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Russia Could Trigger World War III, U.K. Defense Chief Says

By Bloomberg

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Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

Threats from Russia are escalating, the U.K.'s Chief of the Defense Staff Nick Carter said, as new tools and weapons including disinformation and mercenaries could lead to miscalculations or even war.

Techniques including "disinformation, subversion, manipulation, assassinations and of course the use of mercenaries, which are very easily undeclared and non-attributable," mean that "you can see how it could escalate and how therefore miscalculation would be a possibility," Carter said, speaking in an interview with BBC Television.

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Russia could therefore inadvertently trigger a third world war, he wrote in the Sunday Telegraph. U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo has said that standing up to authoritarian regimes like China and Russia requires a greater joint effort from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. London will host a NATO summit next month to mark the alliance's 70th anniversary.

French President Emmanuel Macron, meanwhile, has called NATO "brain dead" and said its core collective defense commitments are in doubt, partly because of a fading commitment from the U.S. under President Donald Trump. Asked about that critique on Sunday, Carter said that NATO has been "an extraordinarily successful alliance" that is changing its strategy to adapt to emerging threats.

Some of those concerns have been brought to the fore in Britain. The U.K. Parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee conducted an inquiry into the threat of Russian interference in British elections, but Boris Johnson's government has refused to release the findings with elections looming. Voters are due to go to the polls next month.

Bloomberg last week revealed that the report raised concerns over Russian interference in British elections but found no "smoking gun" evidence of Kremlin-sponsored meddling. The Times reported earlier on Sunday that the report identified nine Russian donors to the Conservative Party.

Carter said that he couldn't comment on whether the report should be released, though he said that it's understandable that people are concerned about how disinformation might impact democratic processes.

Asked in a separate BBC interview about the report, Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid said that "when it comes to party donors, when it comes to the Conservative Party or any other party, there are very strict rules that need to be followed, and of course we will always follow those rules."

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