

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

ASPEN SECURITY FORUM 2016

FROM PYONGYANG TO BRUSSELS — FRYING PAN TO FIRE?

Greenwald Pavilion,
Doerr-Hosier Center
Aspen, Colorado

Thursday, July 28, 2016

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FROM PYONGYANG TO BRUSSELS - FRYING PAN TO FIRE?

(5:00 p.m.)

MR. AMBROSE: Okay. Can we have everyone take their seats, please? Okay. Good afternoon. I'm Rick Ambrose, executive vice president for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. It's my great pleasure to introduce our next session, From Pyongyang To Brussels - Frying Pan to Fire, and that should excite you for this topic.

Our speaker today is General Curtis Scaparrotti, is no stranger to challenging situations. He's led combat forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, overseeing peacekeeping operations on multiple continents and directed policy inside the Beltway in Washington, D.C. Having recently transitioned from the tremendous responsibility of overseeing the Korean Peninsula to his current role as Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Scaparrotti is confronted with a resurgent Russia, a migrant crisis of staggering complexity and a myriad of other strategic threats such as the recent unrest experienced in the streets of Turkey.

Our moderator, who will keep us -- explore General's dynamic environment, is the renowned David Ignatius, a best-selling author and prize-winning contributor to the *Washington Post*. I'm confident David's robust experience and extreme understanding of the foreign policy issues will serve us well this evening. This promises to be an interesting discussion. So with that, I'll turn you over to David.

MR. IGNATIUS: So, thanks to Rick, it's a pleasure to be here with General Scaparrotti. He is known to his colleagues in uniform as Scap. On the stage today, he's going to be General Scaparrotti.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: General Scap is good.

MR. IGNATIUS: Well, you know, I wouldn't -- I wouldn't dare try that, but. So I asked a colleague who'd served with General Scaparrotti in uniform today to

describe him in a few words. And he said simply that he is a soldier's soldier, who has served in every tough command. I'm just going to briefly list them for you, it's a sort of history of our military over the last 20 years. He's served in the Balkans, he's served as an assistant division commander in Iraq in 2003, he served twice in Afghanistan as the, I believe, commander of the 82nd Airborne and then as the number two, the Corps Commander. He was the J3 with CENTCOM, where I first met him serving under General Abizaid. He was the Joint Staff Director. Then he went off to command our forces in South Korea. Now he is the European commander and the NATO commander.

So I want to start with the fire, using our title, and then we'll get back to the frying pan. To start with, Russia. General, when you got out of West Point in 1978, you had trained to fight a country called the Soviet Union and then that world changed. And now, as you come back to command our forces in Europe, we all have this sense that the world has come full circle. In May when General Scaparrotti took over his command, he said using a phrase that's often used, I'm told, in Korea that he wanted the U.S. and its allies to be ready to fight tonight, meaning that this is a command now where we have to think of imminent danger.

I want to ask you to begin by talking about Russia and your evaluation of Russia as a potential adversary. We've watched Russia deploy new forces, new doctrine in Ukraine, in Syria. I'm interested, I know we all are, in what's impressed you, what you're not so impressed by, but more fundamentally, what you think; as NATO commander, as European commander; what we should do about Russia.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, you know, thank you David, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here today. Thank you very much. You know, you mentioned coming out of West Point in '78. I actually took Russian as the language at West Point because I thought it'd probably be good, and I can learn a little bit about the culture and the language of my adversary. So that's how focused, you know, I was at the time when I came out. I learned the

doctrine, you know, knew their formations, and actually as a young officer went to Reforger on multiple occasions to be prepared to fight them.

And I was -- you know, something I would share with you as you go through the career, I was in Germany with 10th Mountain Division on an exercise, I'd been out about two nights, we had done a night infiltration, I was a major at the time, and I linked up with a classmate of mine from West Point by chance. So I came to the edge of the woods, we ran into each other and he said, he said, "Scap, did you hear the Wall came down today?" I've never forgotten that moment. I was standing there, you know, a couple of nights of hard work in camouflage on and I remember thinking, my gosh, you know this changes everything.

So that was -- you know, that was the early years. And then in '96, '95, we went in December '95, I led the Airborne Combat Team into Tuzla as we went into Bosnia. And about a month later I did a relief-in-place of the area that I was responsible for to a Russian airborne brigade. And I remember thinking, not in 100 years would I have thought, particularly when I was going through West Point, that I would actually do a relief-in-place, a friendly exchange with a Russian airborne brigade. And then you come full circle to the job I have today and Russia is back.

So, to get to your question about them being back. I'm impressed with the fact that they've taken a force that really had some serious problems only a few years ago. You can see that they've instilled discipline in their force, when you just watch what you can see of -- of their work, their photos, the dress of their personnel, you can see that they're learning. While much of their doctrine is based on the early Soviet doctrine, they are pretty agile of thinking if you look at the recent writings that their officers are doing. So they're actually taking a look at the world around them as they see it and adjusting their doctrine off that basis, which is impressive, and they're clearly modernizing.

