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Via U.S. Mail

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin, III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

RE: Concept Plan: Eliminating Two Pillars of Russia's Nuclear Triad

Dear Secretary Austin,

Thank you for your continued service in the Department of Defense.

I am a part-time research and development executive in California who writes screenplays in his spare time. I'm writing to you on this occasion to propose an idea from a fictional story that I wrote about a near-future conflict between NATO and Russia.

Executive Summary

Essentially, in order to avert an otherwise seemingly inevitable World War III, I propose a simultaneous preemptive strike by NATO on Russia with three components: (1) decapitation of the Russian regime with a precision munition directed at Vladimir Putin's armored train, (2) the sinking of Russia's ballistic missile submarine fleet by torpedo-armed underwater drones and/or U.S. attack submarines, and (3) destruction of Russia's bomber fleet with stealth drones. The intention is to eliminate the SLBM and long-range bomber pillars of Russia's nuclear triad with a purely conventional strike, thereby drastically reducing the risk of a future nuclear conflict if the Russians keep their ICBMs in reserve. Defensively, if Russia counterattacks and/or there is a "fail-deadly" trigger on Russia's ICBMs, I propose intercepting Russian ICBMs in the ascent phase with anti-ballistic missiles such as the existing AEGIS capability.

The end goal is to force regime change in Russia and weaken their country below the threshold of danger to NATO for decades. I continue to believe that unless such a strike occurs within the next handful of years, Russia's offensive hypersonic missile capabilities will go fully online and there will be no further window to initiate any type of campaign against Russia without the loss of millions of lives. There is ample justification from the war in Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's various war crimes therein, as well as the failure of economic sanctions to deter Russian aggression. In addition, President Putin's recklessness and his enabling by the Russian people demonstrate that the proposed campaign is a "just war" with all alternative possibilities exhausted, as required by just war theory.

The Armored Train

President Putin apparently travels via armored train these days, perhaps correctly believing that his plane will have some type of accident if he flies. Assuming he actually uses his train regularly, the biggest disadvantage of an armored train is one-dimensional travel along a predictable line. If not already done, I propose studying the movements of the train with multivariate regression to develop statistical probabilities and patterns, with a view toward predicting the circular error probability of where the train is located at any given time. This would assist in preparing air assets for deployment, including stealth drones armed with guided missiles that could loiter above the train for long periods. At the right moment, I would fire missiles at the train in a decapitation strike, similar to the attempted strike against Saddam Hussein in the second Gulf War.

The Submarine Fleet

The Russian submarine fleet allegedly consists of thirteen active ballistic missile submarines: seven Borei-class and six Delta-class, with thirteen attack submarines that have nuclear propulsion and twenty-one diesel attack submarines. The U.S. fleet alone has fifty-three nuclear-propelled attack submarines, providing two-to-one coverage of Russia's submarine fleet. Add to that NATO allies' submarines, and there are at least a hundred submarines available to cover Russia's fleet three-to-one. Given the short warning between a launch detection and impact of a SLBM, the priority in this proposed plan is to locate, target, and sink all thirteen of the Russian ballistic missile submarines simultaneously, with some losses on the NATO side. As submarine warfare expects that each side will shadow the other, it is expected that NATO submarines can approach Russian submarines at close range in this scenario. With close coordination and scheduling, it appears possible for the attack to occur at the same exact time, providing no warning and flooding the Russian headquarters with information overload, consistent with maneuver warfare.

The Bomber Fleet

The Russian bomber fleet is equipped with long-range nuclear-tipped cruise missiles, and accordingly, the priority is preventing them from taking off in the first place. Research indicates that U.S. minimum interval takeoffs still take 15 minutes to prepare, during which time the aircraft are vulnerable. Assuming the Russian procedures are similar, I propose massing stealth drones at high altitude over all nuclear-capable Russian air bases and either destroying the runways or bombing the planes as they ready for takeoff. Alternatively, cruise missiles could be launched and fly below radar in order to destroy the runways at precisely the same time as the submarine strike.

The Cyber Domain

Everything must appear normal to the Russians for as long as possible so that they have minimal warning and minimal time to decide their course of action. In the event there are publicly unknown offensive space capabilities in U.S. satellites that permit jamming or, better yet, the direction of false signals to Russian satellites, it would make sense to feed false data to Russian satellites or jam their sensors in conjunction with the strike.

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Game Theory

It is expected that Russia will want to save its ICBMs for deterrence purposes rather than fire them. Alternatively, if there is a “dead man switch” on Vladimir Putin’s life, then the only apparent solution for defending against the final pillar of Russia’s nuclear triad is attempting intercepts in the ascent phase. Obviously, the Russians would notice if the entire U.S. Navy’s AEGIS capability were deployed around Russia, leaving a question mark in the plan as to how to cover that deployment. I am not an expert in military technology, and I would need to leave that area to better minds.

Conclusion

The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few; in that connection, the goal of any campaign in a “just war” should be to deliver the greatest good for the greatest number of people. I believe the proposed plan delivers on those goals and would be at least arguably appropriate for evaluation at some level of the Department of Defense. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Andrew G. Watters

cc: U.S. Strategic Command
usstratcompa@mail.mil