



Virtual Event | A Conversation on Strategic Forces with Rep. Mike Turner

TRANSCRIPT

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- Mike Turner, *Representative Mike Turner, U.S. Representative, Ohio's 10th District and Ranking Member for the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Strategic Forces*
- Rebecca Heinrichs, *Senior Fellow, Hudson Institute*

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A video of the event is available: <https://www.hudson.org/events/1984-virtual-event-a-conversation-on-strategic-forces-with-rep-mike-turner72021>

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Rebecca Heinrichs:

Hello and welcome to this event with Hudson Institute. My name is Rebecca Heinrichs. I am a senior fellow here at Hudson, and today I have the pleasure of being joined for a conversation with Congressman Mike Turner. Congressman Turner represents the 23rd district in Ohio. Of course, that's home of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Congressman Turner is also the ranking member of the important Strategic Forces Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, which has jurisdiction over our U.S. missile defense programs, our nuclear weapons and DOD intel programs, some of which we will be discussing today. Congressman Turner, thank you so much for joining us today.

Congressman Mike Turner:

Thank you. And Rebecca, I want to thank you. I appreciate both your expertise and your contribution to the overall dialogue of policy. Your legacy of work on Capitol Hill remains and we appreciate that you continue to be engaged on these important topics. And I want to thank the Hudson Institute, obviously, because not only do they serve as a convener of our ability to come together and have dialogue with people in the thought community, academic community, Capitol Hill policymakers, and the administration, they also are a great contributor to the substance that we need. Whenever we take up a debate, you can look to the Hudson Institute for sources of substantive information to be able to guide you through the debate and in the discussion of really what is Congress doing, what are the current events and what is happening on these important topics. So, Rebecca, thank you. And thank you the Hudson's too.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

Thank you so much, sir. We certainly appreciate that here at Hudson. I'm going to go ahead and set the table for the threat context that we find ourselves in today, and then turn over and just kick off our conversation. Of course, we are now in an era of major power competition, not just with one major power, China, but two with the Russian Federation as well. We have the persistent problem of rogue state actors, nuclear North Korea, and then Iran as well, a rogue state on the brink of having a nuclear weapons capability and a persistent problem for the United States in the Middle East, and as proliferators, and that pertains to Iran and North Korea.

And then we have the problem of just global proliferation of missile technology. Missiles are becoming increasingly difficult to detect and to intersect. And at the same time, the United States is seeking to develop a missile defense architecture that meets the needs of the threats for today and of our national defenses priorities.

So with that, I'm going to start with the missile defense topic, and then we'll move on from there. Congressmen, we don't have the Biden Administration's missile defense review policy document at this point. It's still too early. But we do have some budget numbers. So if you could tell us about where you think the status of missile defense in the Biden Administration is, and do you see some things to be encouraged about and some things to be concerned about?

Congressman Mike Turner:

Sure. Yes. Well, I think what's very disturbing, as you said, setting the table for this issue is that we're receiving budgetary numbers from the Biden Administration that are flat lining our defense. Right now, we're in an area where we need to be investing in modernization, and really across all systems. We had the issue of Afghanistan, Iraq, and then of course, sequestration that significantly both shifted our priorities, and then even with sequestration, compromised our readiness and put off a lot of the

modernization that was necessary just with our current systems. We're now in a situation where our adversaries are taking advantage of that, that they have continued modernization and we're looking at their technologies that could be leapfrogging the United States technology. So we can't just merely plot a course from where we were and just re-engage on our modernization that we had planned.

Giving us flat lined budgets doesn't really give us an ability to jump ahead to that type of technology. Now on the modernization that was on the table that had not been done, we're at critical paths, both for our nuclear weapons winterization and for missile defense modernization. We went through a debacle with the Missile Defense Agency where the redesigned kill vehicle had to be scrapped. It's a travesty. And now we're back with the Missile Defense Agency looking to the next generation interceptor and hoping, at the end of this decade, to be able to place that interceptor in our ground-based system and continue to fill the need that we have to be able to look to intercepting intercontinental ballistic missiles. That's an expense, obviously. We're not just talking about maintenance. We're not just talking about life extension. We're talking about development and innovativeness that is necessary to be able to accomplish these types of modernizations. Those take money and funds.

