TRANSCRIPT
Press Briefing
“Previewing the NATO Summit”

DATE
Wednesday, June 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. ET

FEATURING
Max Bergmann
Director, Europe, Russia, and Eurasia Program and Stuart Center, CSIS

Kathleen McInnis
Senior Fellow, International Security Program and Director, Smart Women, Smart Power Initiative, CSIS

Sean Monaghan
Visiting Fellow, Europe, Russia and Eurasia Program, CSIS

MODERATED BY
Samuel Cestari
Media Relations Coordinator, External Relations, CSIS

Transcript By
Superior Transcriptions LLC
www.superiortranscriptions.com
Thank you, Art. And hello, everyone. Welcome to the CSIS press briefing previewing the upcoming NATO summit in Washington, D.C. We’re pleased to have three of our experts with us today to share their perspectives and expertise as it relates to the summit, its context, and the issues likely to be addressed there.

Just a couple of housekeeping notes before we get started. Each of our speakers will offer several minutes of introductory remarks, after which we’ll turn to your questions. We’ll also be distributing a transcript of today’s call to all participants in the next few hours. This transcript will also be made available on CSIS.org later today.

So, with that, why don’t we go ahead and get started? I’ll turn first to Max Bergmann, director of the CSIS Europe, Russia, and Eurasia program and Stuart Center. Max, over to you.

Great. Thanks, Sam. And thanks everyone for joining. And also, pleased to be with some of my other colleagues who I’ll hand off the microphone in a few minutes to fill out sort of the NATO summit. And maybe I’ll give some kind of both an overview, dive a little bit into Ukraine, talk about this concept of the European pillar, and maybe mention the China, Indo-Pacific element.

So in some ways, this NATO summit is coming as sort of the best of times and the worst of times. The best of times, in the sense that the alliance knows what it’s about. It’s about – it’s about deterring Russia. Alliance members are spending more. Kathleen will talk more about that. So we’re seeing real focus on defense throughout Europe. The Alliance has now successfully expanded, with Sweden and Finland now getting over the line, and the alliance has now grown to 32 members. Sort of helpfully filling out the geography, particularly in the north, and eliminating what was sort of a potential blind spot in the alliance in the Baltic with now Sweden and Finland being quite strong members. But it’s also sort of the worst of times, obviously because of the war in Ukraine, challenges of ramping up European defense spending, concerns about the reliability of the United States.

And so there are real, I think, issues at play that will have to be discussed at this summit. And so maybe we can dive into Ukraine. So Ukraine, there was a lot of, I think, concern heading into the summit, especially a few months ago that the situation on the ground in Ukraine would be so dire that it would really overshadow the summit. The situation in Ukraine is quite serious. However, it’s not quite as dire as people feared about six weeks ago when the U.S. supplemental passed. And that’s in part because the U.S. supplemental passed, and has helped sturdy Ukraine’s lines. Russia’s offensive, while maybe not culminating, has not made the kind of significant strategic gains that were potentially feared. And while Ukraine is holding on – its power sector is being depleted – there is sort of no sense that Ukraine is, you know,
facing imminent defeat. And so, you know, that’s sort of a glass-half-full take on the situation in Ukraine, but I think it quite important.

And one of the things that NATO will really focus on at the summit are the bilateral security agreements that a number of countries, including the United States, have made with Ukraine committing to support Ukraine over the longer term. And I think what we’ll see at the summit is those sort of being turned into essentially a compact between a number of NATO countries making kind of clear their support to Ukraine over the longer term and willingness to support Ukraine’s territorial integrity.

The issue that dominated the summit last year at Vilnius was NATO extending a membership offer to Ukraine. This was very much pushed by the Lithuanians, by others. It really, I think, caught the White House off guard at how much that became kind of a major focus of the summit.

The Biden administration has made clear, sort of early and often in an effort to kind of avoid the debacle that I think was the Vilnius summit where it really exposed the divisions in the lines over Ukraine membership by noting that Ukraine is not going to get a membership offer at this summit. There has been a lot of rhetoric about sort of a bridge to NATO, and we can expect in the final communique that there will be sort of expanded language, slightly improved upon last year.

But the basic fact is Ukraine is at war, and the administration does not want to extend membership to Ukraine when it is at war, and that could then mean that Ukraine could invoke Article 5, which would then test our willingness to make Article 5 meaningful. So I think the administration has adopted what I think is a fairly logical position of it shouldn’t really be on the table, and we shouldn’t make that the focus of the summit.

