

**Testimony of
Under Secretary of Defense Christine Wormuth
U.S. Department of Defense**

**House Armed Services Committee Hearing
“How is DOD Responding to Emerging Security Challenges in Europe?”
February 25, 2015**

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you today the security situation in Europe and our relationship with Allies and partners in the region. Over the last 18 months, we have seen the security situation in Europe change significantly. Russia has occupied the Crimean peninsula and unlawfully claimed to have annexed it, and has supported separatist violence in eastern Ukraine. Russian aggression has prompted a renewed focus within NATO on deterrence and reassurance of Allies. In Southern Europe, Allies face instability flowing from the turmoil in the Middle East. Across the continent, European nations are facing a growing terrorist threat fueled by the unprecedented flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria.

Despite these challenges, Europe is the cornerstone of our engagement with the rest of the world and the catalyst for our global cooperation. As the United States and Europe work together to address a range of global challenges, from extremism to climate change to illicit finance, this is true today more than ever. Time and again, Europe and NATO have proven to be our indispensable strategic partners; for these reasons, U.S. engagement in Europe is and will remain a vital element of our national security.

Russian Actions in Ukraine

It has been almost a year since Russia’s occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. Since that time, we have seen Russia funding and arming separatists in eastern Ukraine. We have seen direct Russian participation in the fighting. These actions, coupled with Russia’s continued support of frozen conflicts and violations of its obligations under numerous treaties, are undermining European stability.

Russia’s actions to undermine the sovereignty of a neighboring country and to attempt to change borders by force are unacceptable. Russia’s aggression against Ukraine challenges our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. It changes Europe’s security landscape, causes instability on NATO’s borders, and is a challenge to the international order. The United States remains steadfast in opposing Russia’s destabilizing actions. As the President said in his State of the Union address: “We are upholding the principle that bigger nations can’t bully the small—by opposing Russian aggression, supporting Ukraine’s democracy and reassuring our NATO Allies.” Since the outset of the crisis, the United States has sought to impose costs on Russia, reassure our NATO Allies, and support Ukraine in its effort to define its own course as a sovereign nation.

U.S. efforts to reassure Allies and support Ukraine

First, working closely with Europe and other partners and allies, we have imposed real costs on Russia for its aggressive actions. This includes diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions, which, combined with falling oil prices, are having a substantial and mounting impact on Russia's economy. The ruble has fallen dramatically against the dollar since our first round of targeted sectoral sanctions in mid-July, and Russian companies face a looming credit crunch as sanctions have severely curtailed access to external funding markets. We have also imposed visa and financial sanctions on individuals in Putin's inner circle, Russian officials, and separatist Ukrainian actors who are undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Second, we are taking visible, concrete measures to reassure our Allies and partners in Europe and to deter further Russian aggression. Since May of 2014, NATO has reassured Allies and deterred Russia by maintaining a continuous air, land, and maritime presence and increasing military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance. These measures are defensive, proportionate, and fully in line with NATO's Treaty obligations regarding Allied defense. For example, we have maintained a persistent presence of U.S. military forces in each of the Baltic States and in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria since April 2014. We tripled the number of U.S. aircraft taking part in our Baltic Air Policing rotation, provided refueling aircraft for NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) missions, deployed U.S. Navy ships to the Black and Baltic Seas 14 times, and increased training flights in Poland.

Allies have also agreed to adaptation measures as part of NATO's Readiness Action Plan (RAP) that will improve the Alliance's long-term military posture and capabilities, and ensure it is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. These measures include enhancing the NATO Response Force (NRF) to make it more responsive and capable; establishing a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force that will consist of a multinational brigade, supported by air, maritime and special forces; creating new, small NATO headquarters units -- known as NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) -- in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania; raising the readiness and capabilities of the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast in Poland; and enhancing NATO's Standing Naval Forces with greater numbers and more types of ships.