They've reorganized their force, they've made it

smaller so it could be more professional. They -- when you look at the weapons systems etcetera, they've been watching us. And so you mentioned the demonstrations. They've fired long-range precision missiles from submarines, from surface ships, from medium bombers, all at Syria. They certainly didn't need to launch them from that distance but they did so, so they could; one, probably train, exercise and then demonstrate.

And so I'm impressed with that as well. So we have a -- you know, we have an adversary here that we have to take very seriously and they're going to continue to improve in their capabilities, in my opinion.

Now real quickly we can talk quite a bit about what we need to do. I can probably fill the time with it. But first of all, we have to -- you know, we have to be strong and we also have to look at the world around us and be prepared to invest in the force that we need, to invest in the capabilities that we need, to continue to stretch ourselves so that we outpace these capabilities that they're developing.

We need to do that in the United States and as the SAC here, we need to do it as a NATO alliance as well. When you look at Wales in 2014, the summit, and then the Warsaw Summit that we just had, you can see that NATO has realized the challenge. There was -- and I can talk about this if you want in a minute, they have shown adaptation between that time. And then in Wales they reconfirmed -- I mean, in Warsaw they reconfirmed this.

MR. IGNATIUS: I want to get to Warsaw and the commitments and how credible they are in just a moment. But I want to ask you about a subject that's come up in almost every panel that we've had today, and that is the seeming Russian hack of the DNC and then subsequent disclosure by somebody of that information. I don't want to ask you to comment on the details of that, nobody has all day, but I want to --

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPAROTTI: And I believe --

MR. IGNATIUS: -- just a little bit.

(Laughter)

MR. IGNATIUS: But we keep trying. But I do want to ask you about what the Russians have been up to in Europe, in your area of responsibility. There have been repeated news stories about the Russians funding phony news outlets, about Russian contributions to right-wing political parties in Europe which have had the effect obviously of destabilizing the political situation, all sorts of what Vladimir Putin and his former intelligence colleagues call "active measures."

So this is clearly a country that uses these active measures quite apart from whatever happened in the DNC hack. So I want to ask you as EUCOM commander, most of all, what do we do about an adversary that uses those tools? Are we really able to combat those kinds of tools and to faithful to our own values and laws?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well first of all, I would just tell you that we've been calling this, you know, you heard this, hybrid warfare or like activities short of conflict. But I would tell you that, you know, we see the activity in cyberspace, we see influence in Europe in terms of political parties funding some misinformation to build facts on the ground that really aren't true.

And what I would say to you is I believe that it's a part of their doctrine. In essence, when you look at the range or the spectrum of conflict, it begins with activities below the threshold of conflict in order to set conditions and perhaps even be successful in their objectives without even, you know, approaching a conflict. So I think it's a part of their doctrine, I think we can expect to see them continue it.

Personally, I think we can deal with it. It's difficult, particularly for the Western world because in the West, you know, we believe in freedom of the press, we believe in being truthful in the press, we believe in the rule of law, so we have difficulty approaching and

countering this, but we have to. And I think the best way we do it is we need to be very bold about putting the spotlight on it, that when we know it's true we make sure it's known, that we -- we get it out there.

The other is, as you just said, we have to use the whole of government approach both as a country and the United States but within NATO in order to do our own information, factual information, to make sure that that's out there, to make sure that, you know, we are forthright with our partners in helping them establish democratic institutions etcetera. Those are the things we can do.

And the final thing, David, I would say that, you know, in Warsaw, NATO and the EU made a commitment, they actually signed an agreement, to work together. That's pretty remarkable for these two organizations. But what I think is important about it, is about cooperation and the understanding that the EU provides talents and skills and insights that we don't have in NATO. It's not what we do. And together, with our security expertise, I think we can do some good things precisely when you talk about the cyber threat and, you know, the threats in hybrid warfare.

MR. IGNATIUS: If I understand you, what you're saying in effect is that part of what NATO has to do in combating this adversary with this set of tactics is to employ what people often call information operations, in other words meet them in that battle space, am I understanding that?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: That's right. And, you know, if you look at it with the Russians, if you look at this with, you know, counter-ISIL or counterterrorism, which we also have in Europe, you know, we have to become more adept and also more prepared and willing to use information operations. And we can be true to what we always have professed and that is, is that we're truthful in our information operations.

MR. IGNATIUS: I wouldn't be faithful to my own profession if I didn't express anxiety about information operations and the possibility that they'll blow back in

ways that hurt us, but we have laws and I'm sure you'll be thinking carefully about how to do this.

I want to ask about Warsaw Summit, which just finished this month. The Warsaw Summit was notable to me for agreement on the rotating deployment of four battalions in the Baltics and in Poland, a more aggressive step that the Russians have said they really didn't want to see happen. And the idea, as it was explained, is that this is a tripwire, much as we used to have a tripwire in the days of the Soviet Union, where the Soviets couldn't advance without killing some Americans and risking a broader conflict that we're going to have these forward deployed forces not large in number.

