

Brookings Institute Event

Global Threats and American National Security Priorities

A Discussion with General Joseph Dunford, USMC, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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Moderator: Michael O'Hanlon, Senior Fellow

Moderator Questions

Could you give us a quick tour of the world based on the framework for thinking about threats, specifically the 4+1 (Russia, China, Iran, North Korea and transnational terrorism)?

1. Choosing those four nations are not that we expect to fight these countries but that if we are prepared to face them then we are also most likely prepared to face most other threats that we don't expect.
2. Believe that we have a conventional combat advantage over Russia which is why they try to operate under the threshold of combat that would require a US response.
 - a. These movements under the threshold of violence have been aimed at weakening US ties with NATO
3. China is developing technology similar to that of Russia, but designed and intended to prevent operations in the South China Sea

Does the US still stand behind Article V of NATO (mutual defense clause)?

1. Yes, we have reaffirmed our commitments to NATO countries and our other allies
 - a. Burden sharing is important among NATO countries
 - b. Must also work to keep NATO relevant

There seem to be many parts of the Administration's policy toward Russia but no (publicly) stated policy toward Russia- how do the parts fit together?

1. There is a law on the books that prevents military-to-military cooperation with Russia.
2. Have met with Russian counterpart to discuss risk mitigation and deconflicting. The law does not prevent communication which is necessary for safety.

Russian planes have been buzzing U.S. planes and Navy ships-did you bring this issue up during the meeting with your counterpart?

1. Both agreed to not discuss the topics but we have a separate meeting with the Russians every year to discuss unsafe incidents
 - a. The next meeting to discuss these incidents will take place later this year.
2. Did mention the issue.

Regarding Syria and proposed "safe-zones," how do you create them? What about Assad's position- do strategic options potentially include autonomous regions?

1. We need to think about how facts on the ground inform the political process in Geneva.
2. Whatever situation is on the ground is what the Secretary of State will take to Geneva.

China is militarizing the South China Sea. What kind of military options do we have to offer the President for the South China Sea situation to be solved diplomatically?

1. We have said the for years that the disputes in the South China Sea should be solved according to international law
2. Our interests are to support our allies and deter aggression in the Pacific as a whole, not just the South China Sea
3. We need to exercise our right of navigation

If you were to add one more threat to the "4+1" what would it be?

1. Solvency: economic strength is the foundation of all we can do.

Questions from the audience

Some have mentioned a new force sizing structure- what would that be?

1. Nothing has been discussed yet, Secretary Mattis needs time to put fingerprints on our strategy before any new construct is considered

Have you seen any change in Iran's behavior since being "put on notice?"

1. No, haven't seen any change
2. Iran's major export is malign influence, including its proxy war in Yemen.

To what extent does long term plan for Iraq involve a permanent US footprint?

1. We are in the business of providing the President with options
2. Not in a position to discuss but no decisions have been made?

Can we expect more troops to be deployed to help defeat ISIS?

1. We will provide the President with options

O'Hanlon: is presenting the President options a way to do a deep dive on a complicated topic that President Trump hasn't had the chance to think about much?

1. This is an opportunity for the Administration to think about broader issues and defeating ISIS should be an ongoing dialogue

Only ½ of 1 percent of U.S. population serves in the military- is this a problem and have you thought about a national service requirement?

1. Many more, including civilians and the Intelligence Community, are part of protecting the country

2. The issue is more about American awareness of the sacrifices being made
3. Having national service is an admirable idea

The USS *Carl Vinson* is currently sailing in the South China Sea- what is the future of military-to-military communications?

1. We respect sovereignty and freedom of navigation
 - a. We will continue to sail through waters as allowed by international law
2. Positive military-to-military communications are important
 - a. Our military relationship will reflect the political relationship
 - b. At a minimum our militaries need to keep communication open for safety and mitigating any crisis.