

Bill Walton (00:02):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton and I'm back today with my favorite national security expert, Steven Bryan, who's with the Center for Security Policy. And Steven's written some very interesting material about a couple developments pertaining to Europe and its security, and in fact the United States and our security. Number one is that the Russians have developed a missile that could be a real game changer. And the other is that there's a report by a German think tank or EU think tank about the fact that Europe may not be able to defend itself in any type of war. So with that happy news Steven. Let's talk about the missile, which as you said is a real game changer.

Stephen Bryen (00:53):

Yeah, I think it is. It called a renick? I think that means Hazel, but I'm not a Russian speaker, so I'll leave it at that. It's intermediate range. Ballistic missile was fired from a Russian base called Cap Capistan Ya A Ya is a ravine. It's about a thousand kilometers from Dnipro where the missile hit we're about 600 miles. So it's pretty far into the western part of Russia, this base. Anyway, the missile itself is a hypersonic platform, and I believe, and I think there's no proof about this, but it really appears to be a missile that has on top of it, a hypersonic glide vehicle. Now, a hypersonic Glide vehicle is designed to leave space and skim the Earth's atmosphere and then descend at hypersonic speeds to a target. The Russians developed a system like this, oh, about 20 19, 20 18, 20 19, called a Vanguard, and it's a nuclear system that goes on top of an intercontinental ballistic missile. The one that was used in the attack in Dnipro appears to have been equipped with conventional munitions, not nuclear, and most of the reports back that up, the rocket itself, the renik reached a speed of about 20 Mac, which is very fast.

Bill Walton (02:47):

20 mac is around, I looked it up, 15,224 miles per hour.

Stephen Bryen (02:54):

Yeah, I mean, it's fast. Better than my car. That's really fast. By the time the glide vehicle made it to release its munitions on the target, it was probably flying about half that speed or M 10, 7,000, 8,000 miles an hour. And what we understand so far, and I have by the way, an interesting eyewitness report, I'll read it to you in a second, is that it didn't have any explosives. The warheads were essentially solid iron, or I don't want to say iron because it probably wasn't, but some other hard material, probably tungsten carbide or something like that, that penetrated the earth, what we would call a bunker buster. And eyewitnesses said, oh, it was like an earthquake way. We were a mile away and our house cracked. It was that violent and it hit this old Russian base, which is used to manufacture missiles by the Ukrainians It and did a lot of damage. Since then, the Ukrainians have sealed off the site and not let any eyewitnesses any longer get near it, other than people from NATO in the United States were coming to examine what happened. So it had at least six packets of weapons and each one of those contained between four and six submunitions. So it was somewhere between 24 and 36 penetrations of the earth at this site. It was pretty spectacular.

(04:59):

So

Bill Walton (05:01):

What makes this is the 20 Mac?

Stephen Bryen ([05:06](#)):

Well, it's hypersonic.

([05:09](#)):

Yeah, it's hypersonic long range, probably. There's no air defenses that can knock it out right now. So it's a formidable weapon in that sense. Now we know that the one that the Russians fired was a test vehicle. It was not a rocket that it was in serial manufacturing. In fact, when Putin, who addressed the Russian nation after the strike said that he had ordered serial manufacturing, now that it proved to be successful, it had telemetry on board. The Ukrainians say they recovered a part of the electronics that were a telemetry package and usually use telemetry on test missiles to understand how they perform and to make changes if necessary, if they don't perform as well as you'd like. So yeah, it was a test one. They may have a handful of these, maybe four, maybe six, I don't think any more than that in their arsenal right now. And it's possible even just one or two. That's it.

Bill Walton ([06:20](#)):

I think you explained that not only does this work without explosive, but it also penetrates very deeply into the earth and that it can go right at underground bunkers and

Stephen Bryen ([06:34](#)):

Yeah, exactly.

Bill Walton ([06:35](#)):

Facilit that are hidden silos. And I think you said that one of there was an underground munition facility and it was simply pulverized. It was turned to dust.