I want to ask you to talk about that, but to be pointed in asking whether it's really credible, the implicit idea is that we will sacrifice Chicago, let's say, or Aspen, to save Vilnius, that our commitment is such that if you tripped the wire, you are in a conflict situation, which Americans are prepared to -- so is that -- there was always a question in the Cold War of how credible that was. How credible is it today?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: I think it's credible. I mean, what strikes me about Warsaw, first of all, is 28 nations came together, they agreed on a communiqué, you've seen, it's 118 paragraphs, but they came together and made this commitment, they recommitted to Article 5 in the Baltics essentially and said they'll come to the defense of those countries. Now, you know, you can look at this as a tripwire but I look at it as a commitment, you know, and within deterrence you've got to have both the capability and the intent or the will and it has to be understood in the mind of the adversary.

So this is a way to tell them, to demonstrate to them that we are committed to this and we do have the will to defend Europe. Now, the other point I want to make is we focus on, you know, those four battalions and enhanced forward presence, but there's much more to that. Those battalions are a part of the individual nations, forces that they have theirs -- as their commitment to NATO as well, it's a part of, you know, our air domain and the

forces that we have there, and NATO and the United States within Europe, the maritime domain is part of that, cyber is part of that, 28 nations diplomatic capability and information capability is part of that. So deterrence is a much bigger piece of this than those four battalions. And that's what creates deterrence. And I think in the mind of Putin and the Russians the idea that you don't want to do this, you won't succeed and the cost is going to be far too high compared to any benefit you think you may get.

MR. IGNATIUS: So to push this question of credibility of this commitment, let's imagine that an American political candidate said that --

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Has anybody answered this question today?

(Laughter)

MR. IGNATIUS: Trying to phrase this in a way that you won't say I can't possibly comment on that. Let's imagine that an American politician, not even a candidate, said that America's willingness to back up its Article 5 NATO commitment to defend allies that are under attack would be subject to our review of whether they've been spending what they promised.

So the way I want to put the question is, you're NATO commander, you are the person that 28 militaries look to for guidance, so let's say that one of your counterparts in Europe says to you, "General, I'm concerned about whether the American commitment is real. I read these things in the press." How do you tell that person, I'm sure this happens to you on every trip you make, how do you tell that person, "Yes, it's real"?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, you know, first of all, within NATO and even in, you know, Korea and the alliance there when I was there, these are ironclad commitments that we've made within these alliances. And they look to us for leadership, every one of those countries did in

both places that I've been. And so it's not unusual for them to read our news from time to time and say, "Scap, what do you think about this?" It's the reassurance that they need, you know. In NATO, as I said, we committed to NATO many years ago but we recommitted in Warsaw again to Article 5. And I'm certain of that commitment. And, you know, you can -- one thing they need to know is they can count on the United States to do what we say we're going to do.

MR. IGNATIUS: So just to play the devil's advocate and thinking this entirely imaginary political figure who complains that the Europeans are not in some cases paying what they promised, paying their fair share for defense, isn't that hypothetical political candidate correct in making that argument?

I mean, isn't that true that the Europeans are not stepping up to the commitments that they make? So on the other hand of that, how do we say to them, "You really must do what you promised or you're going to risk losing political support in America," quite apart from the unnamed individual?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, you know, just set aside the candidate or whatever and I'll just tell you, you know, a personal story that you -- first of all, in NATO, you know, I support the idea that we've committed to a 2 percent, and of that percentage 20 percent to modernization, it's very important. Without it we're not going to outpace Russia's modernization. We've got to have that in order to provide a credible force like you talked about. So I reinforce that with them.

And today in NATO at Warsaw we've got five countries out of 28 that have met that 2 percent. We've got 22 in this year that have increased their investment. So we're turning the corner on this. And we got strong commitments from them. What I would say to you, though, is that I tell them typically that, look, we have a people and a Congress with a tough budget as well. And rightfully so they want to make sure that our defense money is spent wisely and that we can take care of our people too.

So, you know, as a leader of another country, you have to put your share into this, you have to do that because when I go back to testify in Congress, I get asked these questions, when I go to Capitol Hill, I get asked these questions, and that's typically what I talk to them about, their responsibilities based on the fact that we're here to help them, we've got some tough budget issues as well, they have to do their share. And I just approach it that way.

MR. IGNATIUS: Thank you for responding to that. I know that's a tricky issue for a person serving in uniform to answer. Another question we've been talking about all day in different sessions is Turkey, after the military coup. Turkey is a NATO member, Turkey's military cooperation is something that's right on your plate and that's a complicated issue after there's been a military coup to have good relations with the military.