So Ukraine I think will be, in some ways, a good news story in terms of all these security compacts, but the Ukrainians will leave somewhat, I think, disappointed. The question is how much of a ruckus is I think created over the membership question.

Now maybe let me quickly turn to the European pillar concept, and this has been talked a lot about. We’ve done a few papers. Sean, who you will hear from in a minute, just had a really excellent article in Foreign Affairs about the Europe pillar of NATO. And this is sort of reviving a concept that Europe really needs to get its act together and work more together to be able to defend itself as Europe. Currently European defense is fundamentally dependent on the United States, not just because we have such a strong military, but that is the ultimate structure of NATO where, from the Supreme Allied Commander all the way down in terms of the basic capabilities – enabling capabilities such as Strategic Airlift, and tankers, and other things
that, in order to fight a war, Europeans don’t work with each other. They work with the United States, and the United States plays quarterback in any effort.

For the last 25 years, or really since the end of the Cold War, the United States has looked very warily at efforts to advanced European defense integration, opposing the EU’s efforts to become more of a defense actor. And one of the things that we are seeing in the latest European parliamentary elections and since this war is the EU playing a much bigger role. And I think what we are beginning to see – and hopefully it will come out in the summit; I’m not totally sure it will – but we’re sort of figuring a clear – a potential division of labor where the EU provides a lot of funding, focuses on ramping up European defense industry, and NATO continues to play its role as essentially the combatant command for Europe, as the organizer of European defense, but that Europeans begin to organize themselves a lot more at a European way, and the EU would play a strong role.

And that’s important maybe to pivot to my last point, in part not just because of the specter of the United States potentially reducing its commitment to the NATO alliance if Donald Trump were to win the election, but also because of the demands of China in the Indo-Pacific. There has been a big push by the Biden administration to get NATO to essentially focus on the Indo-Pacific. When Secretary of State Tony Blinken first went to NATO headquarters in March of 2021, he mentioned China more than 10 times and Russia less than five times. We actually have a paper coming out today on, you know, what does the United States actually want from Europe militarily in the Indo-Pacific, because the United States was telling Europe to focus on China but not really telling it what it wanted to do.

And I think where we are now is that Europe needs to focus on Europe. Europe needs to focus on deterring Russia. And there are things that it can contribute to China. But what we – but where, I think, the consensus is coming is that it’s more about Indo-Pacific partners coming to NATO. And we’ll see that with the AP4 countries, with Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand coming to the NATO summit, engaging with Europe at NATO.

But the effort last year to try to create a liaison office in Tokyo, which was frankly fairly benign – it wasn’t going to cause a big deal – but that probably isn’t the right course of action. It was blocked by France and other European members and is unlikely to get off the ground.

So I think we’re – what we’re likely to see here is a focus in NATO that is sort of back to basics, focused on deterring Russia. It’s going to – has a bunch of regional plans that were developed over the last two years since the outline of the strategic concept at the Madrid Summit in 2022. And so in some ways this is – the deliverables here are going to be fairly technocratic about how
Europe is getting back to basics and defending itself and focused on the threat that it was – that NATO was sort of founded to focus on. And I think that’s, in the end, a very good news story.

And with that, let me turn it to Kathleen.

Mr. Cestari: Thank you, Max. I’m just going to jump in really quickly just to mention that if there are any questions, anyone wants to ask a question, please press 1 and then 0. And then, after our next two speakers, we’ll turn to your questions and answer them as best as we can.

So next we have Kathleen McInnis, senior fellow at the CSIS International Security Program and the director of CSIS’s Smart Women, Smart Power Initiative.

Kathleen McInnis: Thank you, Sam. And thank you, Max, for that wonderful scene-setter introduction to the key issues that the summit is going to be taking on.

I wanted to foot-stomp a couple of points that you made, because I think they’re really important; one about the European pillar. There’s, yes, an emerging consensus about what different NATO partners and European partners need to do relative to the United States.

But there’s also – I have detected a sense within Europe that we no longer have time to think about NATO and the EU as competing organizations, that the challenges the NATO alliance and democratic countries around the world are facing is so great that it’s just – the time for the old theologies about Europeanism versus transatlanticism and, you know, whether we should be doing things through the EU or through NATO, that time has passed. And frankly, as an analyst, as a concerned citizen, I’m quite glad to see that, those debates being moved past, because there is so much important work to be done now.