Third, we are providing substantial support to Ukraine as it deals with simultaneous economic and military crises. Ukraine has been a strong partner to the United States and NATO since its independence, and our security cooperation with Ukraine dates back to 1992. Since the start of the crisis the United States has increased its security-related assistance to Ukraine significantly. We have committed \$118 million in material and training assistance to Ukraine's military, National Guard, and Border Guard service, and together, DoD and the State Department will dedicate at least another \$120 million in FY15 as part of the European Reassurance Initiative. . Our assistance has been consistent with identified Ukrainian needs and priorities in the areas of sustainment, medical support, personal protection, secure communications, perimeter security, and capabilities to counter separatist and Russian artillery. We maintain senior-level defense and military discussions with Ukraine and we are continuously assessing how to maximize the impact of our security assistance.

Other Challenges Facing Europe

Looking beyond the crisis in Ukraine, Europe is also on the frontlines of the fight against ISIL. The United States has led an effort to build a coalition of over 60 nations that are contributing across multiple lines of effort, ranging from military contributions to humanitarian assistance. In the coalition military campaign, Europe is stepping up to fill critical roles both to deny ISIL safe-haven and to build the capacity of our partners to take the fight to ISIL, to include actively striking ISIL targets. This activity is also supplemented by Allied contributions of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), lift, and other air assets.

Europe is also playing a big role on the ground in our efforts to build the capacity of Iraqi forces and the moderate Syrian opposition. In the early days of the conflict in Iraq last year, European partners played a leading role in our effort to provide urgent resupply for Peshmerga forces, providing both substantial donations of arms as well as lifting those supplies into theater. European partners are also playing a lead role in 3 of our 4 building partner capacity (BPC) sites; these forces are in addition to forces from many European countries that are supporting the mission to "advise and assist" Iraqi units on operations against ISIL.

Across the border, Turkey has agreed to be one of the hosts for a joint U.S.-Turkish Train and Equip program for the moderate Syrian opposition, which we expect will begin in the coming months. This framework gives us the foundation to continue strengthening U.S.-Turkish partnership on regional security, and marks a key Turkish contribution to the counter-ISIL efforts.

The threat posed to the United States and the West by foreign fighters moving in and out of Syria – many of whom transit through Turkey -- remains a concern. Turkey acknowledges the threat and has taken steps to bolster its law enforcement and border security efforts over the past year, including increased monitoring, border security, and counter illicit finance measures. The Department contributes to interagency efforts to support Turkish efforts against this threat – including through strengthening the Department's close cooperation with the Turkish military. The Department also supports efforts to help source countries identify and disrupt foreign fighters before they transit through Turkey. More broadly, the United States is using all forms of intelligence available to understand and address the flow of foreign fighters. The United States and our Allies have made progress, and we will continue to explore opportunities to address this complex problem.

In addition to the threat of ISIL, instability in the Middle East and North Africa is affecting NATO's security, especially for Allies on NATO's southern flank. The movement of thousands of migrants to the shores of southern Europe brings instability and violence, due in part to the transnational criminal networks involved in human trafficking. The United States is working closely with France to battle extremism in Mali and elsewhere in the Sahel by supporting France's operations against groups such as al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Murabitun. Today, the French are leading counterterrorism operations in Mali, Niger, and Chad, with over 3000 personnel deployed. U.S. support to French operations, including intelligence sharing, airlift, and aerial refueling, has been vital to French

success. The United States is also cooperating with Spain and Portugal to strengthen security across West Africa. The Special Marine Air Ground Task Force – Crisis Response (SPMAGTF-CR) postured in Spain deployed to evacuate Embassy Juba early last year, and is postured to handle similar unrest in other locales. DoD also works with European partners in the Gulf of Guinea through a robust engagement program, including maritime exercises, Africa Partnership Station (APS), and coordinating maritime domain awareness efforts in the region.

Europe as a Strategic Partner

Looking beyond Europe, our European allies are our strategic partners in addressing a host of security challenges far from NATO's boundaries, whether it is responding to the Ebola outbreak in Africa, or working together to help bring greater stability and security to Afghanistan. Our strong relationship with our NATO allies, our shared values, and shared view of many security threats we face is the strong foundation to this strategic partnership.