You have a fought alongside Turkish troops in Afghanistan and you told me earlier today that you -- since you took over in May have traveled to Turkey and met with their most senior military leadership. I'm sure you're hoping to go back soon. And so I want to ask in this very delicate process how we can work to keep Turkey an effective member of NATO and whether military-to-military cooperation which has increased significantly in the last year, the opening of Incirlik Air Base to American operations was a big deal, how we can keep that going, or maybe I should ask, can we keep that going in this new environment?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Oh, I think we can. The first thing I think about when you say how do we keep -- keep that going, it's about relationships, it's about presence, it's about being there when they need you and working together on hard problems, in the middle of a relationship is very important, in this case.

Turkey itself sits right at really the crossroads of all the challenges we see in Europe, whether it's the refugee issue, whether it's counterterrorism, whether it's, you know, the Russians in Syria, in every

case they've got the problems, they have a terrorist problem of their own. So, you know, it's very important as a NATO ally that we keep them strong. And I think we can do that. I would tell you that it was the first place that I visited after I took command and I spent three days there.

I spent a good deal of time with General Akar, their CHOD (phonetic) for that reason. So that's an indication of how, you know, how important it is. And I've talked to him since the coup. So, you know, my intent is that, you know, as soon as I can I'm going to go back, I'm going to see him again, we've talked since, and will continue to build where we need to, rebuild the relationship.

Some of the officers that we have our relationships with in Turkey are now either detained, in some cases retired as a result of the coup. So we've got some work to do there.

MR. IGNATIUS: Do you -- is there any way you can share, at least the flavor of your conversation with your Turkish counterpart after the coup? I know that would be of interest to people.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, it was -- I thought it was, one, it struck me as a positive conversation and what I mean by that was you can imagine in his case he was taken hostage, separated from his wife, as I understand it. So he had a, I'm sure, a very long night on Friday night into Saturday when he was rescued by, I think, his special operations forces. But I talked to him several days after that. He was positive. He admitted that there is -- "It's stressful right now but we are committed, you have a solid ally, I appreciate your support" and he said, "You can come see me or visit me as soon as you want," which was a -- I think, you know, given all that he had to handle as the chief of the air defense at that time, was a generous offer.

MR. IGNATIUS: President Erdogan of Turkey is scheduled to meet with President Putin, I think, on August 6 in a week or so. And I'm curious what, you as NATO

commander, if there's -- and obviously heads of state meet with each other all the time, friend and -- friend and foe, but is there anything that would concern you that might develop, Turkey and Russia, have been on a process of improving relationships lately that, that could lead to a point where, I assume, it would give us concern from a standpoint of Turkey being a NATO member?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah, I think -- well, first of all, you know, we'd encouraged Turkey and -- Turkey to try and recover from the shoot down and solve that problem with Russian. So it's positive that they're beyond that now and that they can talk because they're working in such close proximity with us on their border in Syria that we really need it to get beyond that. So that was good.

And I think we'll watch closely in terms of how this relationship develops. They, from my point of view, I would be concerned if it appeared that they were departing from, you know, the values that is the bedrock of the Washington Treaty and NATO that they are a part of, rule of law, democratic institutions, etcetera. And so that's what we'll watch closely and we hope that, that will, you know, go in the right direction.

MR. IGNATIUS: I want to ask you a military hardware question that I think many members of this audience would be interested in, and forgive me if it's a little bit technical. But Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and his Deputy Secretary Bob Work have talked a good deal and thought a lot about what they call the Third Offset Strategy, it's a strange name, but the basic idea is that deterrence against Russia is more fragile than it should be. And that as in the past when we had worries about deterrence, maybe we should leverage our technology.

So they have said we have an enormous advantage in particular in autonomous systems, our ability to use very advanced IT to develop systems that are dispersed, hard to take out in a single blow, so as to introduce uncertainty in the minds of a potential adversary like Russia. That if you take a step, you can't be sure how we might react. And I wonder whether you as EUCOM commander, first of all, because these are US systems, whether this

seems like a good path for us to follow.

There are little bits -- echoes of Star Wars, an area where we have such technological leadership? Is that the kind of thing we should leverage? Is it likely to be stabilizing, or as some people argue, it could be really destabilizing?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah. Well, first of all, I think it is the way we should go. And, you know, when you look at the deterrence in the Cold War and you compare it to today, a lot has changed. I think it's much more complex today than it was in the Cold War in the sense that, you know, you have the speed of information, tighter decision space, but one of the other things is technology. At that time we had some clear technological leads that gave us great advantage in terms of, you know, credibility and will and uncertainty in their mind.

And technology today is more dispersed, not only to nation states but to non-state actors etcetera. So we need to stay ahead of that. And I think it is important in our deterrence strategy, but it's also important in helping us in a way we fight, how we deal with that with the speed of information, the amount of information, the closed decision space, we have to make decisions now, our senior leaders do, what we would have perhaps a week in the past that may be hours our at best, days, today. And, you know, the machine and human interface etcetera can help us with those things too.

MR. IGNATIUS: So I want to ask one more question about European NATO issues and then move a little more broadly. I had dinner Tuesday night before coming out here with a Russian "defense analyst," I'm going to put quotation marks around that because you never know.

