Providing for the Common Defense (3/18/19)

00:00:25 Harmony Barker: Good evening and welcome. My name is Harmony Barker, and I'm the public programs coordinator here at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. It's my pleasure to welcome all of you to tonight's program, "Providing for the Common Defense." As always, I'd like to extend a special welcome to our museum members and those turning in to our live web broadcast at 911memorial.org/live.

00:00:50 Tonight, we are joined by Admiral Gary Roughead and Ambassador Eric Edelman, co-chairs of the National Defense Strategy Commission, a congressionally chartered and nonpartisan body tasked with assessing the nation's defense strategy and military readiness. Admiral Roughead and Ambassador Edelman recently presented the Senate Armed Services Committee with the commission's report, "Providing for the Common Defense: "The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission."

00:01:18 We are fortunate to have them both here to discuss their findings and to help us consider what U.S. national defense should look like in 2019. Gary Roughead graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1973 and went on to have a distinguished naval career. He became the chief of naval operations in 2007, and is one of only two officers in the Navy's history to have commanded both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets.

00:01:46 Admiral Roughead has received the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, and Navy Commendation Medal, to name just a few of his decorations. In addition to his role as co-chair of the National Defense Strategy

Commission, he is currently the Robert and Marion Oster Distinguished Military Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

00:02:10 Ambassador Eric Edelman has served in senior positions at the Department of State and Defense, as well as in the White House. He had a distinguished career with the U.S. Foreign Service, and served as a, as U.S. ambassador to the republics of Finland and Turkey during the Clinton and Bush administrations. Ambassador Edelman has been awarded the Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service and the Presidential Distinguished Service Award, as well as the Légion d'Honneur, among others.

00:02:38 He is currently a Roger Hertog Practitioner-in-Residence at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and counselor at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. We'd like to thank both of our speakers for sharing their time and insights with us.

Without further ado, please join me in welcoming Admiral Gary Roughead and Ambassador Eric Edelman in conversation with executive vice president and deputy director for museum programs Clifford Chanin.

(applause)

00:03:12 Clifford Chanin: Thank you very much, Harmony. Good evening, everybody, welcome. Gentlemen, welcome. This document, "Providing for the Common Defense," has an inward look at where we are as a country in terms of our own ability to plan and respond to threats, but also very much an outward-looking sense of what the threats are in the world, and your conclusions have to do with how those threats and our responses do or do not meet up. But we'll get into detail on many of the things there, but I wonder, just to start, if we could get the headline that each of you would find from, you know, the many findings and observations that the document makes. Let me start with the admiral.

00:03:54 Admiral Gary Roughead: Right, I think, that one of the headlines would be that the commission, and it's not a headline that's well published, but the point that I would like to make is, the commission was made up of 12 commissioners, half appointed by the majority in Congress, half appointed by the minority in Congress.

00:04:19 You know, you would therefore say it's bipartisan; we say it's nonpartisan. Because if you had sat in the room for one hour, or for three days, and if Eric or I gave you a piece of paper and said, "Okay, where did your nomination come from?", you would not have been able to tell. There were 12 people who came together who assessed the National Defense Strategy.

00:04:46 And the point that we made is, strategically, the administration has issued a security strategy and a defense strategy that... that kind of gets it right. And where we kind of deviated from that was that we thought that it was a bit short on concepts. It was short on analytics, and we can go into those a little deeper.

Clifford Chanin: Ambassador?

00:05:18 Ambassador Eric Edelman: So, Cliff, first, thank you for having us and giving us a chance to talk about the report. The report was actually part of a series of reports that the Congress has chartered over the last decade and a half, going back to the review of the... the quadrennial defense review of the Department of Defense in 2010, and then the national defense panel that they appointed to review the quadrennial defense review of 2014. And so this followed from these earlier reports.

00:05:51 The 2010 report, which commented on then-Secretary Gates's quadrennial defense review, said that-- although Secretary Gates was at the time saying that he would need one-and-a- half- to two-and-a-half-percent real growth in the defense budget to recapitalize our defense stock that had been worn down over the decade of war at that point, since, since what happened here in September 2001-- was probably an underestimate.

00:06:25 The 2014 panel said that the Budget Control Act of 2011, which mandated further cuts to the defense budget, was a strategic misstep. And I think that our conclusion was, as Admiral Roughead said, while the general direction of the National Defense Strategy that Secretary Mattis outlined a year ago was generally correct in looking at great-power competition with Russia and China as the major future military challenge we face, while we're doing a few other things around the world, that the resourcing of that strategy is just not adequate to actually accomplish the ends that were set out in the document.

00:07:13 We then, I think, can talk a little bit about some of the other questions Gary raised about, do we have adequate concepts for how we would actually take on high-end adversaries? And I think we wanted to stress that the role of our allies is absolutely crucial here. I know you're going to be having some of my former Foreign Service colleagues, Sandy Vershbow and Nick Burns, to talk about NATO soon. But we put a lot of stress on the alliances, and I think that's another one of the headlines that came out of the report.

00:07:46 Clifford Chanin: Let me quote the report at one point, because one of the observations that you just made has to do with, these are ongoing problems. This is not a situation that happens to arise in 2016, that many of the things that are said in the report are things that have been said in recent years, but not really acted upon.

00:08:07 So you write, "Many of these challenges are similar to the ones that the Department of Defense identified before 9/11, when they were largely prospective. Today they are real. Nearly two decades on, we find it notable that many of these challenges have informed U.S. defense strategy across multiple administrations, yet the position of the U.S. has eroded in most, if not all, of these areas."

So the question is, how do you describe this disconnect? If the experts are identifying a constant, and expanding, even, set of security challenges, and those are the people who are credentialed and supposed

to be doing this, why is it that we have not found a solution to this problem?