You also mentioned the engagement of INDOPACOM partners – Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia. And so I think one of the important points to make here is that these countries are working with NATO because of a recognition of the globally interconnectedness of the challenges before us. You know, yes, our partners for U.S. allies in Asia are looking more closely at the China threat, but they also recognize that if Russia wins in Ukraine, the Taiwan challenge becomes much, much harder, that the strategic situation for the U.S. and allies and partners and democracies globally becomes much, much harder.
So there’s – these partners are attending the summit and they’re being – they’re part of these conversations, because we recognize that we can’t think about these problems in isolation. It’s not one or the other. It’s not Europe or INDOPACOM. It’s not Russia versus China. It’s how to think about these challenges holistically, globally, and what different partners can do relative to these challenges.

One story that’s going to be coming out at the NATO summit – you know, it depends on how you look at it, but the moniker, the tagline, is burden-sharing, right? And this has been a debate about – you know, that’s been a part of the NATO alliance since the alliance was founded. The question is: Are European allies doing enough relative to U.S. investment to – doing enough, spending enough on their security? And if not, how can that defense investment be increased?

And so, again, this has been going on for decades. In 2014 there was a pledge at the Wales Summit that nations would meet 2 percent of their gross domestic product, that they would be allocating those resources to the defense program by 2024, and at that time nine NATO nations were spending more than 2 percent of GDP on defense.

Today what NATO allies will tell you is that there’s a great news story coming out. Twenty-three out of the 32 nations are spending over 2 percent of their gross domestic product on defense. So, yes, a lot of progress has been made but the glass half empty folks will tell you, well, that’s still not everybody and that’s a problem.

CSIS conducted an analysis of – rather than thinking about burden-sharing, which only captures what countries are spending on defense – their defense programs, if you actually factor in other things like broader national security spending, what you – critical infrastructure, resilience, those sorts of things – actually, that the picture of what countries are spending on defense is a lot more optimistic. At least 13 allies are spending 4 percent of – or, actually, excuse me, 14 allies are spending 4 percent of their gross domestic product on what we would call responsibility sharing, that broader national security spend, and at least another – further 11 countries are spending 3 percent of GDP. So just because the numbers aren’t being calculated or spent on defense specifically, that doesn’t mean that they’re not contributing to the overall common security picture in other ways.

Overall, though, as an analyst I still remain disappointed that we are calculating the value of an alliance based on dollars and cents and financial contributions. At the end of the day, the alliance provides a framework for which allies including the United States can organize and prosecute coalition operations. It gives us a mechanism to compare notes and come to consensus on major strategic problems with 32 different nations.
Those are critically important capabilities that if we didn’t have them today we would want to create them, and so – and those are benefits that can’t be calculated in dollars and cents. The utility of the alliance is much greater than the dollars invested and, frankly, it’s just one of the best values on the market in terms of national security.

So with that, I’m going to turn over to Sean.

Mr. Cestari: Thank you, Kathleen.

Just going to jump in one more time here and just remind everyone that if you want to ask a question please press one and then zero. After our next speaker we’ll open it up to your questions.

So next we’ll go to Sean Monaghan, visiting fellow with the CSIS Europe, Russia, and Eurasia program. Sean, the floor is yours.

Sean Monaghan: Yeah. Thank you, Sam, and good morning, everyone. Thanks to Max and Kathleen, too.

I’ll just say a few words about what we can expect in Washington on NATO’s defense and deterrence agenda. So, I mean, let me start with the basics. NATO’s priorities is to strengthen defense and deterrence in order to avoid war. The best way to avoid war is to be prepared for it and kind of make that clear to a potential aggressor, in this case Russia. Hence, there will be a great focus on defense and deterrence at the Washington Summit. I mean, if Ukraine is the most urgent agenda item here then this defense and deterrence is the most important topic on NATO’s agenda.

I mean, first off, it’s important to understand, you know, Washington is the latest milestone on the journey towards – NATO’s journey towards stronger defense and deterrent. The first stop on this journey was Madrid two years ago. Allies there agreed on a new strategy, a return to a kind of Cold War style forward defense to deter Russia from expanding its war in Ukraine onto the territory of NATO allies, while at the same time, of course, supporting Ukraine with huge amounts of military aid. Allies made a range of commitments to implement this vision and Secretary General Stoltenberg called this at the time the biggest overhaul of collective defense and deterrence since the Cold War.