Stephen Bryen ([06:45](#)):

Yeah, well, that's what the witnesses say, and it seems to be the case. No one is refuting that Ukrainians said, well, didn't do any damage because there wasn't any explosions.

Bill Walton ([07:04](#)):

But doesn't this send a signal to our president of Ukraine who's operating from an underground bunker that it might not be.

Stephen Bryen ([07:14](#)):

I think that was, he thinks it's, I think that's exactly what the Russians wanted him to understand, that it could take out his bunker in Kiev and others like it, that they've got scattered around and turn 'em into dust. And that's a pretty strong warning. But it didn't stop the Ukrainians. I mean, they fired another 13 attack s missiles over the last three days. So they're still at it. And I imagine the Russians will do something else now.

Bill Walton ([07:54](#)):

Well, and it didn't stop Joe Biden for him asking him for another 24 billion in aid to Ukraine. It seems like there's this era, there's this unreality around our thinking about how we're going to deal with this and facts on the ground don't matter. And this missile is a massive new fact. I mean, it's a game changer. It wasn't the point also that this could be, it could easily reach London or Paris.

Stephen Bryen ([08:25](#)):

Oh yeah. Any place in Europe would be exposed to this type of threat

Bill Walton ([08:31](#)):

And it would've an impact of what? About a mile, square mile. And it can be, I

Stephen Bryen ([08:36](#)):

Don't know exactly the impact. I mean the pattern, because it would depend on the target. In this particular case in Dnipro, it went after two workshops, number seven and number eight in a very large complex. It didn't the rest of the complex because those were underground operations and destroyed them. So yes, it could hit anywhere, but it doesn't have to just have a conventional warhead.

Bill Walton ([09:11](#)):

Well, you meaning it could also have a nuclear weapon.

Stephen Bryen ([09:14](#)):

Well, it's a dual threat. Yeah, because the Russians don't build anything that can't mount a nuclear weapon.

Bill Walton ([09:21](#)):

So does the United States have anything similar to this or close to it?

Stephen Bryen ([09:27](#)):

No, we were working on a hypersonic glide vehicle. It was Lockheed, I think, that had the contract and they tested it a number of times and it didn't work. So the project was stopped. So we have other hypersonic type of weapons, but they're short range, relatively short range weapons. And this is a fairly an intermediate range. Ballistic missiles has a couple thousand miles range. So it's not non-trivial.

Bill Walton ([09:59](#)):

Well, do we have any defense systems to protect against it?

Stephen Bryen ([10:02](#)):

No, as far as I know, we don't. The systems that we have, well, let's go through what we got in Europe. We have deployed mostly patriot, Patriot. When you say patriot, there are a lot of different versions of patriots and evolving systems. So which ones are aware is another whole story, but I don't think patriot could intercept it. I don't think the radar is good enough to pick up a hypersonic weapon. It's too late. If anyone that watches Patriots operate in the Middle East in the Ukraine sees very quickly that it's largely just area weapon with very limited intercept capability. Even though it's supposed to have a long range. The intercepts are just about overhead when they happen. So that tells me that it couldn't do any good against this weapon at all because it is never going to be able to react fast enough to deal with it.

Bill Walton ([11:12](#)):

We know it can reach all of Europe. Can it reach New York?

Stephen Bryen ([11:16](#)):

No, no. That would be more like the Vanguard ICBM, Sarma as the ICBM and the Vanguard is the glide vehicle that the Russians have built, which is an intercontinental ballistic missile as far as I know, strictly nuclear. And it's amazing thing because it can actually go into a suborbital flight and you don't know where it's going to come from and there's a lot of issues with it. But we don't have anything that certainly on the east coast, we have nothing on the west coast, have the ground-based interceptor, which has not done well against even supersonic targets. Forget about hypersonic and it needs to be fixed. It's not a good system right now. That's a good radar. But the interceptor missiles are inadequate. And the other alternative is ais. ais, which is at C, and that depends a lot. It may be able to do something maybe, but it has to be in the right place at the right time, and that's highly unlikely. I don't think we really have any missile defenses. Right. Well, even before hypersonics, we didn't have an adequate, and we don't have an adequate missile defense capability.

