the U.S. has documented at least 50 proven attacks of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime against its own people, but they likely get into the hundreds. So after Syria began using chemical weapons, Russian brokered Syria to join the OPCW and the CWC in 2013, and they did get rid of quite a bit of chemical weapons stocks.

The OPCW has had a variety of investigations in Syria, including through the U.N. Security Council, but that was eventually not renewed due to Russian opposition. The OPCW has had a difficult task, though, in Syria. They've been in an active war zone trying to run around and provide attribution of attacks and write up reports about what happened and try to get Damascus to dismantle everything. And in the meantime, Russian and Syria have been spreading disinformation throughout the OPCW, trying to delegitimize the information and the evidence collected, casting doubt on their -- on their findings and acting within to disrupt the work.

So I think the -- a key lesson, though, is that Syria is much less effective. So I understand that Syria is still participating in meetings, still sending around complaints. The OPCW is still trying to engage them and get them to cooperate, but it simply just has less influence now, now that it's sidelined.

SALAMA: I would imagine a -- a common theme with all these countries is regime cooperation is pretty much nil. How does that impact the work when you are trying to, obviously, operate in -- or -- an already-challenging environment? And how much has that either improved or -- or gotten worse with the Syrian regime, especially as the world sort of accepts the fact that Bashar al-Assad is not going anywhere anytime soon? You know, does -- has that made their work harder over the years?

ALLEN: It certainly has. I mean, it's been mentioned. If you're in a consensus-based organization, it was already hard enough to get consensus with the Russians, even when we were nominally cooperating with them. It's much harder now. And I think people are beginning to write about and study just sort of an alliance of adversaries that are breaking out. Russia and China are, of course, as close as they've been since 1950. That's one of the conclusions of the U.S. intelligence community. You now see, of course, Russian soldiers in Syria. They've been allowed into the Middle East. They arguably are very much looking the other way when chemical weapons are used in Syria. And now Iran, which I would argue always had a healthy relationship, is now more or less overtly sending drones to the Russians in Syria.

So we have proliferation going on among all of these different parties. I think it's a tremendous challenge for the United States to try and go through and do the blocking and tackling that's necessary at international organizations to try and hem them in. But I think we're, as Anthony said, in a new ballgame here, where we have to try and create new forums and new ways to try and restrict the spread of technology in these alliances, which I think are all working against the United States and the West.

SALAMA: Absolutely.

You know, you mentioned Iran, and obviously, this is something that FDD certainly looks at very closely, but also, you know, is in and out of the news these days as efforts to revive the JCPOA some would say are -- is on life support at this point, but -- and in particular with regard to the domestic situation, protests there and other domestic issues that have made for a challenging environment, not to mention as you just mentioned its assistance to Russia in Ukraine.

And now the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, says that Iran's enrichment level is at about 60 percent purity at its Fordow nuclear plant, which is essentially viewed -- it's not -- it's far short from the 90 percent that's needed for weapons-grade material, but it's largely viewed by Western nations as provocative because it's a site that's, like, buried in mountains in Iran and so it's been raising a lot of concern.

Andrea, I know you've looked at this quite closely. If you could give us a technical update on where Iran's program stands, just in terms of how worried should the West be right now? Obviously we are far from the levels of 2016, but it's also with efforts to try to get them back to the table, the administration keeps on saying that they hope that it will reverse it, there's a lot of talk about whether JCPOA was good, was not good, was helpful; anything that you can talk about -- talk us through on this?

STRICKER: Yes, I actually just participated in a dialogue with Israel and European countries, and the European parties are still committed to dialogue. They will not change their way unless Washington says that the deal is dead, that negotiations are over, that they're supporting regime change or the Iranian protesters.

So it's clear that unless Washington makes the call that the European parties won't be undertaking the snapback of U.N. sanctions against Iran.

But in a nutshell on the technical side, the -- Iran's breakout time -- that's the time it would take to make weapons-grade uranium, it's actually zero because they could use the 60 percent enriched uranium in nuclear weapons. Not ideal, but they could do it, so they have enough for about one and a half nuclear weapons of 60 percent. They have enough weapons-grade uranium -- or enough enriched uranium to produce weapons-grade uranium for four weapons within a month, a fifth weapon within the second month, and a sixth within the third month.