While we look to what our adversaries are doing, we also have to be concerned about these leapfrog technologies. Russia has actually fielded the hypersonic technology. China has been developing hypersonic technology. We don't have in place what is necessary to ensure that we, both even on the sensing side and the response side, that we can think that we're advancing our ability to defend against such weapons. And at the same time, we're not fielding them ourselves. So those types of areas where we have voids, where we have actual weapons systems that our adversaries are pursuing and deploying come with a high price, and they certainly cannot be accomplished on flat line budget.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

And just for our viewers, take too the top line now for the Missile Defense Agency's at \$8.9 billion, which is the same number as the Missile Defense Agency's budget in 2008 back when I was a Hill staffer working these issues for a Congressman on the House Armed Services Committee. So the number, the top line actually, hasn't changed. Here we are dealing with major powers and trying to adapt our missile defense systems in the regional context and then also for homeland defense.

Congressman, you talked about the debacle of the RKV and how we're now pursuing the next generation interceptor. What is your stance about the priority of sustaining the ground-based midcourse defense system? Because of course, the next generation interceptor is still going to go into the overall GMD system and it's going to complement those GBIs that are still in the ground. Are you satisfied so far with what you're seeing with the prioritization of sustaining the GMD program, even as we pursue NGI? Or do you see a conflict there or not sustainable, I guess, budget numbers?

Congressman Mike Turner:

I think the concern goes to the issue that you said when you were laying out your opening of the proliferation of missiles and missile technology by our adversaries, and really from all powers around the world, those that there should be an increased focus on missile defense, not just for being able to respond to ICBMs as the ground-based system does. But even in THAAD and Aegis, even looking to how we might be able to incorporate our partnership that we have with Israel and the development of the Iron Dome, their Arrow and David's Sling. The Iron Dome itself has had such a great impact on missile defense policy and missile defense technology that we should be looking at ways in which we can implement that technology in addition to Patriot technology to assist ourselves to respond to this proliferation of the missile threat.

I just want to say for a moment, what's happened in Israel has helped greatly the debate. As you know from when you are on Capitol Hill, we used to deal with the policy issues of the arguments of missile defense won't work, it's too expensive, it's provocative. What Israel has shown by their deployment of the Iron Dome is it's not a provocative system. It's clearly a defensive system. It's actually de-escalatory. As they've used the Iron Dome, it has given them time and space to be able to measure their response as opposed to if they did not have missile defense technology, what they would have to do the moment of barrage was facing the Israeli people. And then obviously it is cost-effective because the amount of damage and loss of life that is prevented is offset on those costs. And then it works. It works unbelievably, and we've been able to see that.

So, it almost gets to the point where not implementing an active missile defense system or policy is almost immoral because you're saying that you're going to leave both your populations, your infrastructure, and your critical capabilities at risk.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

That's a great point, sir, especially about the de-escalatory nature of missile defense and how Israel always paints an unfortunate picture that we have to see it whenever they're on the receiving end of aggression, but that not only saves Israeli lives, but Palestinian lives as well because of their ability to be restrained in that way.

That brings us to another point. The Biden Administration, or President Biden, I should say, just authorized US attacks, defensive attacks against Iranian backed proxies in Iraq and Syria. It comes on the heels of this media reporting, and maybe you've already been receiving some briefings, but there's been media reporting that the Biden Administration is going to be withdrawing some missile defense systems from the Middle East. The pretext, of course, is that we're shifting to the Indo-Pacific theater and so we can't afford to have Patriot systems and THAAD systems, other missile defense systems that we've had deployed throughout the Middle East. What do you make of that? Is that smart policy? And do you think that, that makes sense?