Bill Walton ([12:42](#)):

So what has the Pentagon been doing for the last 20 years,

Stephen Bryen ([12:48](#)):

Fooling around? Look, they keep putting money in the patriot trying to improve it. They put money billions into the ground-based interceptor, but it doesn't work very well. Ages appears to work, but how well that remains to be seen? No, we haven't really taken it seriously. Part of this goes back to, you remember President Ronald Reagan proposed what he called the Strategic Defense Initiative, something that we and the often called Star Wars, but the notion was you're not going to intercept them when they're over your head, forget about it. So you got to get them when they're in space and largely in the just post, boost the parts. So when they're starting to rise into space, that's the time to kill 'em before they release their munitions. He had different schemes to do that. One of them was called Brilliant Pebbles, which would be space-based mini interceptors if you want, that would kill these Russian rockets or Chinese rockets or whoever's rockets they were. That was never built. It was fierce opposition to it because it would destroy the doctrine of what's called mad. Now, mad means mutually assured destruction. The notion was that if they fire at us, we're going to fire at then we're going to destroy each other. The world's over

Bill Walton ([14:26](#)):

Dr. Strange love.

Stephen Bryen ([14:28](#)):

Yeah, precisely. I mean, we have not evolved very far in that respect, but the scientists all complain, you can't do this won't work. Scientists always complain when they have an agenda that's other than technical. But anyhow, the bottom line is it wasn't done. Although I think in some ways it was very sobering for the Soviet Union at the time and led them to desire arms deals with the United States as an alternative to constantly jacking up the nuclear threat on each side. But we're back to that now because there's almost no agreements left to prevent ICBMs and hypersonics and all the rest. We need a hypersonic treaty.

Bill Walton ([15:23](#)):

Why didn't our intelligence services know about this?

Stephen Bryen ([15:27](#)):

I think they did know about it. In fact, as far as the Sarma and the vanguard is concerned, as part of the strategic arms agreements with Russia, the Russians actually showed it to our guys. They saw it. It wasn't something that they dreamed about or looked at from a satellite. They saw it face to face.

Bill Walton ([15:51](#)):

So we've been blindly pursuing this war in Ukraine. I mean with this era of unreality where we're assuming American superiority when in fact we do not have superiority. Russia does.

Stephen Bryen ([16:05](#)):

Well, yeah, we're making two assumptions that we are superior than NATO superior. I think both of those are faulty assumptions.

Bill Walton ([16:13](#)):

Well, that bridges us to that study that you reported on the Kehl report. Kyle Report,

Stephen Bryen ([16:20](#)):

I think Keel. But it's an institute in Germany. It's a think tank, a very well regarded one. And essentially they just looked at, are we prepared or are we not prepared? And they came to a very straightforward conclusion. We're not prepared. We can't possibly deal with the Russians right now. I think that's exactly right. The NATO people, by the way, are living in a very strange world. And it's very scary because they keep talking about, well, we're no longer a defensive alliance. We're going to be an offensive alliance. We're going to strike the Russians. Who are they kidding?

([17:00](#)):

Who are they kidding? What kind of nonsense is this? And these are supposedly smart people. Admirals generals, the head of nato, I mean root. All these guys are mouthing this nonsense. NATO has expanded too fast. It has not built up a sufficient capability to back up the expansion that it's done. And it's hardly a defensive alliance, let alone an offensive one. And using Ukraine, which they've done as a way to batter the Russians and to bring NATO into Russia into Ukraine, is completely crazy. It makes no sense. It makes strategic sense. It's not practical. It has caused thousands and tens of thousands of dead Ukrainians and Russians. The whole thing is a disaster. Total disaster.