00:08:51 Admiral Gary Roughead: Well, I would say one the things that happened in the aftermath of 9/11 is, we became very focused on a particular type of, of war in the Middle East, and justifiably so. But over nearly 17 years of conflict, we've tuned our military to operate and fight in that environment. We have not had to deal with flying in airspace that's contested by a sophisticated enemy. We have been able to flow logistics to our forces in the Middle East without having to worry about someone trying to shut the sea lanes off that, carrying those logistics into the fight.

00:09:38 And while we were doing that, we have two peer competitors that we refer to in the report, but in all, in point of fact, China is, is the pacing competitor. And China has been making investments. They have looked at what our strengths are and how we fight, and they've looked at a regional environment that's important to them, and looked at how they go after the seams that we have in our capabilities, and that's what has happened.

00:10:14 But it really has been a focus on a particular type of fight, and, and the time has come that we really have to start to get serious about, what do we do about a competitor that's not only competing with us militarily, but diplomatically, economically, and I would argue, and we mentioned this in the report, technically. Particularly in information technologies that China has envisioned as part of their future, to dominate not just in a military sense, but geopolitically and geoeconomically.

00:10:53 Clifford Chanin: Let me build on that, because you mentioned China. Russia is the other adversary that we face, according to the report, with a near-peer, at least, status to us. But in both of those cases, China and Russia, the focus of their activities is within their specific region. They don't seem, at least at this point, to have the global aspiration that the United States does.

00:11:17 And so the question, Ambassador, is, you know, as these trends are emerging, are we capable still of acting at the global scale? Because our adversaries are much more regionally focused, and yet the resources, the person power, the equipment, all of this, to maintain this two-front and more option seems to put us in a position where we're always trying to play catch-up.

00:11:45 Ambassador Eric Edelman: Cliff, you put your finger on, I think, one of the things that both the National Defense Strategy tries to wrestle with and with which we on the commission wrestled with, which is that we... Those of us who, you know, came to maturity and grew up in the '50s and '60s and '70s, in the Cold War, grew up with the notion of the United States being capable of defeating one major peer adversary and having to be prepared to go all around the globe to contest different parts of the world in a bipolar division of global power.

00:12:21 We now face a circumstance where we have, over a number of years, created an international order that is based on a regional balance of, regional balances of power, that we have contributed to largely through the creation of our alliances. The bilateral relationships we have with Japan, with the Republic of Korea, with the Philippines, in Asia, the multilateral alliance that we've created in Europe with NATO, and a series of special relationships we've developed with a number of countries in the Middle East-- the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and a variety of others—the United Arab Emirates.

00:13:08 We, we need to maintain this sort of balance in all three of these regions while also dealing with the problems that we faced globally from, from terrorists who would, would wish us ill. So, the challenge is very complex compared to the Cold War, and the difficulty we face is that, as much as we spend on defense, and a lot of people ask us, "Well, you want more money for defense. The United States already spends more on defense than, than, you know, other countries, you know, combined. How, how can that be possible that we don't have enough to do what we need to do?"

00:13:46 The problem is very much encapsulated in what you just articulated in your question, which is, we have global responsibilities. The order that we created rests on freedom of navigation of the seas, maintenance of free airspace, cyberspace now, outer space.

00:14:06 Our adversaries have, basically, regional ambitions, but they're playing at home. They're playing home games. And, therefore, they have the benefit of interior lines of communication, and we have, you know, difficulties maintaining our ability to convince our allies that we will be there for them in a time of trouble because of the capabilities our adversaries have developed.

Clifford Chanin: Please.

00:14:36 Admiral Gary Roughead: Yeah, and I would also say that the other thing that has happened, and one of the reasons why we commented on, on the analytics and the lack of concepts, is, we pretty much know where China is and where Russia is. And what, what we commented on was the fact that we haven't started to do the deep analytical work to say, "Okay, this is where we are, this is where they are, and how do we deal with that problem? And how do we create new concepts, not just for what we have in our inventory today, but also the new technologies that will be coming in, in the future?"

00:15:17 And one of the things that we spent time on and mentioned in the, in the report, and I think you'll continue to hear more of this, and that's this idea of what's called the gray zone, which is where China and Russia have kind of changed the nature of conflict and also the definition of winning. And the gray zone is not just a military thing. It's economic, it's diplomatic, and, and it... And it expands beyond the Department of Defense.

00:15:54 And one of our recommendations was that the nation really needs to begin to look at, if, in fact, the competitors are going to play that game, then how should we be organized? What are the types of authorities people should have? What are the technologies that we should be

bringing on more quickly? And that really just can't be done by shooting from the hip. We really think that you have to put some thought in it.

00:16:18 There has to be a whole-of- government approach to think through how, how you deal with China. And I have a fixation with China, because I always, you know, look West because of my background. But it involves trade and it involves technology. Their belt and road strategy is beginning to influence decisions and activities of allies and partners. So, as a nation, how do we want to approach that?

00:16:49 Ambassador Eric Edelman: Cliff, I just wanted to add one thing to what Admiral Roughead just said, which is that when, when we talk about developing the concepts for how we would... how we would deal with a conflict with a near-peer competitor, I think it's very important to stress that this is not because either Admiral Roughead or I are really anxious to go war with Russia or China. It's just the reverse.

00:17:18 The National Defense Strategy and our report are really about deterrence. How can we posture ourselves so that our adversaries, as they, in the case of China, grow in strength, in the case of Russia, as they decline-- because Russia is really in long-term decline, but both can be dangerous-- how, how can we make the cost of solving the problems that we face around the world through the use of military force so costly that they will not think to do it? And that's what this is really about, and in terms of when we talk about concepts, I think sometimes people... it's a little bit abstract.

00:18:02 Clifford Chanin: Yeah, that's exactly what I was going to ask about. Can, can we get an example of something, yeah?

Ambassador Eric Edelman: So let me give you an example-- so... In the late 1970s and early 1980s, thanks to some great foresight by the late Harold Brown-- he just passed away, was secretary of defense under Jimmy Carter-- and with his director of defense research and engineering,

Bill Perry, who was later secretary of defense under Bill Clinton, the United States began to develop capabilities for stealth and precision-guided munitions.