Congressman Mike Turner:

This really underscores the problem that we have with the lack of plentiful missile defense assets. So these decisions that are being made are not to the advantage of our troops or to our forward deployed facilities. What we've seen before is our attempt to get advanced warning so that we can relocate troops, shelter in place and to prevent casualties. That we should be able to deploy missile defense technology that we have, that we know works, in ways that would protect our service members and women. What I think we're seeing here is not just the delivery systems themselves, but also that we need to invest in more missiles so that we have the ability to reload, that we don't have a concern that a barrage would leave us at a disadvantage.

This is all part of the balance that we need that's not present in this president's budget. Having sufficient enough missiles to be able to even think of taking the Aegis system that's at sea and taking it to a shore in meaningful way. As you know, it's been installed in Romania, we're installing one in Poland. There's discussions as to where else it would be helpful for Aegis to be located. But again, our limitation is the investment and actually producing the missiles. And as Israel shows us every time you indicated that they're under attack, these missiles are priceless.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

And I think it's, especially that the point you just made about how it's raises even just moral questions about if we're going to have these troops deployed there providing the important work that they're

doing, that they should have the air missile defenses that they need so that they're not vulnerable. And then also those missile defense systems, at least in the case of Saudi Arabia, especially, were serving a deterrent purposes as well. And so they actually, to my mind, were providing us a pretty good bang for our buck for the mission that they were providing actually to free us up so that we can focus on other critical theaters. So-

Congressman Mike Turner:

I think that's a very good point there, by the way. And I do want to underscore that missile defense also has a deterrent effect. Because if an adversary does not believe or doesn't have high confidence that a missile that is shot will hit its target, they will have exposed themselves by indicating that, one, they have nefarious intent. And certainly we'll know the location from where the missile was coming from and they will have been escalatory. And certainly, missile defense is not our only assets that we look to, following missile defense certainly would be kinetic ordinance to both punish and takeout whatever threat that we had to arise to with missile defense.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

Certainly, an offense defense mix to their systems. And they provided an active defense there as well. Well, so the previous administration in their missile defense review, they tried to get at some of these problems that we just laid out. You mentioned the debacle of the RKV that happened during the previous administration. And then there were some other programs that were in that missile defense review that didn't come into fruition. The additional GBIs that President Trump wanted to be deployed were not deployed because of the debacle of the RKV program.

And it really leaves the Biden Administration with all different kinds of directions that they want to take the missile defense portfolio. There's some purely rumors at this point now that the Biden administration might be focusing on some of these more advanced programs for this notion of something to trade for arms control with the Russians. And then you see in scholarship, there's always some pressure to include missile defense on the table in any future arms control treaty with the Russian Federation. What is your view of that? And do you share a concern that some of these more advanced programs could be on the table for negotiations?

Congressman Mike Turner:

I think there needs to be an absolute red line on any missile defense assets being part of any arms control negotiations. And Russia has, of course, mentioned this before, and let's just loosely translate what that means. Russia says, I don't want you to have missile defense because I want it to be easier to bomb you. Now, I don't know how that could be influential to anybody and anybody could be persuaded by that. I think what we should look at, especially since Russia itself has deployed missile defense. Moscow today is protected by a missile defense system. What we need to look at are the threatening systems that Russia is now deploying, the exotics as people call them. They have not merely modernized their system, they've deployed weapons unlike weapons anyone has ever seen before. Skyfall, which is this nuclear cruise missile that can orbit the earth.

Poseidon, that is to go under the water and pop up on a coastal city is nuclear capable. The hypersonics that they've deployed, the violations of the INF Treaty which ultimately ended up in deploying new missiles with new capabilities that Russia had. And we're seeing even the classified [inaudible 00:15:58] additional development by Russia of weapons and weapons systems that are nuclear and nuclear capable that show an intent that's beyond just deterrence. And I think that's what we have to be concerned with and that certainly should bring us back to the negotiating table with them. The other

thing that we have to make certain which you've raised is that our modernization of our nuclear program is for us to be able to keep the status quo. Both our infrastructure, just to be able to be capable of being nuclear weapons producing, our missile systems to make certain that our systems are capable.