The next stop then was Vilnius, where, as well as agreeing, as Max said, that Ukraine would become a member in the future, NATO also laid out plans to meet this – the vision that was set in the Madrid. The centerpiece of these plans was so-called regional plans. These are three geographic plans, each run by a strategic command or joint force command, under the command of
SACEUR, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe General Cavoli, across all domains – air, land, sea, cyber, space. So for the first time since the Cold War NATO allies now had a regional plan with specific roles that each of them were to fill to defend the alliance. And kind of worth noting, as this is the 75th anniversary of NATO, this was how NATO did business back in 1949 when the alliance was formed. It had five so-called regional planning groups and that’s how it organized the defense of NATO.

So now in Washington, the latest milestone – the third summit of NATO’s new era, as it were – there’s going to be a focus on implementing all of this sort of vision – the Madrid vision and the Vilnius plans. And this comes under the rubric of what NATO officials call executability. That’s a made-up word, of course, and I suspect some American influence on that. But it broadly means whether NATO allies are ready to carry out the regional plans to defend the alliance, and thereby deter armed attack. So we actually analyze this in a recent report. The report is called, “Is NATO Ready for War?” And you can go and read that for the detail, of course. But let me kind of summarize and use that report to offer some insights about what we can expect in Washington on this agenda.

So we made – in the report, we looked at the commitments that allies made in Madrid. And we found that, in summary, is NATO ready for war? Yes, NATO is ready to fight tonight, as it were, thanks to substantial progress on the executability agenda since Madrid, in the last two years. Which, in practical terms, has involved increased defense spending, boosting, enhancing forward defense, increasing the pool of high readiness forces that NATO has, and modernizing its command structures, increasing the scale and intensity of its collective defense exercises, and of course, as Max mentioned, integrating new allies Finland and Sweden. So we can expect a kind of stock take on this agenda in Washington, and, of course, a reflection that this is a journey and there’s much more to do.

In particular, we found there’s much more to do on the question of whether NATO is ready to fight a protracted war, and thereby deter it. As we’ve seen in Ukraine – we’ve seen protracted war action in Ukraine. We know what that looks like. And of course, as any armed conflict between NATO and Russia would be, it would be a protracted war, a clash of society. Of course, better to avoid it in the first place with strong defense and deterrence. To meet this goal, we’ve concluded that allies should spend even more, boost industrial capacity, address capability gaps, especially in Europe, and bolster national societal resilience across the alliance.

So how should NATO do this? What should we be looking out for in Washington? Well, allies should commit to what I call the four mores. And these four mores are also each begin with C, so that’s hopefully helpful. There’s more cash, more combat power, more capabilities, and more
cooperation. And as Max and Kathleen have referred to, these are particularly pertinent for European allies of the so-called European pillar of NATO.

So just to unpack those briefly, more cash means continued increases, and particularly in European defense spending, which although has increased drastically – gone up by a third since 2014 – Kathleen said 23 allies will now meet the 2 percent of GDP target. It would be better, of course, if those figures were reversed and it was 32 allies, but it’s difficult. Nonetheless, that target of 2 percent of GDP was set a decade ago. And in fact, that actually has its origins in 2006. It’s nearly two decades old. And clearly now 2 percent is not enough. During the Cold War, for example, the average spending on defense by European allies was around 3 percent. I think we’d like to see in Washington something towards 2.5 percent. We may not see that commitment, but at least it should start the conversation about going beyond 2 percent.

Second, more combat power simply means converting that spending into military power. So, for example, in Europe we’ve seen the kind of size and strength of the European army stay broadly the same since 2014 over the last decade, despite the drastic increases in defense spending. The same goes for kind of personnel. NATO allies have a big personnel and recruitment and retention problem that they need to solve. Part of that debate is about military service and conscription, which some allies do have but remains contentious across the alliance. Thirdly, more capabilities. This means filling the gaps that we already know about in critical capabilities, again, particularly in Europe. Max mentioned some of these – air and missile defense, long-range fires, strategic lift, refueling, logistics, cyberspace.