00:18:37 And one of the things that we had to figure out in the late '70s and early '80s, when we still were at a huge disadvantage in terms of conventional military power in Europe, how would we stop the Soviets from actually invading Europe with a conventional force that would then, you know, put us in the horrible position of having to respond with nuclear weapons?

00:18:58 And one of the concepts that people developed-- which turned out to be so powerful as a concept that it really made the Russians want to get out of the business of confronting us militarily in Europe-- was this notion of AirLand Battle, that we would use our advantages in stealth and precision-guided munitions to be able to attack them so far in the rear echelon of their forces in Eastern Europe that they wouldn't be able to bring their forces forward into Central Europe.

00:19:28 This was such a powerful concept, and the capabilities that went with it were so powerful, that the Russians ultimately got out of the business. I mean, this was a... not the only reason that we won the Cold War, but this was an extremely important part of how we won the Cold War. The Navy, by the way, had a role in this, as well. So it was not just a Air Force and Army thing. So, what's lacking now is a sense of, how would we do these things now, to deal with both Russia and China in particular?

Admiral Gary Roughead: If I...

00:20:02 Clifford Chanin: Can I just... I just want to refine the point, we'll, we'll stick with it. But, you know, the report itself is extremely critical of the Defense Department at this thinking level, if you will.

Admiral Gary Roughead: Right.

Clifford Chanin: Conceptual level, because while you said at the beginning of the conversation that the Defense Department and the National Defense Strategy hits the right notes, you say, but the report essentially says, "Yes, they hit the right notes but they don't actually know how they would deliver on any of these ideas."

Admiral Gary Roughead: Right. And just to touch on what Eric was talking about, and you can tell from the color of my hair that I may have been around during some of these earlier concepts...

(laughter)

00:20:40 Admiral Gary Roughead: And, and we had something that was called the Maritime Strategy, where we took existing airplanes and ships and put in deep analytical work. And, and I can also tell you that we practiced, and practiced, and practiced, to be able to do things with the systems that we had in hand that people didn't think were possible, largely driven by, you know, mathematical analysis and then putting things in the right place, that, that we were able to create a force and take that force in places where I would submit the Soviets didn't think we could go.

00:21:21 And that's what, what we're talking about there. And this is not something that is unique, the shortcomings; it's not unique to this administration. It's not unique to the people who are serving in the administration. This has been something that has been happening over time. And even though we, you know, these words aren't found in there, we really have become satisfied with a very superficial treatment of how you solve problems.

00:21:49 And I'll let Eric comment if he wishes to, but we can, we can easily satisfy ourselves. And I would say this even goes beyond the Department of Defense. We can easily satisfy ourselves with a PowerPoint slide. And if the PowerPoint says it's so, by golly, it's so. And it requires a lot more thought, work, investments, shifting of resources, and, as I said, a lot of

practice because at the end of the day, it's the young people who are out there in the tanks, and in the battalions, and in the airplanes and submarines, that are going to have to make this work. And you can't just give them a PowerPoint slide and say, you know, "Go forth and do it."

00:22:34 Ambassador Eric Edelman: And by the way, our, our conclusion that the department's analytical capabilities have atrophied over the years was borne out in the last just, I think, week or two by a government accounting office report, a G.A.O. report, that found exactly the same thing. Although they have more, even more detail than we did. I mean, we were 12 volunteers working over the course of a year, meeting with very small staff, meeting with senior leaders of the department. The G.A.O. has gone in and done this in quite a great bit of detail.

00:23:09 Clifford Chanin: One of the points that I think is related to this in the report is, you look at the relationship between the military and the civilian leadership, which is ostensibly, in any case, supposed to be in charge. Our whole system is premised on the idea of civilian leadership of the military.

00:23:25 But you write that civilian voices have been relatively muted on issues at the center of U.S. defense and national security policy, undermining the concept of civilian control. Is that the outcome of our politics? Is that simply the way sort of the military professions have evolved? What is the problem here that the bigger picture, which the civilians are supposed to be providing, is not really being fleshed out?

00:23:55 Admiral Gary Roughead: Um... the first point I'd make is that this was... The commission was unanimous on this, that we thought that it had, that an imbalance existed, and it has been in the mill for quite some time. And, again, it, it... You know, there were some who thought that we were targeting this administration, or people within the Department of Defense.

00:24:22 But the fact of the matter is that in recent years, I think going back, I date it back to about 1986, when we began to invest much more heavily in

military officers' education, and not just in their academic education, but also in professional military education. Much heavier in that.

00:24:51 We, because of some legislation that was put in place, the military staffs became very large. And so not only did you have people who were very competent and trained and schooled, but you also had mass to throw at any problem. And it has become more difficult, and Eric can talk with a lot more detail on this than I can, more difficult to bring young people into the... into service.

00:25:20 The... whether that's coming in as, as a government servant or, or someone who is being appointed into a position. But I often say, if you're a young military officer, we'll send you to college, to get a master's degree, maybe even a PhD. We'll send you two, two turns to professional military education. And if you're a young civilian working in the Department of Defense, and let's say you're interested in nuclear policy, and you say, "I'd like to go and get an advanced degree so that I can, you know, become a thought leader in this," we might let you off early to go to night school. And so the, the... it really has created an imbalance, that I, you know, as a, as a former military officer, I think is extraordinarily unhealthy for our democracy.

00:26:09 Ambassador Eric Edelman: So, I mean, I was a career Foreign Service officer, but I did two tours, six-and-a-half years in the Department of Defense, and one of the things that struck me, particularly in my last tour, which was as undersecretary of defense for policy, which is the number-three policy position in the department, after the secretary and deputy, was that the policy organization-- there were 1,500 people working for me in offices in Washington and two field, field units-- there was no real career progression for D.O.D. civilians the way there was for, you know, a Foreign Service officer, or for a military officer.