And then of course, looking to modernization of our warheads. No one is going to enter into arms control negotiations with us if we are on our own, constraining our own capabilities for production or for deploying weapons and weapons systems. Not only will Russia be jumping ahead of us in capabilities, but we'll be slipping behind and that's not how you get to the bargaining table.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

And then that gets me thinking too, because major power competition, not just with Russia, but with China as well. And I just think about how fast things have happened. I was just rereading the Obama Nuclear Posture Review, which essentially says that Russia is no longer an adversary and basically great power competition is a thing of the past and now our major concerns are terrorists getting a nuclear weapon. And then here we are in 2021 where we are trying to take on these two great powers and deter both of them and be prepared to win in the event that deterrence breaks down. So when we're talking about arms control, we don't just have Russia anymore, we have China as well. And there's been a lot of talk about the development of China's nuclear program. Would you mind just talking to us about that? Because I think there's some misunderstanding. It's not just the number of China's nuclear weapons, but you mentioned intent. So how should we think about China in the context of these arms control agreements and how we should think about not just Russia again, but China?

Congressman Mike Turner:

Right. Well, I mean, if you look at Russia for example, in Crimea, excuse me, their nuclear weapons systems were a deterrent. Not just deterring others from using nuclear weapons or engaging in a nuclear strike, but they were a deterrent to restraining Russia's adventuresomeness. China by expanding their nuclear weapons are expanding it beyond just the issue of I'm deterring you from using nuclear weapons. I'm deterring you from attacking my nation itself. You get to the point where both with speed, proliferation, number, where you begin to wonder whether or not China will be using this as a pillar of its strength, as it then threatens its neighbors.

They are vastly expanding their nuclear weapons at all levels, but they're also implementing a triad that they had not had before. Their increase of delivery vehicle types, number of weapons themselves, all show that they're looking for parity with Russia, parity with the United States. Of course, that makes the world more dangerous because as we already know that China has looked in the South China Sea, threatening its neighbors. What we've seen what's happening in Hong Kong. The threats that they continuously make to Taiwan, you begin to be concerned that China may use this as a foundational strength to be able to threaten their neighbors in ways that we can't counter.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

And I think it's another... You mentioned that it's the number of, and the different kinds of delivery systems that they have as well. And that contributes to how robust their nuclear weapons arsenal is. And so then you look at ours. We have a nuclear triad, we have fewer kinds of delivery systems than even both China and Russia have all kinds of diverse ways and means of delivering nuclear weapons. So I want to kind of dig in now to our own nuclear modernization program. We are at a point now where we got to modernize basically everything. And we continue to hear that there really isn't anything that we can skimp on that this is just the bill has come and we need multiple administrations, Democratic and Republican administrations to hold the line and continue modernization, multiple congresses. We need

to be able to get this done. You recently had an exchange in the House Armed Services Committee with the acting secretary of the Navy, Thomas Harker, where he had a directive to unilaterally defund the sea-launch cruise missile SLCM, which was something that the Trump Administration had put in there to adapt to the threats that we're seeing today. Based on your discussions with other congressmen and DOD officials, do you think that there is sufficient support for that program now, and do you have an update on that since that hearing it?

What is the context which we should continue to think about this system? And then do you see still a need? I know that we're kind of getting ahead here. We don't have a nuclear posture review from the Biden Administration, but the threat landscape hasn't exactly improved since this weapon was deemed necessary.

Congressman Mike Turner:

Well, let's just go back to review that exchange as you were indicating. So the acting secretary of the Navy, and let's put a little emphasis on the word acting because it's certainly someone who shouldn't be exercising major policy decisions, issued a memorandum that instructed staff constructing the budget for 2023 to defund this sea-launched cruise missile. It is currently funded in this budget in 2022 as it came over in President Biden's submission. In his testimony, he claimed to have not spoken to anyone and just on his own had decided that this was a weapon system that was not going to continue. Now, everyone who's in any chain of command that looks at both Russia and China and our needs for flexible deterrence, it says that this is a weapon that is absolutely needed for what Russia is doing for its INF treaty violations, for the fact that we have very large nuclear weapons and no one is deterred, assuming that any action would have to have a very large response as opposed to a smaller response.