In Africa, we saw the importance of our relationships with NATO Allies and partners as part of the international community's response to the Ebola crisis. Under Operation UNITED ASSISTANCE, the Department has supported the USAID-led effort to break the back of the Ebola outbreak, focusing primarily on Liberia. The United Kingdom and France are leading similar efforts in Sierra Leone and Guinea respectively. Key partners, such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark, deployed personnel in support of these efforts and provided air and sealift to transport humanitarian supplies. From a posture perspective, the Department relied on our partners in Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, and Senegal to support deployments. While the mission is not complete, and many lives have been lost, we can be proud that the international community, with strong roles played by European nations, successfully mobilized to address this emergency.

In Afghanistan, NATO Allies and partners remain our steadfast partners. The Resolute Support Mission (RSM), launched on 1 January 2015, focuses the efforts of NATO Allies and operational partners on training, advising, and assisting the Afghan Security Institutions at the ministerial and institutional levels. Twenty-six Allies and sixteen partners are providing forces to this mission. Under Resolute Support, advisors provide assistance to their Afghan counterparts to develop skills and processes focused on support and oversight of the Afghan National Security Forces, including: planning, programming, budgeting, and execution; transparency, oversight, and accountability of the budget; force generation, recruitment, and personnel management and development; and the principles of rule of law and good governance. Finally, in accordance with decisions taken at NATO's Summit in Chicago in 2012 and reconfirmed during the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO Allies and partners have committed to providing sustainment funding to the Afghan National Security Forces through 2024.

U.S. Force Posture in Europe

To work with our Allies and Partners in all these areas, it is essential to have a robust force posture in Europe. Our footprint in Europe gives us the capability to defend the United States' security interests forward, enhance transatlantic security, reassure Allies, and deter aggression. For example, U.S. facilities in Germany, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom

enable U.S. and European militaries to plan, train, exercise, and operate together effectively -- activities vital to forming effective coalitions as we look for ways to cooperate during austere times. Additionally, we maintain two brigade combat teams in Europe for rapid response and have begun to forward deploy naval forces at Naval Station Rota in Spain. We are also continuing to implement the European Phased Adaptive Approach for ballistic missile defense.

The threats the United States and Europe face are familiar challenges in some instances, but we need to refresh our approach to posture in the region in a time of limited resources. Achieving U.S. presence through more innovative approaches not only makes strategic sense, but it is also an increasing necessity in the current fiscal environment. Our Joint Force has been engaged in uninterrupted warfare for over thirteen years, while the changing security environment has generated new challenges not only in the European theater, but across the globe. Our defense strategy assesses that the future security environment will continue to be volatile and dynamic.

The United States must innovate and explore new posture arrangements by increasing the flexibility, adaptability, and readiness of our forces throughout the region. For example, the United States announced in January 2015 that RAF Lakenheath in the United Kingdom will be the first location in Europe to host the F-35, demonstrating that we are putting our most advanced capability in a critical region postured to support and defend our Alliance interests in the region. In response to our need to provide DoD support to the protection of U.S. personnel and facilities in high-risk areas, the Department deployed a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force to Moron, Spain as well as an East Africa Response Force to Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti. Italy and Greece have also been key partners and hosts to U.S. forces to facilitate the monitoring of the security situation in the Mediterranean region and to conduct crisis response against threats to U.S. interests in north and central Africa.

Moving forward, we need to continue to assess whether the U.S. European Command has sufficient forces and capabilities assigned given the threats in the region. The Office of the Secretary of Defense will continue to work closely with General Breedlove and his team of planners and strategists to ensure that they have the resources they need to tackle current and future challenges.

Conclusion

In the current economic environment, burden sharing and leveraging partner capabilities are critical. The NATO Alliance includes many of the United States' most capable and reliable Allies, and it is essential that the Alliance remain capable and interoperable. While the United States remains ready to counter new threats, we prefer to address them alongside our European Allies and partners. But they in turn must maintain the forces and capabilities to work alongside us. The defense spending pledge signed by NATO leaders at the Summit in Wales is an important step in keeping Allies capable to meet the challenges ahead.

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Smith, if we do not solve sequestration and related budget pressures, our ability to continue to invest in capabilities and posture in such a vital part of the world will remain at risk, as it is today. We look forward to working with this Committee, and

with Congress more broadly to find solutions to these budgetary pressures so that our military force remains healthy, agile, and able. Thank you for your time today.