00:26:55 It remined me of being a graduate student, you know? When I was a graduate student in history, and there weren't any jobs for historians, we started publishing a, something called "The Silver Lining," which consisted totally of faculty obituaries...

Clifford Chanin: (chuckles)

00:27:12 Ambassador Eric Edelman: This was how people, in the Department of Defense and OSD were also planning a career. If they stayed long enough, somebody would die, and they would be able to move into that position. So, I think there's that problem, there's the, there's the lack of an analogue to the professional military education that Gary was talking about. And then, finally, there is a huge problem, which is both the problem of the executive and the legislative branch, which is filling presidentially appointed positions.

00:27:45 That's both Senate-confirmed and non-Senate-confirmed positions. So, routinely when I was undersecretary of defense, we had about 25% vacancy rate in OSD policy. And I think it's higher now, I think it's somewhere on the order of 30, 33%. And some of that is because the vetting for presidential appointments has become, you know, a nightmare. And because the Congress takes so long to clear people, the security clearance process has gotten completely gummed up, it's become very difficult to bring people in.

00:28:22 Admiral Gary Roughead: I think the other thing, too, at least on the civilian side, it makes it very difficult, or it is difficult, for people to move in and out of government with respect to any wealth that they may have created while they were out working in the private sector. The... I think it's a very unhealthy assumption that people make that, that you can't go in and out of government and do it in an ethical and honest way.

00:28:57 And so, if you're a young person, and you're looking at being able to provide for your family but wanting to commit to public service during the course of your lifetime, and being able to go in and out, it just is, is... we don't make it easy. In fact, I would say we make it hard. And, and we need young people who have the background, who have an interest, who have the commitment, to give to public service, and, and yet still be able at times to be able to provide, you know, for their families.

00:29:31 So, that's something that I think really needs to get fixed, and I don't seed anything on the horizon, quite frankly, that, that is making that turn.

00:29:40 Clifford Chanin: You know, it raises-- and coming now to China, specifically-- I mean, it raises a contrast, it seems, with the way you describe the Chinese system, which seems to mobilize people and money and concepts around a common goal led by the state, and everybody falls in line. We know there are pitfalls to that system, but it's very, very different from ours.

00:30:03 And so I wonder if each of you might take a turn describing the Chinese challenge, as it's posed. Because, as the admiral said earlier, this is not just in military terms. I think the, the Russian is a very different case. But this is actually a rising power flexing its muscles in all kinds of ways that, at least in the postwar world, no one has really challenged the United States in these areas. And yet the Chinese seem poised to do that.

Admiral Gary Roughead: Do you want to lead off, Eric?

00:30:36 Ambassador Eric Edelman: The Chinese challenge is, is one that... is difficult for us, I think, to wrap our minds around because it's so different, for instance, from what we faced when we dealt with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. So, we're dealing with, you know, an adversary who is not... They've got all sorts of economic problems, but they've got a pretty robust economy that is very deeply entwined with our economy.

00:31:05 Which was not the case the case with the Soviet Union, which had a failing economy that was almost completely cut off from our economy. The other, I think, big difference is that during the Cold War, we had our challenges with Soviet propaganda. But, by and large, Soviet efforts at disinformation were fairly ham-handed and not, you know, not something that we couldn't deal with. I think today that both Russia and China present a challenge for us in, in the information area.

00:31:42 I would actually... we talked about information operations in our report. I would actually personally characterize it as a form of political warfare that's being waged against us. And in some areas, like cyber and information, it's being waged against us every day. And there, the Chinese are extremely capable. I mean, a lot of the discussion in the United States, because of the allegations about collusion in the 2016 election campaign, have focused on Russia.

00:32:14 But if we were having this conversation in New Zealand or Australia, it would all be about what the Chinese are up to. Because there, they've had very, very robust efforts to, you know, expand their political influence through some techniques that are similar to the Russians', but some that are different, and I would argue even more sophisticated.

00:32:40 Admiral Gary Roughead: The other point that I would make is, and I've not advocating this for the United States, but the stated policy, stated by President Xi Jinping, is that there will be civilian-military cooperation. That's expected, and, and that, I think, gives the Chinese the opportunity to be able to bring, especially with the new technologies, bring that into the, into the military.

00:33:10 We, over the years, have become more fragmented between, or among, I would say, academia, industry, and government. To the point where, if you think back to, for example, the space race, that was a national effort that really came together and, and allowed us to do things on a pace and at a scale and with a level of ambition that I think has been extraordinary. We've lost that.

00:33:45 The other thing that, especially as you get into some of the new technologies, China has made the point of investing very heavily in intellectual capital, in people. And when you look at the growth in Chinese students to the United States, it's dramatic-- I think it's over 300,000 now.

00:34:09 And... And it's also what they're studying. If you consider computer science, electrical engineering, to be the foundational disciplines for 5G,

artificial intelligence, 21% of the graduates in computer science in the United States are U.S. citizens. 19% of the graduates in electrical engineering are U.S. citizens. We are not investing in that.

00:34:47 Our elementary school system and secondary school system aren't providing the foundations for our young people to be able to succeed in that. If you look at the percentages of those who go into those fields, noticeably higher. But they're just not prepared to, to do that. So, you know, when we look to the future-- and we've commented on this-- not just from the intellectual capital, but also physically, our young people are not, you know, ready for military service.

00:35:21 It's... the number of young people in the United States that can pass the physical and mental and legal standards to go into the military is 28%. Didn't, didn't want to lift anyone up that way...

(laughter)

Clifford Chanin (laughs): This is not necessarily an upbeat report, I will say.

(laughter)

00:35:44 Clifford Chanin: But, I mean, it does really lay out very clearly what some of the significant issues are. But picking up still with the Chinese question, we have seen in recent years a much more aggressive military stance. These implantations in the middle of the South China Sea, on islands where all of a sudden these empty spaces are built up and become Chinese military bases; relationship, particularly focused on Taiwan, where we have a commitment.