Finally, more cooperation means reversing the decline in military and industrial collaboration and cooperation that we’ve seen over the past few years. And that’s happened at the same time that European allies have spent more on defense. So, you know, this clearly fragments Europe’s approach to defense industry. And that’s not sustainable. That has to change. And we expect to see a defense industrial pledge or something along those lines in Washington. And we hope it includes something on cooperation.

Just two final points I’d make before I wrap up. The first is the link between the two big pieces here of this agenda – so defense and deterrence and support to Ukraine. So at some level, there is a trade-off here. For example, allies give equipment to Ukraine, and it leaves them with gaps that they then have to fill. But ultimately, in my view, you know, these are mutually reinforcing. And allies have to do both. Supporting Ukraine obviously helps keep Russia at bay, which is NATO’s kind of primary task, and at the same time strengthening allies’ own defense and deterrence means they can continue to support Ukraine without fear of reprisal, strengthen their own industrial base, which in turn helps Ukraine. So this is a virtuous circle.
Final point is that NATO’s main strength is, and always has been, its unity and solidarity. And this has to be the foundation which underpins the Washington Summit on Ukraine, defense and deterrence, global partnerships, and so on. You know, the history of NATO, in a way, the history of allies’ efforts to maintain a united front while continuing to move forward. I’ll leave it there. Thanks.

Mr. Cestari: Thank you, Sean. Really appreciate it. And thank you to all three of our speakers for sharing your thoughts here today.

So why don’t we open it up now for questions? I’ll turn it over to our operator, Art, to open up the line. Art, why don’t you go ahead with our first question, please.

Operator: Yes. And as a reminder, if you have a question or comment, please press one followed by zero.

And we have a question from Justin Katz with Breaking Defense. You’re – one moment – you’re open. Go ahead.

Q: Hi. Thank you all for doing this.

I wanted to ask if you could dwell on Mark Rutte for a second. I’m sorry if I pronounced his name wrong. This morning NATO said he has been given the formal nod. He will be the next secretary general. So what are your expectations for him at this summit? Do you expect, you know, he’s going to come out strong with, you know, his vision for the next four years? Do you expect he’s going to let, you know, Secretary General Stoltenberg kind of, you know, finish his term in the way he pleases? What do you expect to hear, or perhaps not hear, from Mark Rutte, you know, in the next month? Thank you.

Mr. Bergmann: Yeah. This is Max. I can start.

Great question, and good flag that this is the other big thing that is happening, that there is a new secretary general. It has sort of felt a little while that the secretary general position for Jens Stoltenberg was a little bit like Hotel California. He could – he could join sec-gen, but he could never leave. His term has been up for the last few years, but has been kept on being extended – in part because of the war, and COVID, and other things. And I think he’s had an outstanding tenure and is sort of ready to move on.

Mark Rutte is the prime minister of the Netherlands. He is seen as an exceptionally talented and likable politician, one that gets along pretty much with everybody. Which is, I think, probably one of the most crucial factors – or, crucial assets in this job, because secretary general is, in some ways, a job about herding cats and getting 32 members to kind of be on the same page.
There had been a lot of talk about having an Eastern European member of the alliance, having an – having a woman lead the alliance. That was sort of seen as something that was inevitable and likely going to happen.

I think on the Eastern European side, it’s – part of the concern, I think challenge, is that a lot of the kind of very aggressive rhetoric toward Russia perhaps makes sense in the domestic context, but then when you’re leading a nuclear alliance can be – I think, gives some in Washington and other European capitals, particularly in Western Europe, some shivers down their spine. So I think that kind of eliminated some of the Western European candidates. And then there just, I think, wasn’t the – there was a number of female candidates, but I just – it’s hard to get a consensus. And Rutte, being a known figure in European politics – he’s been around for a very long time as prime minister of the Netherlands – has recently just announced that he just stepped aside. The Dutch had elections last year. So I think he was seen as sort of a consensus choice.

The one other thing I would mention about him is that he is from an EU member country. And there has been – I think one of the critiques of Stoltenberg’s reign or era – reign is putting it – is probably not the right word – but of Stoltenberg’s tenure is that there have – the EU-NATO bureaucratic tensions have flared. Norway is not a member of the EU, although it pays into the EU budget. And Stoltenberg has been very guarded about EU efforts to develop its defense efforts.

And I would think, with Rutte, you will have less kind of concern about the EU developing its defense efforts, because Rutte understands the EU and has been, you know, a key figure in European politics at the EU level. So I think that’s one area where I think there could be a real difference.