We just recently heard they'll produce their HEU underground at Fordow and in around 2,600 advanced centrifuges.

So the Fordow site was originally planned in their -- in their pre-2003 nuclear weapons program to be the site where they would make weapons-grade uranium for the weapons. So it's kind of interesting to see that they're now sort of configuring Fordow for what they had originally planned for a breakout prior to 2003.

And there hasn't been IAEA monitoring of their advanced centrifuge production since February 2021. We have little idea if there's a secret enrichment plant, for example; they would just need a few hundred of those advanced centrifuges to facilitate a rapid breakout.

And with a good ISIS that I still work with on technical assessments, we estimate that they could explode a crude nuclear device in under six months, and

they -- it would take one year or so to fit it on a missile, but the demonstration test is what you would worry about, because it would really change the game in the Middle East.

And then that's not to mention they're not complying with the IAEA safeguards investigation that's been going on for four years now into possible breaches of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

And truly I think policy appears asleep at the wheel as Iran is just moving closer to the nuclear threshold. We're trying to revive an expiring deal that is for all practical purposes technically obsolete at this point, and trying to propose to give money to a regime that is killing its own people, the people clearly don't want this regime in power anymore.

SALAMA: Anthony, Michael, chime in, because the administration argues that the JCPOA was never perfect, it needed improvement, but it's better to have an agreement in place than none. After we, the U.S., withdrew under the Trump administration, they argued that that is when Iran really kickstarted and put into high gear its efforts and that there were some checks previously when we were a part of JCPOA, despite the fact that the agreement needed a lot of improvement.

And so, what are your views? Obviously, now with everything that's going on, there is concern that we reached a point of no return. The administration still kind of speaks optimistically, although not for the foreseeable -- not in the immediate future, of seeing an agreement, but they do hope that an agreement will be possible so long as Iran kind of comes back to the table and curtails its enrichment.

Is that just a pipe dream at this point? What are -- what are -- what is your view?

ALLEN: It's really hard to see Iran coming back to the table. And if they come back to the table it's hard to imagine them coming in good faith.

They are under severe stress, like I -- like I tried to explain earlier. I believe in the age of a geopolitical competition and what they viewed through the Russia-Ukraine context they may be concluding that we do need a nuclear weapon, especially given the protests that are ongoing right now.

Of course, the past is the past. I wish they had maintained a maximum-pressure campaign and then tried to pivot to negotiations. I know they were going to go to negotiations regardless, but there was no lengthen and strengthen of the deal like so many people had promised two years ago.

I think there was too much zeal to strike a deal as soon as possible and get this arrangement back in place and it just hasn't worked. I don't think the Iranians truly want a deal. I know a lot is going on internally inside the regime.

And so, we're going to watch this closely and see how it affects the prospects for nuclear negotiations. But I'm not optimistic that this going to come to any place.

SALAMA: Whether or not they want to deal, you know, we could sit and argue about that. But, you know, they most likely want sanctions relief because it's putting

a lot of strain on them domestically. And we could say the same about the North Koreans as well, which we'll talk about in a second.

So, you know, where's the middle ground here between, you know, wanting a nuclear weapon, needing sanctions relief and some sort of economic stability? And how does the administration approach that in a way that is alluring enough for them to come to the table and want to make -- get -- make an agreement, put something on paper?

RUGGIERO: Yes, we just make two points though, is that the IAEA investigation, the current on safeguards indicates that Iran was not fully compliant, right? That they had done things that they were not truthful about. And then many of the nuclear expansions happened in November 2020, after, you know, President Biden was elected, right? So, I think it's clear that some of that happened, certainly, some things happened after the withdrawal.

But I agree that the conversation that's not happening, right? JCPOA proponents and opponents, there's a lot of arguments back and forth. And either side, they're not going to convince the other, right? But there's also this conversation that needs to happen about the danger of the status quo, right? We don't have, really, a robust sanctions campaign against Iran. And those of us who work on North Korea know what it looks like when you don't -- when you sort of sit back, it's called the Strategic Patience Policy that the Obama administration had with regard to North Korea.