00:36:11 But also, it seems, the military capacities are improving, increasing, and would you say that we are falling behind the Chinese in these areas, if,

indeed, we have commitments out there that require that we do provide defense for allies and so on? Yeah.

00:36:31 Admiral Gary Roughead: Well, I think that one of the aspects of China's strategy is to drive wedges within our alliance structure. Not just in the Pacific, but also in Europe, as the belt and road moves in, into Europe. And Eric can speak, you know, much more about that than I can. But I think that they have made inroads into making it very difficult.

00:36:56 They, in certain areas, technological areas, they, if they are not ahead of us, they're on par. Excuse me... areas such as hypersonics, which are weapons that fly five, six times the speed of sound. Artificial intelligence, I think they're nipping at our heel in artificial intelligence. The 5G technology that will be put in place, I think China is eating into that, and I'm sure you're watching in the news where some of our European allies are, are, you know, having a bit of a dilemma as to, do they go with China or not go with, with China?

00:37:40 So, I, I do think that China is, you know, making significant inroads, and a lot of people will say, "Well, they're stealing all of the intellectual property." There is no question they do that. But having been watching China very closely since the early '90s, they were, they were in an imitation phase where they were copying a lot of what we do, and they still copy a lot of what we do.

00:38:08 But then they went into what I call imitative innovation, where they are kind of taking what they've learned and then working on it. And now they have people graduating from, and have now for decades, graduating from some of our very top universities who are now the innovators. And there is genuine innovation going on in China, in addition to which they're pulling people from the United States to, you know, be in some of the more innovative labs and companies in China. So the, you know, the tables have turned a bit, and, again, this is not something that the Department of Defense can fix. This is a national issue, and that's what we tried to bring out in the report.

00:38:38 Ambassador Eric Edelman: You know, I think a lot of the time when people have this discussion, people will say, "We have the finest military in the world." And we do. And we have a battle-tested military, which they do not have. But our military, for the last, you know, 18 years, for good and sufficient reason, as Admiral Roughead said, has been focused on finding, fixing, and finishing terrorists. And we are the best military in the world for doing that.

00:39:18 But what we haven't done is large-scale combined-arms operations, which would be what we might have to do if we were to be in a dust-up with Russia or China. And right now, I still think we have a number of advantages, but what we tried to draw attention to in this report is, if current trends are not reversed, then I think we could find ourselves down the road in a place where we don't want to be, where we could find ourselves in a fight that we could lose.

00:39:50 Admiral Gary Roughead: If I could just add one more thing to that. That one of the points that we make in the report is that we believe that many of the challenges that we face, particularly in the defense area, are classified. And this is particularly true in space, which is... You know, we dominated space, and I would say we still have an edge in space.

00:40:16 But just begin to drill around on China's space program. But a lot of the challenges that we have in space are also classified. And as some of our discussions that we had during the course of our deliberations was that we are classifying that which our adversaries are imposing on us.

00:40:37 Our adversaries know that they're imposing it on us, so who are we classifying it against? And our point is that we believe that some of these challenges need to be out in the open so the American people can understand what they are, have debates, have discussions, and only from that awareness can you then, as a nation, make decisions on, "Will we spend money on this, or will we spend money on that?" I think we've kept too much under wraps, and we're keeping it, in my view, from the wrong people.

00:41:11 Clifford Chanin: Let me ask, just on this point, you know, we have this sense of the last years, of sort of turning these problems over to the military. You know, we know the numbers of American citizens, the percentage of the population that has fought these wars is really tiny in relation to the population as a whole.

00:41:32 But I think, at the larger scale, and this gets to the civilian- military question you were discussing before, but at the larger scale, it's really a matter of, you know, what does the population in general have, by way of connection-- in family or other terms-- but in intellectual, conceptual terms, with what goes on with the military? Is that a concern? That the military is sort of sent off to do these things, and it's not just the personal sacrifices that individuals make, but it seems it's almost behind a curtain, what goes on there, and somehow the connection to the broader society of knowing and, in fact, governing what's done, that seems to be lost, as well.

00:42:12 Admiral Gary Roughead: No, I agree, and I think that... The term I use, and it's not in the report, but we have, as Eric said, the finest military ever. And that is a result of the all-volunteer force that went into effect in the early '70s. And I've served in both, and there is no question. You know, when people say, "What's the most revolutionary thing that ever happened in recent history in the American military?" It's going to the all-volunteer force. It's not some widget that's flying around in space.

00:42:43 But what has happened is, that all-volunteer force has now become an all-professional force. And by that, I mean it's becoming more insular. In the Navy, some recent figures that I've seen, those who are serving, 75% of them come from someone who has in their immediate family somebody who has been in the military. I think that that is a, is a bit of an isolation, and detaches the American public from its military.

00:43:12 You also look at where the military is being drawn from, and it's from the South and from the Southwest. Now, I'm not a proponent of a draft because of the nature of the work that we're doing. I am a proponent of national service. But we really need to think about the military, and this also gets to the discussion with the American people.

00:43:39 You mentioned Taiwan. Those of us who have, you know, lived the life we have and still deal in policy issues, we know a lot of the intricacies about Taiwan. But when I go to the Walmart in Warrenton, Virginia, and I ask somebody about the... You know, the Taiwan Relations Act, they're going to look at me like I have three heads. But, if anything were to happen in Taiwan, it's the American people that will have to decide, "Are we willing to spend the blood and treasure to fulfill our obligations?" And we're just not having those discussions.

00:44:16 Clifford Chanin: I mean, your career was in diplomacy. So, on the civilian side of managing these questions and relationships, we know in recent years, the budget for the State Department has been not just cut, but under assault. Is that only something that's going to increase this disproportion as to where these problems get resolved?