Bill Walton ([17:58](#)):

Well, they also had an interesting piece of the report about what Germany pays for its weaponry. And I think the Pentagon is,

Stephen Bryen ([18:07](#)):

Yeah, no, they're ripoff artists there or even exceeding ours. The KE report puts it all, even simple things price.

Bill Walton ([18:20](#)):

What about the German air assault vehicle? That's an interesting one.

Stephen Bryen ([18:26](#)):

They have no lift though, so it doesn't mean anything. Look, there's a lot of corruption here on all fronts. I'm not saying that Russians aren't corrupt, by the way. They probably are. But the bottom line is that we invest very heavily in very expensive weapons. We don't need and neglect conventional stuff. We do need and should have. And we also neglect where our interests lie. Our interests don't lie in Ukraine. We don't have any interest in Ukraine. We have an interest in Europe, parts of nato. We have a very important interest in the Pacific protecting Japan and Taiwan and Korea, places like that. Those are pretty important interests. Economic, political, military, all the rest. But we've done very little to strengthen our posture in the Pacific because we've dumped all our weapons into Ukraine. So we've left ourselves in a hole. It's a very irresponsible,

Bill Walton ([19:42](#)):

Well, we have two months until Trump comes into office and we have Biden continuing to fire off missiles through his proxy.

Stephen Bryen ([19:51](#)):

Well, he wants to go. Yeah, I mean that's an interesting thing in itself. I mean, look, everybody has sort of concluded that has any sense of responsibility. Two or three people maybe. But I mean the general consensus is the Russians are winning the war in Ukraine, not quickly, but winning it and that the Ukrainians are running out of people. The situation on the front lines is dire. The casualties are, they lose a thousand guys a day. I mean, you can't do that. You just can't do that and they can't replace 'em. So everyone's concluded that this war is going to hell. Biden wants to get out of office before it collapses, I think. So he wants to throw anything he can into Ukraine to hold the line, try and somehow to convince the Russians that more is coming. It's going to get worse. Not better. I mean, he wants to get out with his pants on.

Bill Walton ([20:56](#)):

Well, he doesn't want to do what he did in Afghanistan.

Stephen Bryen ([20:59](#)):

Well, that's was your pants on. Yeah,

Bill Walton ([21:01](#)):

Exactly. So if you were advising President Trump on how to wrap this up, what would you tell him?

Stephen Bryen ([21:13](#)):

Well, it's difficult for Trump because Biden has made it so much worse with these new weapons and attacks on Russian territory that the Russians are pretty pissed off. That's a technical term. So whether they're open to negotiations of some kind, the Russians said No, ceasefires. So that's off the table. I think they're not going to do that, but they may be willing to talk. And if I were Trump, I think I would start negotiating with Putin and see what you can get. What do

Bill Walton ([21:54](#)):

We have that Putin wants

Stephen Bryen ([21:57](#)):

Sanctions to get rid of the sanctions normalization nation. Putin wants options, not just China. I mean he can't just rely on the Chinese because the real truth is the Chinese and the Russians don't really get along. And so he's taking a risk being a one horse pony. He needs to balance his relationships. He needs to have a relationship with the United States. And this is my opinion. I dunno if it's Putin's, he didn't call me and ask. But it seems to me if I were in the Russian position, I would want to have options. That's a good Washington term, have to have options. And one option is to be able to talk to the Americans, talk to the Chinese to see what works which way. Plus economically, Russians are missing some big pieces and they're going to be depending entirely on the Chinese for them, unless they make some deals with us. Electronics being one of the most prominent.

Bill Walton ([23:08](#)):

Well, the Biden administration refuses to talk to the Russians. I mean back in the day when we had the Cuban Missile Crisis and all the way through before and after the Cold War, we've been in constant communication with them. And that's the way you can avoid catastrophe. And yet Jake Sullivan and Tony Blinken, they're acting like teenagers. They're just not going to talk to Russia

Stephen Bryen ([23:31](#)):

Or the Europeans

Bill Walton ([23:33](#)):

And the Europeans.