(Laughter)

And this fellow said, you know, "You Americans are so focused on the Baltics and protecting the Baltics. People around Putin accept that the Baltics are in NATO, that's not what we're thinking about, that's not how we're deploying our forces. We're thinking about Ukraine.

That's our focus. That's the real issue for us."

So I want to ask you to talk about Ukraine and start with this question. Our Secretary of State is trying very hard to rehabilitate and push through the Minsk process for stabilizing Ukraine and creating a kind of balance, a more decentralized political set up there satisfying some of the Russian concerns.

From your perspective, as a military commander, would that kind of outcome, where the Minsk process was adopted lead to a stable Ukraine that would be a stable buffer or would it lead to perpetual instability among these fragments? How do you look at that?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, first of all we hope that we can work through the Minsk agreement and find stability there because stability on the eastern flank or anywhere in Europe, for instance, is very important to us. The Russians today, in many of these areas like that or Georgia tend to keep this turmoil kind of churning and that too day-to-day in Europe is not a good thing and it's a place where you could have conflict because of miscalculation, whatever. So we need to find a way to bring some stability to the area.

And then, you know, secondly we want to reinforce the sovereignty of a country that -- you know, that's really what we stand for in the Baltics as well is that nations have a right to determine the government that they want to have and that's simply a basis what we support. And, you know, I think that, that's a way forward. It will all, in the end, depend on how the Russians approach it, though.

MR. IGNATIUS: And give us your military assessment of Ukraine itself. The government -- it's a very fractious place, it's a place where all reporting says that corruption is a big problem. Are they moving toward a better ability to defend themselves, to use modern weapons? They have this enormous military threat to their east. How do you think they're doing?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, there's no question

that they're working hard to build a better defense and our soldiers that work with them say that they're very focused, they're tough, they're good folks to train with and work with. The -- that's one point.

Two, they're in a very tight spot, you know, even with this last week there was greater, you know, action along the line, they took some higher casualties. So they need our help in terms of that, you know, defensive posture. And then finally, in terms of the government, we're working with them as well to move them toward reform in democratic institutions.

And as you know, that's been somewhat difficult. They have some issues there with corruption etcetera that we are leading them to reform and they're going to need to do that to continue to, I think, have our help.

MR. IGNATIUS: Ukraine is not a NATO member but what's the extent of our military-to-military relationship with them? Are we able to train their officers to help them use the weapons they have from the various sources more effectively? Or are we foreclosed from that?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: No, we are actually, you know, assisting in training for, you know, communications, small unit weaponry, counter-IED, things that they need in order to -- you know in order to reinforce the line of contact etcetera. So it's not full, it's not offensive by any means but it's defensive and it's helpful to the task they have at hand.

MR. IGNATIUS: So the title of this session you'll remember is, From the Frying Pan into the Fire, and I left the frying pan, which is General Scaparrotti's previous command in South Korea and the Korean Peninsula for later in our conversation. But I do want to ask you to speak a little bit about it. When you think about what the next President will inherit, will have on the desk after January, high on that list, although we don't talk about it very often, is the reality that North Korea, led by a very belligerent, seemingly unstable leader, will soon in the term of the next President have the ability to deliver a nuclear weapon on to US territory in terms of

all of the reporting that we see, which is really quite disturbing prospect.

So I'd like to ask you, you were deeply involved in decisions when you were out there about how South Korea and the region can defend itself better. The starting point for me would be -- is a situation in which North Korea can deliver a miniaturized nuclear weapon atop an intermediate-range missile on to Okinawa, let's say, or onto US territory, is that an acceptable situation?

Should we allow ourselves to be in that situation, in effect, held hostage by a very unpredictable adversary?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: I think that North Korea's one -- a country that today and in the time that KJU has been in power, he has been very focused --

MR. IGNATIUS: Kim Jong-un.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Kim Jong-un. He's been very --

MR. IGNATIUS: Known to his friends and adversaries as KJU.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: KJU.

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: He is young and he's brash as you noted. But he's also very focused on developing his military capability in specific ways that he knows is difficult for us. So he's very focused on his -- developing his ballistic missile capability. In the last couple of weeks we've seen him fire three missiles in one day. He's picked up the pace of this. And, you know, my estimate is that he's testing and he's solving problems.

He has a, you know submarine-launched ballistic missile that he's working on as well. And then he has a nuclear capability that he's continuing to build. And so, you know, I've said this before, I think that we need to,

continue in every way that we can, to put pressure on this country and to bring them to the -- to follow the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

What I am concerned about is -- I'm very concerned about what he has today, but I'm more concerned about what he'll have in three or four years, when he has a, you know, proven their continental capability when he's perhaps -- he's figured out the submarine-launched capability. And he has built more nuclear devices. So it's a serious problem.