And so the number of reasons why this missile is necessary have been well-documented and throughout the Pentagon have been verified and is endorsed. The acting secretary, and in saying that he didn't speak to anyone, the secretary of defense and the chief of staff have all said that they were not involved in the decision making. Now what's horrible about this is that Biden was on his way to go meet with Putin to have their so-called summit. And on Biden's agenda was of course arms control, and here we have the acting secretary of the Navy basically telling Russia we're not going to field this. We're not going to develop it, we're going to defund it. And it certainly undermined the president of the United States. In fact, the acting secretary admitted that he understood that his actions had undermined the president of the United States.

What's clear here though is that we do have this undercurrent of policy in DOD that we always have to overcome that is looking for unilateral disarmament to the United States. Here, we have a missile that is a capability that we need, and we have this desire for arms control and it doesn't satisfy either. It would cancel a needed capability and of course it would unilaterally concede and get nothing from the Russians or China in any concessions in their systems. But that undercurrent of policy at DOD really has to be brought forward. I mean, as you said, the legal posture view is ongoing. Even the assessment of alternatives for the SLCM missile itself were ongoing. All of those would have been afforded by this. Now I've asked the secretary of defense to resend, to direct the acting secretary and the Navy to resend this direction.

I certainly hope that he does that because it sends the wrong message. But what's important here also is that if you look at all the systems that we have, you can't get anyone to agree to have negotiations with the power that is continually undermining its own nuclear weapons modernization programs and failing to accomplish it and unilaterally disarming itself. And as you said, the bill has become due in every category and we have to make certain that we live up to responsibility to ensure the security of the nuclear stockpile for the United States.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

So, in other words too, you're not making an argument against having discussions with the Russians, it's this idea of not fully modernizing our own nuclear force before we even begin doing that, and then taking entire categories of missile systems that they would disapprove of, that they would want us to get rid of, that we would do that preemptively even before we get anything in return from the Russians. And I thought that was a very interesting exchange, especially on the point of where the acting secretary of the Navy was unable to even give a reason why he chose that particular weapon system over any other category of weapon system. So I look forward to paying attention to this and seeing what the updates are as the Biden Administration continues to plow through their nuclear posture review.

Let's talk about plutonium pits. The Congress has mandated bipartisan agreement that we should have a two-site solution to produce ADM plutonium pits per year so that we can continue to have an active credible nuclear enterprise so that we have a credible deterrent force. We have not done that. We don't produce plutonium pits at that scale at all right now. And yet some of the criticisms are that despite the bipartisan support for this, the Department of Energy, the NNSA's agreement that we should have this and it's prudent to have this, that it can't be done at this rate and it's not feasible and we don't have enough money for that. What would you say to those particular criticisms?

Congressman Mike Turner:

Well, I mean, first off, we have to maintain the ability as being a nuclear weapons state to be able to produce nuclear weapons. We just said earlier, you can't get to the bargain table if we're not even a nation that's capable of doing that and all of our adversaries are capable of doing it. We may be the only nuclear weapon state that doesn't currently have the capability for full-scale production of nuclear weapons, and nuclear weapons to grade. It's not as if you make one and you put it in the ground and then you have one forever. The passage of time and the weather and conditions certainly degrade that capability and it has to be replaced. The two sites are obviously very important because if you have something happen to one and it was your sole production site, then you completely lose that capability. We'll be back to where we are now with no substantial ability to produce.