And the fact that North Korea was able to do all of those nuclear and missile tests in 2017 and 2018, they had that buffer, that cushion, during the Obama administration where they were able to expand their programs without people really paying attention to it.

So that's the -- the problem I see, which is that we, sort of, fight about whether we should be back in the deal and not have a conversation of, "OK, neither side wants to give right now. Should we be going back to full sanctions against Iran, or some version therein so that we don't allow Iran to just continue this program with no real guardrails?"

SALAMA: I mean, I guess it's -- it's, you know, the repeated argument by the administration now is "Something is better than nothing." But when you're at 60 percent enrichment, in certain facilities, it doesn't bode well for any future agreement. And so what could come next?

I mean, you know, you've all -- you've all been policy advisers to presidents. You know, what -- what do you go then and tell the president is your next step to try to prevent this from really escalating into potential weapons-grade -- a weapons-grade level?

(RUGGIERO): I would -- I would say the special -- the special envoy, right, I think recently, this week, came out and made the comment that, you know, to that question, "When is enough enough; when do you move in a different direction," and, sort of, suggested this is a technical assessment, right? Whenever nonproliferation experts make that determination, that's wrong. This is a public policy discussion. It is a discussion that should be ongoing in the National Security Council, where they're working through different options, you know, the -- the famous, like, low, medium, and high, and having conversations that President Biden himself is chairing and making a decision and -- and moving in a different direction.

This is not for, you know, technical experts to make the -- certainly, that would be an input, But that's not the only factor here. This is a public policy discussion that frankly is not happening because either we're distracted or people are OK with the status quo inside this government.

SALAMA: I really quickly want to turn to North Korea before we start taking audience questions. Just, North Korea has tested a record number of missiles this year, despite -- in spite of sanctions. And so I'm curious to hear where do you all think they're getting their necessary components from? Is it China or is it elsewhere?

And ever since efforts to get them to the table a few years ago, you know, they've obviously -- they've obviously put their program into -- in fast forward. There -- there -- you know, there was one episode with the missile being fired over Japan that was -- you know, caused some very scary moments for our ally.

And so where do we go from here with regard to North Korea? And what's your analysis in general of their program at this stage?

RUGGIERO: So...

SALAMA: You were very closely involved in that process, so definitely, Anthony...

(LAUGHTER)

RUGGIERO: For a long time. But I would just say, you know, the myth of the robust North Korea sanctions regime, I think I have to start there. We don't have a robust North Korea sanctions regime. We only had it for three, or two and a half years, 2016, at the end of the Obama administration, when they realized the error of strategic patience; 2017 and early 2018.

And so what did that produce? That produced leader-level discussions, right? We can have a debate of what that approach was. Currently, we don't really have a robust sanctions campaign.

If you just think about this month, North Korea did two ICBM tests. We had one sanction against North Korea, against two individuals that worked for the national airline in China, and not the entire network, right?

So that's a problem. We're not actually sanctioning North Korea.

Now, people will come back and, not to pre-empt...

SALAMA: I just wanted -- sorry to interrupt you...

RUGGIERO: Yeah.

SALAMA: ... but I want to -- I want to clarify. So you're saying that you want to see more sanctions and...

RUGGIERO: Correct, yeah.

SALAMA: ... and it's not about implementation of the sanctions...

RUGGIERO: It's both, yeah.

SALAMA: ... or enforcement -- I'm sorry -- of the sanctions.

RUGGIERO: No, I think it's both. I mean, I think...

SALAMA: So what's left to sanction then?

RUGGIERO: There's a lot left to sanctions. So I'll just say...

SALAMA: Give us examples.

RUGGIERO: ... that I think a lot of people -- I think a lot of people say, "Well, it didn't de-nuclearize them, the sanctions, so why should we do it?"

We should do it because it reduces their revenue streams, right? Right now, North Korea is getting -- and this is the Biden administration saying this earlier this year -- hundreds of millions of dollars from overseas laborers, right, up to 100,000 of which are in China. They could target that.

We know that North Korea sells coal, which is prohibited by the United Nations. And they get probably millions of dollars from that. So there are these areas.