MR. IGNATIUS: We had just today, a little news item that I mentioned earlier that, General Scaparrotti, where a top North Korean diplomat said that the US, in adopting one of these measures intended to pressure North Korea and sanctioning Kim Jong-un economically had, in this diplomat's words, crossed a red line and -- but that famous phrase -- and that if the US and South Korea went ahead with a planned military exercise, I think it's next month, that if they went ahead with this military exercise, you know, there were risk of war and this is a declaration of war etcetera, etcetera.

How do you -- you've dealt with a lot of threats from North Korea, how do you respond to that kind of rhetoric?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah. Personally I just --

MR. IGNATIUS: Yeah, but as a commander.

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Not -- doesn't surprise me, you know. What we do is we watch who says it, what they say, those kinds of things. You know, we've watched particularly North Korea long enough that there's patterns to this. So that's one way we look at it. So I always go back and take a look at that pretty closely. This is not unexpected.

We put a sanction on Kim Jong-un, as I understand it. I think that's great. It needed to be

done. And I think we need to continue the pressures along sanctions working with our allies and by other means to continue to put pressure on them and convince him there's different way and hopefully bring China into this mix as well because they're an important partner in solving this problem we've gotten in North Korea. And it's a problem for them as well.

MR. IGNATIUS: You were, when you were in the Korea command, a strong advocate of the theater missile defense system known as THAAD, which is now in the process of being deployed. How much protection does that give to us and our friends in the region against this very unpredictable threat?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah. It's a very important system to put in because it -- one is, they have a very significant ballistic missile capability in North Korea, particularly short range, that can hit our forces and Korean forces and citizens in South Korea. What the THAAD brings to us is a high-altitude intercept capability, a better system for determining, you know, our defensive strategy in an attack, okay, because of its connection and radar to others, and it gives us some capabilities that provide better protection to South Korea, not to mention that it's an area defense not a point defense.

So I can't go into that too much. But I would just say that I was very insistent that we try and bring THAAD in because of the capability that brings to the peninsula. And I'm glad to see that it is going forward.

MR. IGNATIUS: The Chinese, it's said, hate THAAD and worry that it's a threat to their capabilities and to which are most senior diplomats have said, "Okay, then help us solve the North Korea problem if you're concerned about that."

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: That's correct.

MR. IGNATIUS: So --

(Laughter)

MR. IGNATIUS: So I want to close my part of this conversation and will turn to the audience by asking you to step back just a little bit, General. You are a prime example of the generation of US Army officers, US military officers, who've lived through this generation of war, the Army's been at war for 13 years.

I asked Ryan Crocker, I don't know if Ryan is here, but asked him earlier today, he knows General Scaparrotti well from Afghanistan and other places, and I just asked him what he remembered about serving with you. And he said the thing he remembered best but most painfully was going with you to Bagram Air Base for the departure ceremonies when dead Americans were loaded onto planes to come home.

And that's what you and your colleagues in uniform have been living with now for all these years. And I want to ask you to reflect with this audience on what you've been living through, on what that's been like for you as a commander on your hopes that will enter a different period in which we're not a country seemingly perpetually at war and just what this period of our history has been like for you?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: One is it, you mentioned Bagram. As a 82nd commander there, you have Bagram Airfield, that's where we do the return of remains for departure from the country to go home. And if you're the commander there, there's almost a day that doesn't go by in the time that I was there that you didn't have one of those ceremonies.

It's a -- it's unbelievably difficult on the folks that go through that and it's something that has affected me, I'll never forget it. But it's representative of the sacrifice that I've seen in, you know, over a decade of war now and we can't forget that even today what we decide to do as senior leaders there are soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines on the other end of that decision, and they're going to do what we tell them to do but they also are willing to pay a heavy price for it. So we've got to keep that in mind too.

That just reminds me that where we need to be, we need to resolve conflicts and we need to get to a peaceful solution because I've seen too much and there's no one that has done what our troopers have done, what our service members have done over the past 10 years that will come back and say they're unaffected. I don't believe that.

MR. IGNATIUS: I know we're all moved to hear that. I think something that we worry about sometimes, even as we celebrate these remarkable sacrifices that the military has made is that the military in America is becoming almost a separate tribe, it has its own rituals, it's a family, we love that family but it's -- sometimes feel separate. Do you worry about that, that the military is too separate from the rest of American life?

GEN. SCAPAROTTI: I do worry about it. I worry about -- it's not just the military either, I worry about service, you know, because we are a volunteer force, you know, 1 percent serves. And I think in a democracy we have to think very hard about that. Now you might not necessarily serve in the military but I think -- I tend -- I thought a lot lately about this, I think service to your country, even if it's for a year or two in some means is of value particularly in a democracy and we ought to consider that.

(Applause)

MR. IGNATIUS: So on that note we're going to go to the audience. And I will recognize hands as I see them. In the front row, my friend Kim Dozier.

MS. DOZIER: Kim Dozier --

GEN. SCAPAROTTI: I know you Kim.

MS. DOZIER: -- with the *Daily Beast* and *CNN*. So, could we expand a bit on some of your challenges coming up with Russia in terms of the missile shield that has been installed in Romania, will be installed in Poland? The spokesman for Putin has said some very dire things about it being a threat.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah.