00:44:39 Ambassador Eric Edelman: Well, even with the... You know, even with the decline over the last decade of resources going to the defense budget-- which has been interrupted on a couple of occasions by these bipartisan budget deals that have plussed it up, you know, a little bit here and there-- the State Department budgets continue to atrophy and continue to be cut. It is literally the case that we have more people in military bands than we have in the State Department's Foreign Service corps.

00:45:14 And so there is a huge disproportion and it, you know, it does lead to, you know, some distortions, I think, in the policy process. Secretary Gates, for whom both Admiral Roughead and I worked, used to joke that in the average interagency meeting about, you know, any given problem, the State Department would come in and say, "We need a military solution to this." And the Department of Defense would say, "No, we need covert action." And the C.I.A. would say, "No, we need diplomacy."

(laughter)

00:45:48 Ambassador Eric Edelman: And there is more than, you know, like all jokes, there's more than a grain of truth in that.

Admiral Gary Roughead: Yeah.

Ambassador Eric Edelman: And so, you know, there is the old adage, that if, you know, the only thing you have is a hammer, every problem becomes a nail. And we... there is a risk, I think, of that becoming a default position for us if we continue to devalue diplomacy.

00:46:15 Now, I will also tell you, and my Foreign Service colleagues sometimes don't like to hear this, but, you know, George Kennan, in 1946, gave a lecture at the National War College in which he said, "You have no idea how much more constructive and congenial diplomacy is if you have a little quiet force in the background." And what... diplomacy is the adjudication of national differences by negotiation rather than by force. But unless there is force looming in the background, on some of these very knotty issues, it's sometimes very difficult to get agreement. And so you have to have the two working in harmony, so...

00:46:53 Clifford Chanin: Your arguments don't look as good if there's not something backing them up. You know, we're sitting here, and we think back of the attack here, and, you know, the retrospective view of it is at that time, it was unimaginable. And yet it occurred, someone thought of it, and it changed the world. And so I'm asking, you know, in your report, you make mention of...

00:47:19 Because of these trends, the possibility that the United States could be attacked by a major power at home, could lose a war, or suffer enormous casualties even in winning a war. I mean, that is unimaginable to us in terms of the recent decades of our history. Perhaps even during the whole postwar period, and yet the trends are continuing, we said this at the very beginning, and they seem to be leading... at least now a greater possibility of the unimaginable, as 9/11 was in much more specific terms.

00:47:53 Admiral Gary Roughead: Right, and I think, you know, one of the points that we discussed at length was, again, this conditioning that we've had on the wars in the Middle East, and the nature of major-power conflict, whether it's China or Russia, is that there's a very real probability that there would be significant loss of what I would call major capital assets that this nation has not had to deal with in a long, long time. Really, one would argue, since World War II.

00:48:33 And so if you take the scenario of Taiwan, and if we were to have... you know, a massive attack on one of the aircraft carriers, and 1,500 people were killed, the part of the calculus of winning and losing is, what are the American people willing to absorb? And do they understand the nature of the types of conflict that we may be in?

00:49:02 And then there is also the issue of nuclear deterrence, and how the adversaries are modernizing their nuclear arsenals. And so when we get into... you know, how we think we need to prepare for the future, and, you know, we were critical of lack of analysis on the part of the Department of Defense, and people said, "Well, you did less analysis than they did, but yet you are recommending, you know, an increase in spending."

00:49:35 If you are trying to modernize a force that hasn't been modernized since the 1980s-- that's the conventional force-- you're trying to modernize the nuclear triad-- which is due for modernization-- and you are trying to introduce leading-edge technology, and you are in a much, much more competitive human capital market, we didn't think less was the answer. And so that, that's one of the things that... Again, this conversation has to take place not just within the Department of Defense, this is a national discussion.

00:50:13 Ambassador Eric Edelman: It's been a quarter of a century since the Cold War ended, and I think, like a lot of people, I, when the Cold War ended, thought we were in a kind of different world, where great-power competition was a thing of the past. There had been a marked decline in great-power conflict; state-on-state war declined enormously after 1945.

00:50:37 That didn't mean that the world was a peaceful place with lions laying down with lambs. But these were largely civil wars in remote parts of the world, that, you know, didn't worry about... We didn't worry about that much. And I think what people have lost is a sense of how bad things can be, and how bad they can get when you have great powers, multiple great powers, competing with one another in international affairs.

00:51:09 We haven't seen anything on the scale of World War I or World War II, you know, in almost anybody's lifetime now, because the Greatest Generation that fought World War II is now literally dying off. My dad was in that, that, you know, that group. And so one of the things I think we were trying to help prompt is a sense that complacency in the face of these challenges is not warranted and may be dangerous.

00:51:37 Clifford Chanin: You know, and not in relation to this program this evening, but coincidentally, I'm actually reading the memoir of Charles de Gaulle. And he was a military officer in World War I, highly decorated. And in the interwar period, he is basically the lone voice in the French military pointing out the need for a mechanized force. That the next war was going to be fought by, or dominated by, mechanized forces. That doesn't happen in France, his report is published and discussed, by nothing really moves, and, of course, the Germans create the very force that de Gaulle had been advocating. And it's that force that moves across the border.

00:52:15 So, that's the motion of hindsight, and de Gaulle is, in retrospect, quite pleased to point out his own foresight in thinking of this at that time. But, you know, the other problem is, a report, as difficult as the circumstances it points out may be, as much of a warning as it hopes to offer, a report may simply wind up on a shelf and have no impact whatsoever.

00:52:39 And so I wonder how you think about the problems that you're pointing out to us in this report, which is a serious document. But the level of gravity that we face, and that, you know, without wishing or hoping anything as a conclusion, you know, is this a report, or are these kinds of warnings the kinds of things that you think we will be looking back on at

some point, and if we don't act on them, we will regret them from a very different position than we are in today?

Admiral Gary Roughead: My short answer is yes.

Clifford Chanin: Much longer than my... Much shorter than my question.