The other thing is, to your question on implementation, is you don't sanction two individuals and then leave their network in place. There is not this effort to basically dismantle these -- these networks. So that's the pressure side.

I'll just also point out, on the diplomatic side, we're in big trouble, too, right? Because the U.N. is -- Russia and China won't let anything happen there. So in its place our U.S. mission to the U.N. have issued these strongly worded statements that are great, and there's nothing objectionable to them, and there's 10 statements that they've issued. But in only four of them a majority of the Security Council members have joined.

And then, when you look and you dig in, like, countries like the UAE, who has Iran, that's following the same North Korea pathway, they've only joined five of them. India has only joined the last three. G7 members like Canada, Germany and Italy have only joined one statement in March. And I can go on and on, but it really indicates that there's a diplomatic problem here, whereas back in that -- that three-year period, we were getting countries to stop their diplomatic and their commercial relationship with North Korea.

So we've got to reinvigorate the pressure campaign. We're not doing that now. I don't know if it's because we're distracted or we're waiting for a nuclear test so we can have this big sanction that comes out. It's not clear to me.

SALAMA: But, sorry to beat a dead horse here, but...

RUGGIERO: Sure.

SALAMA: So it's not like the administration has lifted any of those sanctions. You're saying that what -- what happened, they came to the table because of the intense sanctions regime that was in place under the previous administration. Well, we haven't lifted those sanctions. This administration is very -- and they've added a couple more. Whether or not you think they're impactful, that's another discussion.

But why -- you know, are they -- are they finding ways around, to operate around the sanctions that were in place because a few years have passed?

I mean, that -- that's what I'm -- that's what I'm not understanding from your point, is -- is why, if the strain is still there, and if it still exists, then why wouldn't they be pressured to come to the table now, after several years of, sort of, being cut off from the outside world?

RUGGIERO: Well, I don't think the strain is there. I mean, I guess my point would be we're talking about expert countries that can avoid these sanctions, Russia, China, Iran and North Korea, right?

They -- they are -- their efforts are to avoid the impacts of sanctions. And the only way -- sanctions export controls. The only way those will be effective is if the United States is -- we're doing it in the Russia context with Ukraine -- but if we're continually stopping all of those avenues. If North Korea can get hundreds of millions of dollars from their export of overseas laborers, then Kim does not face the -- the decision, "Do I spend this money on my prohibited programs? Do I spend it for the elites, to keep them happy, or for my military?"

That's the dynamic that we're not forcing now with Kim.

SALAMA: Um-hmm. I have 17 more questions on this issue, but I'm going to definitely turn it to the audience.

Eager to hear your thoughts. Please just, when you're called on, remember to introduce yourself, tell us who you are, where you work.

I see a woman in the front row here. Yes?

QUESTION: Thank you. Laura Kelly. I cover foreign policy for The Hill.

If I may be so bold to ask two questions, the Ukrainians have made allegations that Russia is helping Iran with its nuclear weapons program in exchange for the drones. I wonder if any of you have followed this, if -- if you have any insight onto this.

And then, just looking at the deterrents for nuclear weapons use, the Biden Administration has said they warned privately to the Russians against using a nuclear weapon in Ukraine, but given that, the paradigm was mutual destruction of nuclear weapons use, but that paradigm has kind of shifted. What are -- what do you all think that the deterrence is now against nuclear weapons use, whether it be Russia or whether it be Iran or whether it be North Korea? Thank you.

STRICKER: Great questions. Who wants to jump in? Please, go for it.

(ALLEN): Well, on the second point -- I'll let one of you all handle the first one, the -- yes, well, I still think Russia is deterred from using a nuclear weapon against the United States. I think we've successfully deterred them. They made threats on February 24th, but we didn't see any actions in that regard. They've obviously rattled their sabers on numerous occasions since then. I think we've successfully messaged to them that it would of course be the end of their regime were they to use them.

Why? Because even if it's true, what you read in the papers, that we would only use conventional weapons on the Russian forces that are within Ukraine, that could arguably destroy their army, even more so than the Ukrainians are already

doing. So I still think some measure of deterrence is applicable and should govern most of our relations with them, even if, as you say, it's not all about mutually assured destruction anymore. It's also about a way for rogue regimes to get regime security.

