

By Robert S. Dudley

The Stolichnaya Strategy

"The Putin regime needs an end to sanctions—not because they are crippling in themselves but because, in combination with the growing crisis of the economy and the unpredictable trajectory of the war [in eastern Ukraine], they could help lead to the destabilization of Russia. ... It is a measure of the government's concern that it has cut the price of vodka. ... This is a transparent attempt to use vodka to tranquilize the population."—*David Satter, Soviet-Russian expert, op-ed in Wall Street Journal, Feb. 3.*

Regime Change?

"The last time the [Obama] Administration made a diplomatic overture [to North Korea] in early 2012, the North responded with a ballistic missile launch, so we wouldn't be surprised if this latest attempt at a rapprochement ends the same way. That is all the more reason for the US to abandon 21 years of failed North Korean diplomacy and adopt a policy of regime change through coercive financial sanctions, support for North Korean refugees and dissidents, and enhanced deterrence on the Korean Peninsula. This is the only policy that will denuclearize the North."—*House editorial about White House effort to restart nuclear talks with Pyongyang, Wall Street Journal, Feb. 3.*

Just Like Jimmy

"Although Barack Obama won't admit it, his foreign policy instincts and Jimmy Carter's have much in common. Like Carter, Obama took office in the wake of a disastrous war. And like Carter, he has responded by attempting to discard the doctrine that underlay it. For Carter, the war was Vietnam and the doctrine was global containment. For Obama, it is Iraq and the 'war on terror.' ... Obama, like Carter, believes he inherited a doctrine shaped by excessive fear. ... Carter never succeeded in moving beyond the Cold War. To the contrary, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, he largely embraced the containment doctrine he had tried to discard. These days, Obama's efforts to move beyond the 'war on terror' don't look much more successful."—*Liberal political pundit Peter Beinart, writing in the National Journal, Jan. 31.*

Good Luck

"The taxpayer cannot comprehend, ... let alone support, the defense budget when they read ... of cost overruns, lack of accounting and accountability, needless overhead, and the like. This must stop."—*Ashton B. Carter, hearing on his confirmation to become Secretary of Defense, before Senate Armed Services Committee, Feb. 4.*

Bad News I, and ...

"We are now the smallest Air Force we've ever been. When we deployed to Operation Desert Storm in 1990, the Air Force had 188 fighter squadrons. Today we have 54, headed to 49. There were 511,000 Active Duty airmen in 1990. Today there are 313,000. ... We can't continue to cut force structure to pay the cost of readiness and modernization or we risk being too small to succeed."—*Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, statement to the Senate Armed Services Committee, Jan. 28.*

Bad News II

"Our smaller aircraft fleet is also older than it's ever been. If World War II's venerable B-17 bomber had flown in the first Gulf War in 1991, it would have been younger than the B-52, the KC-135, and the U-2 are today."—*Welsh, Jan. 28.*

Give Them Guns

"Unfortunately, sanctions alone are unlikely to deter [Russian President Vladimir] Putin. As such, Ukraine needs an immediate infusion of effective defensive military equipment and financial aid to thwart Putin's naked aggression. ... We believe it is time to increase military assistance to Ukraine and urge the US and NATO to move quickly."—*Letter from a 15-member group of senators, led by Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), delivered to President Obama, Feb. 3.*

Note to Brian Williams

"Sorry, dude, I don't remember you being on my aircraft. I do remember you walking up about an hour after we had landed to ask me what had happened. Then I remember you guys taking back off in a different flight of

Chinooks from another unit and heading to Kuwait to report your 'war story' to the 'Nightly News.'"—*Facebook post, Jan. 31, from Lance Reynolds, who in 2003 was flight engineer on an Army CH-47 helicopter in Iraq—the one in which NBC's Williams falsely claimed he was riding when it came under fire. Williams has admitted the falsehood.*

Ayotte on A-10

"I am deeply disappointed that the Air Force has again decided to seek the premature divestment of the A-10, despite the fact that A-10s are actively engaged in combat against ISIS."—*Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Senate Armed Services Committee, statement released Feb. 2.*

A 10-Year Look

"It's not about not liking or not wanting the A-10. It's about some very tough decisions that we have to make to recapitalize an Air Force for the threat 10 years from now."—*Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, briefing on the budget, Jan. 15.*

Generation Six

"It will be ... a program that will be initially led by [the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency], but it will involve the Navy and the Air Force as well. And the intent is to develop prototypes for the next generation of air dominance platforms—X-plane programs, if you will."—*Pentagon acquisition chief Frank Kendall, describing a new "sixth generation" fighter initiative, House Armed Services Committee, Jan. 28.*

No Rubber Stamp

"Congress determines the size, shape, and soul of the military. ... Sometimes the Pentagon is penny-wise and pound-foolish. Sometimes the Pentagon can be parochial. Sometimes the White House tries to cut military spending to put money in other parts of the budget. ... Sometimes their priorities are just wrong. ... Congress should not give any president a blank check and Congress should not be a rubber stamp."—*Rep. Mac Thornberry (R-Texas), chairman of House Armed Services Committee, American Enterprise Institute, Jan. 20.*