Stephen Bryen ([23:34](#)):

Some of 'em are actually, but

Bill Walton ([23:36](#)):

Well have to be some of them

Stephen Bryen ([23:38](#)):

Under the table. But especially the Germans, the Germans have reason to be concerned about Russia. And also it's a huge potential market for Germany, which they have taken off the table. And the German economy is ailing very badly. So they really need to get this over with and to make some deals with the Russians from an economic and political point of view. And look, the Germans are not going to spend on defense what they would need to spend on defense to rebuild their capabilities. So given that, and that's a prognosis because they don't have the money and anyway, they won't spend it. Even if they had the money in any way, their defense industry would rip most of it off. Anyhow, the bottom line for the Germans is they really need a deal and they have an incompetent government. Let's face it.

Bill Walton ([24:39](#)):

The other thing is that Ukraine War has proven, has been a proving ground for what weapons work and what weapons. And so

Stephen Bryen ([24:48](#)):

I think

Bill Walton ([24:48](#)):

What Russia has figured out is most everything that we thought we had and maybe what we thought we had doesn't work

Stephen Bryen ([24:58](#)):

Well. I think that's too

Bill Walton ([24:59](#)):

Harsh. Is that

Stephen Bryen ([25:01](#)):

Doesn't? Let's say that whatever we've thrown in there has not proven to be a game changer. I think that's a fair statement. I think not work is too strong. I mean high Mars works. It's a good system, but the Russians have figured out how to shoot down most of them. Not all of them, but most of 'em. But it's a very important system. The big mistake in my view is that by throwing all this into Ukraine, we don't have any to use elsewhere. So we've left ourselves kind of naked and we left our allies even more naked. There was an announcement just now by Japan that the US Marines are going to be able to put high Mars on the Japanese southern islands that ri coco ku, I can't pronounce it right islands, but particularly one called Uni. And the reason is it's about 90 miles from even less from Taiwan.

([26:07](#)):

And any Chinese sea invasion has to cross between there and the Japanese island and Taiwan. So with high Mars, they can shoot down, destroy these ships. So it's a very important strategic thing. But we don't have enough high Mars because we've thrown them, especially the long range ones, which were being used in Ukraine. So what is this? Why are we doing that? We didn't safeguard our own interests here at all. So the Japanese had made an announcement. It's a very important announcement. It's a very welcome one and it will help stabilize, I think then tell the Chinese that if they try something, they're going to pay a price. But whether we can back it up with the hardware is another whole different story. Have

Bill Walton ([26:57](#)):

You seen anything that suggests President Trump and the people he is putting into place see this in the clear-eyed way that you've explained it?

Stephen Bryen ([27:08](#)):

Well, I don't know all the Trump people, the new ones, and I haven't talked to them Occasionally. I read statements by some that make a lot of Vance, who makes a lot of sense to me. Certainly Tom Cotton makes a lot of sense to me, people like that. And I'm encouraged. I mean the real problem Trump faces is being sucked into supporting what Biden started and there's a risk that could happen. What about Marco Rubio? I very much like Marco Rubio and I think he's sensible when it comes to Ukraine. I think he understands the game. I think he will be a very good official for the Trump administration as Secretary of State. And that's encouraging. He's not going to be a blinken, God forbid. Well,

Bill Walton ([28:14](#)):

That's a very low bar.

Stephen Bryen ([28:18](#)):

Extraordinarily low.

Bill Walton ([28:20](#)):

We've been talking about Tony Lincoln for the last two and a half years and we need to wrap it up. But today, because there'll be a next set of events that happen, but we ended up most of our conversations with, we hope we survive until we get a new administration. And so the very good news is we can finally say we've got a next administration, but we got two months to get through what could happen in those two months before the new cops.