I'll let one of you handle is Russia proliferating to Iran?

STRICKER: Yes, I think they had to walk back that initial report, the claim about a weapons program. We looked at it, we didn't see anything. It sounded more like nuclear field assistance, maybe relating to Bushehr, but always worth keeping an eye on because post-Soviet experts have helped Iran, maybe or maybe not without state knowledge. So -- and they were helping on the weaponization effort.

So it's always worth keeping an eye out on that one.

SALAMA: Yes, right here?

QUESTION: Hello, Eunjung Cho with the Voice of America. Two weeks ago there was a reporting coming out of the Middle East saying that North Korea is helping Hezbollah produce chemical weapons by injecting toxic chemical into missiles. My question is is North Korea a proliferating chemical agents and WMD to actors and countries in the Middle East? Is North Korea a major proliferator now, even during COVID?

SALAMA: Thank you.

RUGGIERO: Well, yes, I mean, there used to be a time we called them the -- I think the phrase was the foremost global proliferation threat from North Korea. I think North Korea has certainly exported the -- on the missile side, they have done some, and I think they would be willing to do some on the WMD side, it just would depend -- there would be a bunch of factors associated with that.

I think going back to the question about whether Russia is helping Iran with their nuclear weapons program, I would be worried about -- given the close relationship with the -- between North Korea and Iran, on the ballistic missile side, that that starts to bleed into the nuclear realm.

But as we talked about earlier, as we start to think about what the counterproliferation, nonproliferation space looks like in the post-Ukraine war, as we start to get our allies together, allies and partners together, there will be another group that will start to get together. And I'm sure they will, in some instances, be willing to share things. And so, it will be imperative on us to make it harder for them to do that.

SALAMA: Anyone else have a -- yes, sir?

QUESTION: Hi, (Sangmin Lee. I'm from Radio Free Asia. I have additional question about North Korea to Mr. Ruggiero.

You mention about the impact (inaudible) of a robust sanction regime against North Korea to stop their behavior to move (inaudible) locations. And then, however, as you know China and Russia is reluctant to limit U.N. sanction against North Korea, so they help (inaudible) a sanction evasion for North Korea.

So, given the situation do you think it's impactful that we have more kind of a unilateral sanction against North Korea to deter their propagation?

RUGGIERO: Well, the good news is that we don't need China and Russia, right? I mean, they're the ones cheating on the U.N. sanctions and the U.S. sanctions.

So, I mean, I think we have to be clear that we don't need to go through the U.N. Security Council in order to implement these sanctions. You know, the president has his own executive authorities, he has authorities from Congress, which passed by three times by overwhelming bipartisan margins. So, he can implement those sanctions now.

The other thing I neglected to say earlier is the reason that that three-year periods was so impactful was because President Obama and President Trump, to their credit, were willing to dispel conventional notion and go after Chinese banks, Chinese companies and Chinese individuals.

They went after them (inaudible). And despite what people suggested, that the Chinese would stop their cooperation with us, they actually implemented cooperation. They stopped China -- North Korea from getting certain things inside of China. So, we need to go back to that.

We know -- that's why I go back. And certainly we can have a debate over the sanctions that were done this year, but you go after two individuals in China, they certainly were probably working with other Chinese companies and individuals and Chinese banks. So start to go after those and then you'll start to see the implementation within China increase.

SALAMA: I'm happy, actually, that you asked that question, because, you know, although it's not part of our list, one of the most significant changes to the geostrategic environment that's happened since the turn of the century is the rise of China. And I'm curious to hear from you all where China plays into all of this, not just in assisting, say, North Korea or Russia, but also just in terms of its own activities and what we know, how much should we be concerned about what China has going on in the proliferation space?

ALLEN: Well, I can start. I'll defer to you all on China's proliferation activities.