But as for what he’s going to do at the summit, I think it’ll be very much in the background. It’ll be noted. Rutte will, you know, get his picture taken. I don’t expect him, Rutte, to maybe make a big speech about his vision, in part because the secretary general’s job is – I wouldn’t say visionless, but is more about getting members aligned. And I think he won’t want to steal the limelight from what is Stoltenberg’s sort of swan song and final summit.

And I think the transition in – please correct me if I’m wrong, Kathleen or Sean – is only going to happen actually in October. So I think this is something that was important, will be agreed on, formalized at the upcoming summit. But I don’t expect Rutte to have kind of a starring role or to make any sort of big pronouncements.

Dr. McInnis:  Yeah –

Mr. Cestari:  Kathleen, Sean, would you like to – go ahead, Kathleen.
Dr. McInnis: Yeah, if I could just jump in. You know, I agree with you, Max. I see this as a moment of passing the baton. I don’t see Rutte playing a big role in this summit. His tenure doesn’t start until October 1st. So this is the moment in which, again, handing the baton and starting to get up to speed, starting to do the transition, so that when he assumes the role on October 1st, he’s ready to go.

Somebody once pointed out to me that when, you know, transitions – how important transition times are, especially when you’re going to take the helm of such a critically important alliance. And so that’s what I expect him to start at the summit and then continue through the summer and early autumn.

You raised the question of Rutte, and I’m so glad you did. I also wanted to call attention to another issue that was not part of our scene-setter that is very important to allies in the south, and that’s the – there was a group of experts that was convened to discuss what NATO’s position should be relative to its neighbors to the south – in the Sahel, in North Africa, so on and so forth. And so, you know, the group found that NATO really needs to focus its work with those partners on maritime security, resilience, women peace and security, counterterrorism, climate security, those sorts of things.

But it was – the effort is a way to acknowledge/recognize that NATO, while the primary emphasis is deterring and defending against Russia and all of the work that’s happening relative to Ukraine, it is a 360 alliance. There are challenges from NATO’s southern flank that it needs to be able to contend with. And so I expect to see something at the summit that fleshes out some of those recommendations from that experts group that was – I think they delivered their report in March.

Mr. Cestari: Perfect. Thank you, Kathleen.

And at this time, if any –

Mr. Monaghan: Can I –

Mr. Cestari: Yeah. Go ahead, Sean.

Mr. Monaghan: Not much to add to those comments. This is obviously breaking news, but you know, it’s not a surprise to anyone who hasn’t lived under a rock. I think it’s worth noting that Rutte is the latest kind of – the Dutch have a tradition now. I think there’s been – this is the fourth Dutch secretary general, so he’s standing on the shoulders of giants.

In Washington, I would expect him to keep a low profile. This is Stoltenberg’s moment. Stoltenberg’s entire tenure has been about NATO’s defense and
deterrence renaissance and strong support for Ukraine, and this summit is the kind of culmination of that. So this will be a – this will be a handover, as Kathleen says, and Rutte’s job will be to continue the journey of implementing the vision that Stoltenberg has set out.

Thanks.

Mr. Cestari: Perfect. Thank you, Sean.

If anyone has any questions at this time please press one and then zero to join the queue.

Operator: And once again as a reminder, if you have a question or comment please press one, then zero.

Sam, at this point no one is queued up.

Mr. Cestari: Thank you, Art.

Well, that seems to be all of the questions right now. I want to thank all of our speakers and participants for joining us this morning for this timely call.

Of course, if any questions come to mind throughout the day or the week leading up to the summit feel free to reach out for anything we can do to be a resource, looking ahead to the summit. We’re happy to help so don’t hesitate to reach out.

As mentioned at the top of the call, we’ll have a transcript distributed to all of you in the next few hours. It’ll also be available at CSIS.org.

So, with that, I hope everybody has a great rest of your day, and thank you for joining us.

Operator: (Inaudible.)

Mr. Cestari: Oh, we have one. Sorry. Real quick.

Operator: One moment.

Mr. Cestari: We did have one question pop into the queue –

Operator: One moment.

Mr. Cestari: – if you’d like to go to Darlene here.

Operator: If you could just give me a moment, we’ll open it up. Darlene, you’re open.
Q: Hi. Thanks for taking a question at the last minute. I joined a little bit late and apologies if this was already covered in some of the opening statements.