MS. DOZIER: Do they know it's not a threat? Is this a rhetorical counter-attack? Or are they going to use this to try to separate you from some of the Baltic allies?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well I think -- first of all, I think they will use it or try to use it, they'll use almost anything they believe they can to separate, you know countries, within NATO, I mean that's one of Putin's objectives is to try to create friction among the allies. So I think he'd use that anyway.

The question of whether they really believe it's a threat, that's an interesting question for me because it is -- you know, it's a missile defense system, it's not positioned in a place that if it were offensive system that it, you know -- it's not positioned in a position that as a defensive system that it can really impact at all their systems. In other words impact their strategic deterrence.

I'm certain that their military leaders should know that. So that's why I say it's an interesting question to me. I would like to fully understand it. Now having said that, those who understand the Russians and have talked -- those who have talked to the Russians recently, and I think this could very well be true, their leadership just simply does not believe that this is just a defensive system because you have the -- the system itself can't be used for an offensive capability. It's not structured that way. It doesn't have the technical nor the software to do it. But I'm told they believe that we're not being truthful about that. And that could in fact be the case, what's it really for?

MR. IGNATIUS: So --

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: They can believe that, in other words, so.

MR. IGNATIUS: I want to ask John Negroponte and then, ma'am and there was a gentleman here in the far -- but first Ambassador Negroponte.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah, let me clarify something, there was a way I said that. What I meant by that was --

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Because I heard somebody react to that. I'm not suggesting it's anything other than missile defenses system, that's what it is. They -- they may not believe it's -- yes, it's defending basically from the Middle East. It's not oriented on them, it doesn't have the capability to do that. And we've been quite clear about it.

MR. NEGROPONTE: Thank you, General. John Negroponte. I -- if this were 40 years ago, we'd be thinking at least somewhat about triangular relationships between ourselves, the Soviet Union and China. And I was wondering if you had any thoughts on the sort of geostrategic relationship between Russia and China and is there any risk that we might end up in the short-term having adversarial relationships with both of those countries at the same time.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Thank you, sir. You know, one of the things that I note about China and Russia is, if you listen to their message to us, there are some similarities in the sense that China in the South China Sea claims that you know, the international norms that we've established are constricting of what they see as their rightful territory and sphere of influence. Does that sound familiar?

I mean, that's what you hear Putin say about particularly in the east and the Baltics that's their sphere of influence that the Western set of rules is actually constricting the way that they would like to operate. And so there are some similarities as you hear both leaders talk. That's of a concern in the sense that

they could come together on this, I guess, is what I'm saying.

So I think we have to work hard to develop relationships with both of them and make sure that we're having quite candid communication with them so that we understand each other.

MR. IGNATIUS: There's a gentleman all the way in the -- on the far right against -- yes, standing against the mesh of our tent, if we can get a microphone over there. Okay, go ahead.

MS. HOWARD: Andrea Howard, I'm Naval Academy class of 2015.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Go Army! Beat Navy!

(Applause)

MS. HOWARD: Beat Army, sir.

(Applause)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: I wanted to get that in first because I knew you were -- you were probably coming at us.

MS. HOWARD: Yes sir, I was coming at the end.

(Laughter)

MS. HOWARD: So General, this talk has taken a bit of a traditional flavor focusing on deterrence theory and the capabilities of our adversaries like Russia and North Korea. To what extent is NATO and EUCOM embracing and addressing human security issues like the refugee crisis?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah, thank you. Good -- I'm glad you asked the question because I really wanted to get at. In Warsaw what you saw mostly publicized was about deterrence and about the Baltics and enhanced forward presence, but actually they made some very, I think, significant decisions to support what we call the NATO

Strategic Defense South, okay.

So it's a framework that's been developed that addresses the challenges to Europe from the south and those are primarily the issues of the -- the refugee crisis, counterterrorism, counter-transnational crime, counter-WMD, the issues that Europe's struggling with in other areas. And so Warsaw addressed a 360, not just the Russia front.

Now, what came out of that will eventually be in order to me as the SACEUR, to assist in the ways that NATO can assist and I think we can do that through maritime operations for instance as we're doing in the Aegean with EU, and that operation has been very successful.

You know, last summer we, you know, we had I think on order of about probably 60 -- I'm thinking about 60,000 come across through Greece over a three-month period, April, May and June. This year it's, you know, below 6,000. So we're talking a 90 percent reduction as a result of the operations there.

So I think assistance throughout the Mediterranean can help particularly where you see refugees coming from North Africa, across into southern Europe and you see terrorists or the movement of weapons of mass destruction, weaponry, as a part of criminal organizations as well. So we are addressing it and you'll see more on that as we work our way through the orders from the NATO Alliance to North Atlantic Council to tell us and our force is in shape.