I agree with Anthony that there are many reasons why the United States can implement and enforce sanctions on its own. Generally, it would be nice if we had more cooperation from others around the world, certainly the Chinese. We tried to induce them in the Bush years and it was great to hear what Anthony just said about late Obama, early Trump. But I think here in the age of the geopolitical competition with China at the top of the list, we have so many different issues going on with them I'm afraid that counterproliferation in North Korea starts to fall to the bottom.

I think at the top of the list for the administration is obviously Taiwan and our diplomatic presence in Asia, but also they've explicitly said that the pandemic and climate change and certain economic issues are well further up the list.

So, while I think everyone's worried about the DPRK, I think there's a conundrum on what to do policy-wise. And it falls to the bottom of the list when you have a busy bilateral agenda with China.

SALAMA: I mean, the previous administration had tried to loop China into sort of a trilateral arms control talks with -- with Russia. Obviously, that was before the invasion of Ukraine. But is something like that just completely unrealistic, or do you think you could actually make it enticing for China to get involved in -- in talks like that?

ALLEN: I think it's really hard, but I mean, I think they would...

RUGGIERO: Yeah.

ALLEN: ... do it at some level, but whether they would be effective and really pursue it is a totally different question.

RUGGIERO: Right, and if -- if they're not willing to pursue it and we have a Russia that's not willing to allow inspections under New START, which is -- which is what they should be allowing, if that starts to happen as China is expanding its nuclear program exponentially, right, we're going to have to have -- start having a debate domestically in the United States of, what's the right level for our own nuclear forces, right? The -- the right level for own nuclear forces, because we're -- we're -- we're moving into uncharted territory to have to deter two nuclear peers, whereas during the Cold War it was only one. Two nuclear peers with a North Korea and possibly a -- an Iran out there at some level. So we're going to have to have that debate as well about, you know, is the New START level the proper level for our nuclear forces?

SALAMA: Anyone else have any questions? Yes, sir?

QUESTION: Hi. Dylan Jones, National Nuclear Security Administration. I just want to go back to what we started this conversation with, or sort of started with. I was curious, where -- is it just the two of you that were denied the ability to participate from the OPCW, or was it all outside entities? And then a second question is, we've seen in the past Russia actively trying to undermine, you know, building in attribution capabilities to the OPCW and they had people arrested for spying and trying to infiltrate OPCW networks, et cetera, even though they're already on the inside, which is weird. But anyway, what -- to what level do you still see Russian meddling in the operations of the OPCW on a day-to-day basis? Thank you.

SALAMA: (inaudible) question...

STRICKER: So apparently, somewhere around 75-plus NGOs were admitted to -- they -- that had been previously admitted to the -- the conference. It was just us, the only American group, and then several, like six or seven Syrian human rights groups that were vetoed. We -- we were told by the State Department that it was Iran, Russia or Syria or some combination of those, and...

RUGGIERO: And then I think to, you know, a version of your question about, you know, Russia's, you know, operations and the OPCW -- and I know Vivian asked that earlier and we didn't get to it -- is you know, if there's chemical weapons use in Ukraine, right, some of the lessons that we learn -- have learned already from how Russia has tried to obstruct or, you know, whitewash that --- that effort by the OPCW to collect evidence, trying to blame it on the opposition, have an entire disinformation campaign, I mean, we should be prepared for that. That is what is going to happen in Ukraine. It's not going to be cut and dried -- I mean, if it's cut and dried, that's great. Well, not great, but you know, in terms of attribution, that'll be good.

But the fact is, is that it's not going to be cut and dry; it's going to be very messy. The Russians know what they're doing. They're going to have a plan in place already beforehand. They're going to try and either stage things or blame the -- the Ukrainian side or someone else, the United States, maybe. You know, we see this on the biological weapon side, claiming that we're building biological weapons in Ukraine, which is ridiculous.

(UNKNOWN): Right.

RUGGIERO: So -- so there is different areas there that we can learn lessons from.

SALAMA: I'm curious, you know, there -- we've heard a lot of saber-rattling from Vladimir Putin. I -- I mean, typically, you hear it from him. It's not new or exclusive to this year, but he has -- he has threatened the use of nuclear weapons to defend his country a -- a few times this year. The administration assures us that while the threats are very serious and they take it very seriously, they haven't seen movement yet in that direction to suggest an imminent threat of the use of nuclear weapons. And I -- I'm curious if any of you have any insights or a good read on where -- how close Russia is, or whether or not there is reason for concern beyond just the fact that any kind of threats of use of nuclear weapons is obviously very disconcerting.