And then secondly, the ability, the number is what is currently charted for what we need for modernizing our current nuclear weapons stockpile and what it's projected to be. But also, again, if we don't have the ability, no one is going to come to the bargaining table with us and say, we're going to enter into negotiations with you even though we have no ability to produce. The other aspect of this, which is I think really, really important and that is just the advancement of knowledge. What we did 50 years ago, as we're doing it now and we're learning the processes, relearning them, it's going to be new personnel, it's going to be new systems, new physics and engineering studies that will be applied. We may learn new and better things that make that stockpile safer, that ensure that we have less risk overall. That advancement of knowledge is incredibly important, knowledge that otherwise we lose and dissipate.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

So, all of that has been outlined repeatedly and again, it's across administrations. It was the Obama Administration that began working on this, committing a nuclear modernization, though they didn't do so great towards the end of the second term of their administration, but they committed to having a nuclear modernization program. And then you've heard some commitments from Defense Secretary Austin, and Kathleen Hicks has also said that, that we need to be able to have a credible nuclear deterrent and this is certainly part of it. But every time they say that, it seems like there's new cost estimates that come out, especially on NNSA's, and then you have new ballooning costs over time. You have been conducting oversight over military budgets for many years. What is it about the NNSA in

particular budgetary practices that causes time and cost estimates to be inaccurate early in the process and then becomes more accurate, and then sometimes gets some people who are not inclined to support nuclear modernization anyway some sticker shock when those new numbers come out?

Congressman Mike Turner:

Well, you raised a very important point. There is two aspects, really. One is Congress, and that is that we keep changing our policies. We run one direction full blown and tell the NNSA to go this way and then we stop when we want to go the other direction. Obviously, there's increased costs associated with those starts and stops and insufficient funds and incomplete support.

Second is, and we're learning this now as we're going through the pit production and the renovation establishment of these facilities is that apparently the NNSA had been working with working numbers rather than the actual detailed contractor provided numbers. So where DOD would get a number from NNSA, and they would take that as the secure cost estimate, NNSA would take that as a working number. But that sticker shock, because we just had this conversation with them, was quite a shock to find that NNSA publicizes, gives numbers to Congress and DOD, that we think are like the actual numbers and NNSA saying, "No, no. That's just a working number until we actually figure out what the number is going to be."

So, we're going to try to get rid of that. We're going to try to strengthen the NNSA's system of what is required when they provide what they consider to be a working number, we're going to make an actual estimate. And we've been having conversations with them as to what do they need in resources to be able to do that work, that pen and paper work, early so that we can get more accurate numbers.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

Then of course, we know that the high-water mark for the cost of both operations and then for the modernization piece is still about 6%, 7% of national defense spending, percent of everything that we spend. So these numbers are big, but we're talking about our nuclear deterrent and so to my mind when I say sticker shock, it's always sticker shock relative to what we were expecting, but it's still a number that is feasible to my mind, and we should be able to find the money for it.

Which brings me to, I want to talk about just the nature of the bipartisan sentiment on these issues. Congress disagrees about a lot of things right now, and there's always disagreement between the two parties on spending and spending priorities. But what is your sense about the bipartisan support or disagreement on nuclear modernization in particular? And do you think that there's going to be some support there in moving forward and doing what is necessary to get the funding to get us over the line for another few years?

Congressman Mike Turner:

As you pointed out, both the Obama Administration and the Trump Administration continued funding for nuclear modernization. And we had to fight on the margins, we had to fight on how it was being allocated. But overall, the funding, the identification of the need for modernization has been recognized by both administrations.

In this administration, the first budget that came over continues that recognition of the need for modernization. So now it comes to the issue of how the money's allocated and how sufficient will the amount of monies that are appropriated annually be. I do think that we're going to continue to have in the Armed Services Committee and certainly in the House and the House floor opposition to the United States' nuclear modernization.

There are those who every year will vote for an amendment that would result in the unilateral disarmament of the United States in weapons and weapons systems. Unilateral, we'd be doing it alone, we'd get nothing from our adversaries. And disarmament, obviously eliminating a weapons system or class of weapons systems, that I'm certain is going to continue.