MR. IGNATIUS: In what I hope we will be able to describe as a post-ISIS world with the region bordering NATO in such turmoil, do you think NATO can be a force for re-stabilizing its periphery? Is that something that's -- this is a military alliance, it's not a traditional military job, would you be comfortable with that?

GEN. SCAPAROTTI: I do. I mean obviously what we go into is, again, the North Atlantic Council that's policy, I act on the directives they give me as the SACEUR. But for instance at Warsaw we had deterrence and defense

as a major thing and we have projecting stability, which we haven't talked about much. But NATO has been in that business for a while as well.

You know, in Kosovo we have forces there today, we went into Kosovo. In Afghanistan we train, advice and assist today. We're looking at potentially doing partnership capacity building in perhaps Iraq, if invited, perhaps in Libya. And that in a sense is projecting stability so that we solve those problems outside of our borders and thereby keep our security intact as well. And obviously within the, you know, the countries within NATO, the 28 nations, we have a good deal of experience in stability ops as well.

MR. IGNATIUS: So we could see in a NATO deployment in Iraq and in Libya down the road those fragmented countries try to get back to something more stable?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, I don't know. Again, that's not --

MR. IGNATIUS: I know it's a policy decision.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: I'm not making, you know, that projection for NATO, I can't do that. I'm just saying that we have the capability to do that and we at least at Warsaw said that we would take some steps at Iraq's invitation to do some specific training primarily to help them with the skills they need post-conflict in the areas that have been recaptured from counter-ISIL. That's primarily what they wanted to start with as well as mine clearing etcetera. That's the first step. There may be more that we can do if they ask us to do so.

MR. IGNATIUS: The gentleman here on my far right.

MR. MARKS: Jonathan Marks, Candy Group. General Scaparrotti, first of all forgive me for being so far away. Please take this gap as a symbolic Atlantic Ocean.

(Applause)

MR. MARKS: Prior to Brexit, the United Kingdom was actively campaigning in Europe against a European army, and in fact ultimately the United Kingdom had a veto for that. In two years time, approximately, the UK loses that veto and it's highly likely that there will be a European Union army of some sort.

How confusing will that be to the military/political situation in Europe and how will that dilute NATO and decrease its efficacy?

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well first of all, you know, I would just say upfront that, you know, there's -- each of our -- each of the nations in NATO have one military. And so the intent is going forward that we have a very close working relationship and to the extent that they do operations as, you know, they do today, that we have a complementary and close relationship because we really don't have the capability to not be complementary and not be wise in how we use all the forces that we have. That's the first point I would make.

The second is that again, back to Warsaw, the agreement to cooperate between EU and NATO is very important for many reasons, and you cited one. So that we do have a relationship, that we are used to -- we become used to working together and we can consider these things in the best way.

I would say just as we did in the Aegean operations, they asked for our assistance, we did that in about 96 hours time, which those of you, you know, that know NATO, that's -- that's lightning speed.

(Laughter)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: So, you know, that's -- you know, we're moving and we're adapting and we're getting better.

MR. IGNATIUS: So the woman here, where's the microphone --

SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. IGNATIUS: And then I'll go to you sir for the final question.

SPEAKER: Thank you General and Mr. Ignatius. I wanted to ask what you could share with us about the relationship, friendship, military relationship between North Korea and Iran.

MR. IGNATIUS: Good question. Not often asked.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Yeah. There is a relationship between the two and it is probably, you know, we think complementary in particularly their missile arrangement, and we've seen indications of that. So, you know, that is always of concern and we watch it closely. So there -- you know, that's about as much as I can say about it, that there is a relationship there and that we've been watching it.

MR. IGNATIUS: Sir.

MR. CANNON: (Inaudible) Al Cannon from Charleston South Carolina. Three quick points.

MR. IGNATIUS: Sir, let me ask you to -- because we're running out of time, just one question.

MR. CANNON: Distribution -- just three quick points. Distribution of Russians throughout the Republics, the historic vulnerability from Russia's perspective of the Baltic States, in Poland corridor and Kaliningrad. To what extent is the issue of Russian citizens within the Baltic States a factor in what NATO is trying to do and Russia's efforts.

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Well, it's a factor because it's what the Russians in this activity below the threshold of conflict it's who they are appealing to, it's who they're trying to influence in the Baltic States with some of these information operations activity with parties etcetera. So it's of concern to us.

Now the other part is, is working with those governments, how do you ensure that you bring those of Russian heritage fully into your government so that they also are a part of that democracy.

MR. IGNATIUS: So General Scaparrotti told me that he really, really has to leave at 6:00 because he's got to fly back tonight to Europe and then -- wonderfully, he is, it's not a scheduled flight, but he's -- he's a four-star general --

(Laughter)

MR. IGNATIUS: --wonderfully he is on his way to do some work in Italy but also to visit the place where the Scaparrottis are from, in Italy. So we hope he has a great trip back and we all, I know, join me in thanking him for a wonderful cause.

(Applause)

GEN. SCAPARROTTI: Thank you.

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