ALLEN: Well, part of this is an intelligence question.

SALAMA: Sure.

ALLEN: And as far as I know, from the open source, I have a feeling this kind of stuff would leak. This is classic indications and warning in the intelligence community. This is a mission that goes back at least to the very beginning of the Cold War, at least when the Soviet Union got the atomic bomb. And I think that the U.S. intelligence community is staring at literally hundreds of -- of sites, of everything else that you -- people, everything else that you can imagine. They have a long list of indicators, and I think that the United States intelligence community would have a good idea if they were to start moving in that direction.

The -- it has gotten out and -- and I think even been said on the record that the -- the occasions in which Putin has threatened nuclear weapons, we've seen no indication that he's begun to ready them for any kind of use. Now, it's harder to see tactical than strategic, so I'm not saying we're out of the woods here, but I have not seen anything in the open source that indicates that they're moving in that direction.

SALAMA: Well, and one of the really extraordinary things about the administration's approach to confronting Russia in this conflict is the declassification of intelligence and the public calling out of Russia's active -- malign activities. You'd think if they saw any reason for concern on the nuclear front, you know, we'd be doing drills every day and -- and not sort of...

ALLEN: You're right. The...

SALAMA: ... living our lives.

ALLEN: The -- the intelligence that people got by way of their iPhone and send it on Twitter during the conventional buildup...

STRICKER: Yeah.

ALLEN: ... is a revolution for U.S. intelligence.

SALAMA: Absolutely.

ALLEN: I see Jennifer Jacobs out there. She's ready to...

QUESTION: I -- can I ask you (inaudible)?

SALAMA: Please, Jennifer.

QUESTION: (inaudible) we just broke the news -- I'm a reporter (inaudible).

SALAMA: One second. The mike's coming to you.

QUESTION: Thanks. I'm Jennifer Jacobs from Bloomberg News. We just broke the news that Treasury is going to announce some new sanctions today on North Korea; not all that clear on what they're sanctioning. And I know you just said there's still plenty left to sanction.

RUGGIERO: That's right.

QUESTION: Can any of you elaborate on what you think, what else could be sanctioned? Is there anything -- any room to sanction on, say, cyber crimes or cryptocurrency theft, or something along those lines, or just any other revenue streams that you can think of? Thanks.

RUGGIERO: Yeah, I mean, well, I -- I guess you -- you let me know what the rest my day will look like.

ALLEN: He's so excited. He can't wait. He can't wait.

RUGGIERO: I have -- I have this -- a whole spreadsheet that -- that -- that I need to update today.

SALAMA: You've been scooped.

RUGGIERO: Exactly, exactly. But I mean, I would say all of the above, the things that I mentioned, as well. But I -- for me in particular, I'll be looking at sort of digging into, rather than just looking at the numbers or what they're going after, but looking at the network. Are they just trying to dismantle a network? Like, I failed to mention when -- when they talked about the two individuals they sanctioned earlier this month, and one of them, they mentioned that -- that -- that that person worked with a Chinese company. And so to me, unless China has shut down that company or done something behind the scenes that we've asked them to do, why was that Chinese company not sanctioned? So I'll -- I'll be trying to dig into some of that. But you know, we'll see how large the sanctions are from a numbers perspective, and then how impactful. I -- you know, to me, I think going after...

I -- I also would caution that December is traditionally the time where the United States' focus is back on human rights and does human rights sanctions. So last year, the Biden administration only did one sanction against North Korea, and it was as part of a December rollout against the global human rights

activities. So human rights certainly is important and we should be doing more in that case. I'm -- I -- I hope it's not just that, but we'll have to see.

SALAMA: Well, I now have to go chase Bloomberg's scoop, so we're going to end it there. Thank you so much to our panels. We just scratched the surface of this very fascinating discussion. Thank you all for your great questions, and to FDD for hosting us. Have a great day.

(APPLAUSE)

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