Stephen Bryen ([28:50](#)):

Well, it would help if Trump told Biden and he told the Pentagon, stand down. No more stop. You did enough. Stop. And let's wait until we get an office and then we'll deal with it. Don't give the Ukrainians one more bullet. They have enough for right now, but stop. And I haven't heard that yet. Maybe they're telling him privately. But Lloyd Austin, for example, has been harsh and critical of the Trump people and Trump himself. He needs to shut up and just stop doing what they're doing. It's bad. It's dangerous. The Russians are very tense right now. We don't want them to be very tense. Lara is saying, well, in negotiations, that's never going to happen. It's way off in the future. This is showing you the Russian mood. And I think Trump is going to have a hard time turning that around. And he's going to have to use all his persuasive powers now.

([30:02](#)):

He's really good at it. I am tremendously impressed. He got the Mexicans to back down and the Canadians to back down in five minutes. In five hours. Yeah, even less. I mean, it was a tour de force. I mean, because he knows what he wants. He tells him exactly what he's going to do and that's that. Now, Putin's another story. He's a major power. He has nuclear weapons. He's very angry with the United States and with nato, it's going to, is going to take a lot of work to settle that out. And part of the deal here is not just Ukraine. They have to settle how they're going to manage the situation in Europe too. And I think that's critical. And that's, by the way, what before this war started in December of 2021, right before and February is when in 2022 is when it started, the Russians sent a letter to the United States and sent a letter to nato. And they said among other things, they wanted to settle the overall security situation of Europe. And that was basically Washington told 'em, go forget about it. We're not interested. We should be interested. The Europeans should be interested. The Europeans don't need to spend what little revenues they have and was it on Ukraine. And they need to get realistic about their own economies and their own political future because things are changing in Europe.

Bill Walton ([31:41](#)):

My friend Matt Whitaker is going to be our ambassador to nato. That's going to be a tough job because I don't see a future for nato given everything that's evolved here. I mean, what's it mean? What's it stand for? What's it want to do? And everybody, these countries, their interests are no longer aligned. I don't think it holds up

Stephen Bryen ([32:06](#)):

Well. Yeah, I mean he's got a big challenge. I've written a lot about this and basically said, look, NATO was created as a defensive alliance, and that's its real role. The idea of NATO as an expansionist alliance is very dangerous because it invites trouble and there's no reason for that trouble. What do we gain by adding, let's say in the perfect world, what would we gain by adding Ukraine to nato? It would be of no

particular significance for us, except that it would invite a war with Russia. Why do you want that? Russians have made that clear. It's a red line and it's an unbridgeable red line. So the bottom line is I think NATO needs to be reassessed. And it would be very helpful if the Trump administration carries out such a reassessment and defines the parameters of what the NATO alliance is and what it isn't. And that would be a big step forward.

Bill Walton ([33:18](#)):

Steven, Brian, thank you, Senator for security policy. You write brilliantly at your SUBSTACK site weapons and strategy. How do we find that? We look up on substack Second.

Stephen Bryen ([33:33](#)):

You can find it by going to substack. Just go to substack and write weapons and strategy and you'll go right there.

Bill Walton ([33:40](#)):

Okay.

Stephen Bryen ([33:40](#)):

And subscribe. I like subscribers

Bill Walton ([33:44](#)):

And paid subscribers are even better.

Stephen Bryen ([33:47](#)):

No, no, I don't take any money.

Bill Walton ([33:48](#)):

You don't take any money.

Stephen Bryen ([33:49](#)):

No, no. It's a free site. I don't take a nickel. I don't want a nickel. I'm trying to do this. I'm an old man, so I do this as a public service. It's my contribution to the common good. Maybe at least that's how I like to think about it.

Bill Walton ([34:07](#)):

It's huge. I mean, you're my go-to guide to understand what's really going on. So keep going and we'll be back, I'm sure with the next big development. So thanks a lot.

Stephen Bryen ([34:19](#)):

You're more than welcome. Take care.

Bill Walton ([34:21](#)):

Okay, and thanks for joining us on the Bill Walton Show and you can find us in all the major podcast platforms and on Substack. So stay tuned for other shows like this and look forward to seeing you talking with you in the future. Okay.