

US general calls for nuclear build-up against Russia

Patrick Martin
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The Air Force general who supervises the US nuclear weapons stockpile made an unusual series of public appearances Tuesday in New York City, addressing the Harvard Club and giving an interview to editors of the *New York Times* at the newspaper's offices.

Lieutenant General Jack Weinstein is deputy chief of staff for strategic deterrence and nuclear integration at the Pentagon, giving him responsibility for the overall readiness of the US nuclear arsenal, the most powerful in the world, able to destroy life on the planet many times over.

According to the *Times* report of his remarks to the newspaper, Weinstein expressed concern over “much more aggressive” behavior by Russia in the last few years, and cited this as justification for strengthening and upgrading US nuclear weapons.

The Obama administration launched a \$1 trillion program to modernize US nuclear weapons, including particularly ominous efforts to make nuclear weapons more “usable” on the battlefield, and the Trump administration plans to continue and accelerate that build-up.

“If you look at the Russian behavior since 2010 to the way they are now, it’s much more aggressive—much more, I’ll say, bellicose,” he told the *Times*. “I woke up one day, and the Russians had invaded a sovereign nation, which was not something that was on my scope.” He also accused Russia of violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, signed by the US and the Soviet Union in 1987.

Weinstein added that considering the relations between the United States and Russia historically, “For me the most important thing we can really do is maintain a strong nuclear deterrent.”

He added that the US doctrine of deterrence depended on a firm willingness to use nuclear weapons in war.

“My belief is that a strong nuclear force keeps this country safe,” he said to the Harvard Club. “Deterrence is capability times will,” he continued. “You need to have the will to use it.”

The general’s appearance before a group of *New York Times* editors was particularly remarkable since it came one day after the nationally televised hearing before the House Intelligence Committee, at which FBI Director James Comey confirmed that the bureau is investigating possible collusion between the Russian government and the Trump campaign during the 2016 presidential election.

The *Times* has been the media spearhead of the effort to depict Trump as a Russian stooge and suggest that his election was tainted by Russian interference, a campaign fueled by leaks from anonymous sources within the military-intelligence apparatus, hostile to Trump’s seemingly less aggressive posture towards Russia.

The same issue of the *Times* that reported the interview with General Weinstein carried a diatribe by columnist Nicholas Kristof, headlined, “There’s a Smell of Treason in the Air,” and calling for the establishment of an independent commission to investigate Trump’s alleged links with Russia.

These were the political conditions under which the general with top responsibility for nuclear weapons stopped by the offices of the *Times* for an interview bolstering the newspaper’s anti-Russian campaign, which targets his nominal “commander-in-chief.”

Weinstein also voiced differences with the Trump administration, at least in tone and emphasis, in his remarks at the Harvard Club the same day. He noted that basing US nuclear weapons in South Korea might be seen as provocative by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and might be unwise, only days after US

officials suggested that course of action.

The general was hardly speaking as a pacifist, declaring flatly, “If the North Koreans go south of the DMZ there will be war,” and vowing that all military options remained on the table in dealing with North Korea’s alleged effort to build a missile that could deliver a nuclear weapon against the US mainland.



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