But did any of the speakers cover the overall NATO program and what that will look like? I picked up that Ukraine is going to be a big issue, of course, but anything else that we should be watching for over the two and a half to three days of the summit here?

Mr. Bergmann: Yeah. Great question. I can maybe start and then, Kathleen and Sean, please fill in.

One major focus, and I think there’ll be sort of a day devoted to it, is defense industrial production and the need to ramp up defense industrial capacity. That’s a huge challenge on both sides of the Atlantic. There are, you know, major questions about how to do this.

The current structure right now of transatlantic defense industrial cooperation is pretty much – I hate to say this for American companies but it’s pretty much a one-way street where Europe has a very open defense market, where the Europeans buy American. They buy Korean. They buy from each other somewhat.

But it’s a very much open market, while on the other hand on the U.S. side it’s a closed market where the Pentagon buys American and if you’re a European company and you want to do business in the U.S. as a European defense company you basically have to become an American company.

And this is leading to some awkward conversations, especially as the EU – if the EU develops its defense spending because if the EU is going to spend money it’s going to spend those euros on Europeans – European companies, and that gives American companies concerns that the market may be closed off.

And there’s also big concerns about how do we make sure that our defense industrial bases are compatible so that if we’re producing 155-millimeter artillery that it can be fired in – by American weapon systems and European weapon systems.

This sort of NATO standardization is a big challenge as well and has been a big focus, particularly given the war in Ukraine. So there will be a focus on defense industry so a lot of defense companies from across Europe and the U.S. will be in town and I think that’s the first – I think that’s a Monday.

There’s going to be, I think, a lot of pageantry with dinners at the, I think – believe at the White House, as well as I think military flyovers. The main
The summit itself will take place at the Washington Convention Center. And that will also have the NATO Public Forum, which is sort of the public side where think tankers like us get to sort of huddle and then see some of the leaders as they come through.

And, in general, you know, I would defer to Kathleen and Sean if they know more about the actual details of the schedule but I think heavy on defense industry. There’s going to be a lot of pageantry around this being NATO’s 75th birthday, and I think a lot on Sweden and Finland. And there’ll be series of leaders events across town during that time.

Q: Thank you.

Mr. Cestari: Kathleen, would you like to add anything? Go ahead, Kathleen.

Dr. McInnis: Yeah. Thank you. I am calling it NATO-palooza. (Laughs.) There is so much going on this week, the week of the summit, to celebrate the fact that this alliance has existed for 75 years. Which, when you take a step back and think about, I mean, this is – this is something that’s never been done in human history. And having these structures to have militaries be able to coordinate with each other, talk to each other, be able to work together and plan in peacetime, and go to war with each other, this is – having these mechanisms for strategic consultation at the political level, again, this has never been done. And it’s incredible that it’s existed for 75 years. So I think there’s going to be, you know, a moment to reflect on the signing of the Washington Treaty in 1949, and other events around town that celebrate this amazing institution, that needs constant maintenance, and constant discussion, and constant ventilation of critical issues, but that’s what it’s there for.

I would just add that there’s also going to be some discussion of women, peace, and security. That’s a dedicated event on the margins of the summit. I think it’s on the ninth. So the alliance is going to be taking on, you know, what it means to implement that agenda across this – you know, its core functions of business. And then, I think in terms of what you’re actually going to see at the end of this – you know, having worked in the bowels of the Pentagon on NATO summits back in the – back in the day, the 32 governments are furiously working, fevering away at coming together with the major deliverable, which is the declaration and summit communique.

And these are lengthy documents that sort of capture the state of play on issues as diverse as NATO and climate change, NATO and human security, what we’re doing in the Arctic, missile defense, cyber, space, all of these things, and will create space for the different governments to work together and move forward on this. It’s an articulation of the common understanding of where we want to go, you know, at the conclusion of this meeting. So you’re going to see in the actual, final analysis a pretty lengthy document,
because NATO’s work program is pretty significant, and the declaration will be capturing that. Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

Mr. Cestari: Thank you, Kathleen.

And if there are no other questions at this time – and, Sean, if you don’t want to add anything in – then we will close this out. Again, we’ll be sending a transcript to everyone in the next few hours, and it’ll be available on CSIS.org. And I want to wish everyone a great day. And thank you all for joining us.

(END.)