(laughter)

00:53:17 Admiral Gary Roughead: No, but I would also say that... You know, Eric has done several of these. He, you know, he considers himself a serial offender on the number that he's done. But the report is really carried and continues to draw attention, and it will be important, particularly as we go into the budget debate. I think we've... I think we've put some things on the... on the table that have carried the report in the policy realm and the budget realm, quite frankly, longer than I thought it would be... Eric?

00:53:58 Ambassador Eric Edelman: You know, since you opened your question, Cliff, with a citation from de Gaulle, I'm tempted to reply that the French historian Marc Bloch, who wrote "Strange Defeat," which was a history of how France lost the war in 1940 to Germany, talked about the paradox of revision. Which is, if you call attention to a problem, you actually are helping to, you know, actually perhaps evade the worst consequences of that problem.

00:54:30 And that's certainly, I think, what we hoped we would do in this report and why we're very grateful to have this opportunity today to be here-- Gary and I have done a number of events; we'll be doing another one at the end of the month in New Haven-- to have this conversation continue. And I think the good news is that at least when we testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the leadership there, both Chairman Jim Inhofe and his minority ranking member, Senator Jack Reed,

00:55:03 I think, were both extremely complimentary about the report. And both their staffs, I think, see it as an aid to them in executing their constitutional oversight responsibilities of the Department of Defense. And so I think the report will live on in that way, as well.

Admiral Gary Roughead: Yeah, and I would also, my view, and I may come across as a bit of a pessimist, but I also live by the rule that I've never met a disappointed pessimist, so...

(laughter)

00:55:33 Admiral Gary Roughead: But the... The... You know, we have all of the building blocks to do this, you know. We referred back to the challenges that we faced in the Cold War. And, and I think that we still have the means to do it, but, again, it's not just fixing defense-- it's broader than that. And, you know, we talked about China and its rise, and I often think back to an evening in Beijing, where, after a day of everyone trading talking points back and forth, and we were having dinner, and there was a Chinese general that, you know, looked at me, and obviously we're going through an interpreter, but I could see that he got really serious, and he looked at me and he said, "I just have one question for you."

00:56:21 And I said, "What's that?" And he said, "How do you make your people fight so well?" And so, in his mind, he... He knows that as a nation, we, you know, we are very proud, we're very effective, and extraordinarily patriotic and competent. And I think that if we can get the other pieces together, and as Eric said, you know, we're not, you know, lusting for a conflict. In fact, my whole objective throughout my career was to have an adversary wake up in the morning and say, "Today is not the day that I want to go after those guys."

00:57:02 And that requires strength and it requires a national effort, and we have a lot of challenges that we have to deal with. In fact, that was one of the questions that the senators were asking. You know, they gave great credit to the report, but they said, "You know, we have a lot of other things that we have to deal with. How do we do it?" And that's the type

of conversation that I think the nation has to have. We have to make more information available so that the American people can make the decisions that they should make, and that they need to make.

00:57:36 Clifford Chanin: We're going to take some questions, but I cannot leave one subject unmentioned. We talked about it before, and I'm going to quote from the report itself, and perhaps the audience will realize this is something of current discussion, so... "U.S. alliances and partnerships are sometimes mischaracterized as arrangements that squander American resources on behalf of free-riding foreign countries. In reality, these arrangements have been deeply rooted in American self-interest."

00:58:05 And repeatedly in this report, you speak about the importance of our alliances and our relationships around the world, and that the international order that was created around our own principles after World War II, and has persisted for decades, is something that serves our interests. And yet, as we know, this is something that is under assault from the Oval Office.

00:58:31 And so the question is, has that set of relationships and that international order run its course, and the president is actually looking towards perhaps an undefined but still different future, because simply the current order is running on fumes, or is this something that still has vitality and that still underscores not just our strength, but a vision of what the world should be that remains appealing, remains attractive to people around the world?

00:59:03 Ambassador Eric Edelman: Well, I think if you look at how the Cold War played out, you know, the U.S. alliance system was one of the great strategic comparative advantages we had vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. I mean, we had real allies. They had, you know, subjects. And the truth is, if you look at our adversaries today, neither China nor Russia nor even Iran have real allies.

00:59:30 They have some proxy relationships or other kinds of, you know, convenient dalliances, but no real allies. And so why we would give up,

you know, something that has been a huge advantage to us is a mystery to me. Having said that, I don't, you know, much I would like to lay all of the blame at, you know, the feet of Donald Trump, the reality is that, you know, President Obama had some reservations about the free-riding of allies, as well.

01:00:02 Free-riding has always been a problem in the alliances. Since the ink was drying on the Washington Treaty, really, in 1949 and '50, we've had these problems. But there are ways to, I think, go after that problem and get the division of labor between us and our allies right that can and should be done out of respect and out of common values to preserve what has kept the peace for a very long period of time.

01:00:33 Admiral Gary Roughead: And I completely agree. There is no question that the dissonance that we have produced on the value of alliances is straining them significantly. But I think we cannot lose sight of the fact that so many countries would rather be a party with the United States than with China or with Russia. I also think it's important that we have to advance the alliance relationships in ways that are, quite frankly, still locked in the past.

01:01:11 For example, as we get into some of these new technological areas, and I apologize for sounding like a, you know, that everything is about technology, but we don't make it easy for our high-end allies to participate in co-production, co-development, and benefit from the intellectual property that they generate.

01:01:33 I can think of no better country to go into autonomous vehicles and robotics than Japan. But we tend not to treat them as an equal partner that has access to intellectual property, and they can, you know, do with it what they will. And we really need to upgrade the types of relationships that we have.

01:01:56 And one of the... to give you an example of how powerful the relationships are, in my past life, every two years we would have an event at our war college in Newport, Rhode Island. And we'd bring all the naval

leaders from around the world. And the one year that we were there, we actually had more people mustered in Newport, Rhode Island, than were in the general assembly here for the meeting during the same time.