However, the vast majority of Congress will result, in I believe this NDAA fully funding the current priorities for modernization. I think we'll see in the next budget from the Biden Administration a continuation of that modernization. As long as we're able to hold NNSA accountable in continuing our timeframe, at least for the next several years, I think that the overall political debate will win on nuclear modernization.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

And going back to another threat topic that we talked about already in the beginning of our conversation, but sticking with this idea of bipartisanship or what different sentiments are... Because Iran, the Biden Administration does want to try to get back to the JCPOA, the Iran Deal. And then you see this uptick again in violence between the United States and Iranian proxies in the region even as they try to have this new Iran Deal.

What is your sense about where Congress is or where the political stomach is for pursuing this again? And then also something that I have long-tracked on this issue is this idea that missiles have got to be included in any kind of conversation with the Iranians about their nuclear program, because they really do go hand in glove. Can you talk to us about that?

Congressman Mike Turner:

So, as you know, the Iranian deal was technically flawed by four main reasons. One, they're very technical provisions of the bill that are necessary to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power that were limited in time. Two, it did not have an unlimited inspection regime as it had been touted, it wasn't "Anywhere, any place, anytime." And third, missiles were not included, which of course, as they pursue missile technology, ICBM technology, they can certainly have later their weapons systems catch up to their delivery vehicles.

It certainly shows intent. As they are saying, "We're not going to be developing a nuclear weapon," an ICBM is not for any conventional delivery for any conventional weapon. Clearly it shows what their intent is. And the fourth is, it doesn't include malign activities. That was a big issue for the Trump Administration is that they were in this deal and Iran continued to throughout the Middle East, attack their neighbors, engage in activities supporting terrorism.

As the Biden Administration does this, we've already heard from Iran that they do not intend to include missiles in this deal, they said that is a non-starter. I think obviously that needs to be an equal one with the fact that the provisions of the agreement itself should have no expiration.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

And then of course, it's the missile programs... You want to thwart that early on, the development of these missile programs. Because if you just look at a case study of the North Koreans, they get a nuclear capability but then they just keep going over the years and developing the ability to deliver that nuclear capability. And so, if you can, you want to stop that earlier on.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

You mentioned too, their space launch program, that technology could be applied to an ICBM capability and the IRGC did put a satellite into space recently in the last couple of years. So they have made improvements that could be used towards an ICBM capability.

Then, do you think with the development of the Iranians moving forward and gaining some ability and some proficiency on the ICBM front, even if they don't have a technical nuclear weapons capability yet, and then we've seen Kim Jong-un in North Korea continue to develop their nuclear ICBM capability... Are you comfortable with where we are on US Homeland Defense in particular at this speed? We've already talked about NGI, we need a sustained GMD, but would you like to see a greater emphasis on Homeland Defense versus regional? Or do you think that those two pots are in the right balance, given the fact that we have a budget that you already said you don't like?

Congressman Mike Turner:

I think we definitely should [crosstalk 00:37:59] Homeland. I offered the legislation to establish an East Coast missile defense site that arose out of the fact that the Obama Administration had come forward with their phase "Adapted Approach" which had in phase four a system that would be deployed for protecting the Homeland mainland of the United States. They canceled that provision and so we moved to establish a East Coast missile defense site, which has been picked to be located at Fort Drum.

Currently, the policy at DOD is that it will not proceed until the threat evolves. So my concern is, it takes us so long to develop missiles, so long to develop an interceptor... And if you look at the breakout time for Iran, if we don't get started, Iran can achieve an ability to threaten the Homeland before we have the ability to effectively defend the Homeland.

And what the East Coast gives us along with Alaska is a shoot-look-shoot, the ability to shoot twice, and also not have to go across the entire space of the United States in order to defend it. This, I think would be a very important first step.

Rebecca Heinrichs:

Thank you. I think that that's right in getting ahead of it, because if you have a greater missile defense capability you take out the teeth of that coercive capability that a country can have if they do develop that ability to threaten you with a nuclear ICBM.

Congressman, I thank you so much for taking the time with us today to talk with us about everything that's going on inside your portfolio. I look forward to continuing to follow the work of the subcommittee. Please do go to the Hudson Institute website for more information on these issues and for other related events. Thank you so much for joining-