01:02:28 And one of the evenings, we take a photograph of the alumni from the Naval War College. And when the alumni got on the stage to take the photograph, 68 heads of their navy or their coast guard or maritime police, depending on the size of their country, were graduates of the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

01:02:54 That's a network that you cannot replace. And it's a network that gives you ties and bonds and strength that we can't lose sight of. And it requires engagement, it requires understanding what they can bring. Sometimes they're not going to operate on the level that we can, but they all bring value and they bring strength in numbers, and we can't lose sight of that.

01:03:19 Clifford Chanin: And just to underscore that point, it's not confined to the navy or the military. It's law enforcement, it's intelligence, it's diplomacy-- it's across the board. And these relationships are equally strong in all of those sectors. Let's see if we have any questions from our audience. We have a microphone, you have to wait for this lady up here. Just wait for a microphone to come to you.

01:03:47 Audience Member: So you both mentioned outer space a couple of times. So the president has talked about this new branch of the military for outer space. Is it addressed in the report? Did the commission address it, and what do you guys think about it?

01:04:07 Ambassador Eric Edelman: Well, I'll make a very brief remark and then turn the floor over to Gary, who is more expert on space than I am. We did not take a position on the question of whether there should be a separate service or not. What we did try and do was outline some of the key elements about how space is related to almost everything we do in defense, to make sure that whatever organizational fix is decided on

doesn't lose sight of those key elements and they don't get lost in translation as we move to whatever the new organizational framework is.

01:04:44 Admiral Gary Roughead: Yeah, and I would say that the emphasis that this administration has put on space, I think, is spot-on. And I also believe that the path that they are on for the Space Force model that will be created I personally agree with. I do think that we had allowed space to become... Well, it was assumed. We did not properly incentivize and reward those young people that were going into space.

01:05:15 And so I'm hopeful that this new construct will keep the attention on space, and will allow us to develop over careers a cadre of people who really understand what it will be like to operate there and also to be able to bring in the new commercial dimension. Because, you know, I mentioned the space race before, that... You know, we didn't have the SpaceXs and, you know, and Elon Musk putting his car up in outer space and things like that.

(laughter)

01:05:48 Admiral Gary Roughead: But that... space has changed so much that we have to have a different approach, and we have to be organized to be real serious about it.

Clifford Chanin: Other question?

Audience Member: Thank you for your comments and perspective. Question I have, Admiral. A number of times you were talking about having the, in my words, the open, honest communication or discussions about these issues. How... do you have some thoughts on how they can be achieved given that we have an environment that seems to be one of instant gratification and one through snippets of information?

01:06:26 Admiral Gary Roughead: Yeah, I... Well, one, I'm hopeful that if we can get some of the challenges that are out there, and I'm not saying that we have to, you know, play Chicken Little and "the sky is falling." But we really have to begin, I think, to cultivate more young people who can have an appreciation of what their future is going to be like in an environment that's different than what we grew up in.

01:06:52 You know, we, we can talk a lot about the administration, but I would submit that our representatives on the legislative side need to begin to have this as part of their discussion going with their constituents, which doesn't happen, and unfortunately, we're even becoming more superficial in that. But I think it's important that our political leadership begin to have conversations with the American people. I also think, and I alluded to the fact, that we... that the government and businesses are detached from academia.

01:07:31 We have to be able to have young people who, in universities and colleges, want to go into public service, want to be able to become leaders in policy thought on some of these areas. And so I think trying to draw what I would call the three pillars together would be very, very helpful. And I'm fully aware of some of the cultural issues that have to be dealt with.

Clifford Chanin: I think we will do one more-- gentleman here.

Audience Member (off mic): How are you doing?

Clifford Chanin: Hang on, just wait for the mic, if you would.

01:08:07 Audience Member: This question is for both. You know, as far as our allies, okay, you know, you hear all the talk about the United States no longer the superpower of the world and things of that nature. But based on the relationships we have with our strong allies, a whole lot of our allies ordinarily are taking cue from the United States as far as their

personal national security, based on our national security. They're still taking the cue, "Let's see what United States is going to do."

01:08:40 As far as keeping ourselves secure, keeping themselves secure, and to reinforce the relationships, okay, amongst the country, amongst both countries, and the other question is, I think, do you feel that, you know, especially in this day and age, that administrations are talking more about domestic issues and not giving enough attention to the Department of Defense and other national security issues, because without our national security, and the Department of Defense and the State Department, we do not have a country? I mean, this, that's it.

01:09:22 Ambassador Eric Edelman: So, when I talk to members of Congress, I like to point out to them that, actually, providing for the common defense is one of the things that they're obligated to do under the Constitution. All the other things that they do-- regulating interstate commerce-- are things they may do, but providing for the common defense is something that they have an obligation to do.

01:09:43 I do worry that actually we are spending much less time having this national conversation, as Admiral Roughead was suggesting, I think that's important. On the point about allies, it's not going to work if we tell our allies, "You need to spend more on defense," and we're not doing it ourselves. I mean, if we don't have skin in the game, they're not going to do it.

01:10:06 So these things have to go in parallel, and it's good to jawbone the allies, try to get them to do more. It's actually more important to get them to spend money on the right things than it is to just get them to spend more money. But I think we can do all that, and I think for all the talk about, you know, multi-polar world, and the end of, you know, U.S. primacy, we still are the richest country in the world.

01:10:34 We're the only country that has military global reach, we have tremendous advantages, we've got great people. We just have to harness it and put it into service of a common objective.

Admiral Gary Roughead: I agree with that.

Clifford Chanin: I will recommend to all of you to take a look at this report. It is really, in 60-, 70-odd pages, you know, a really concise statement of some of the issues that the country faces. And I hope that we've been able to contribute here this evening to the dialogue that the country does need.

01:11:12 So, please on that note, join me in thanking Admiral Gary Roughead and Ambassador Eric Edelman.

(applause)