

# **House Committee on Armed Services**

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for inviting me here to Washington to talk about these important issues: it is a pleasure to return to the House Armed Services Committee as always. I ask that this statement be entered for the record, as you have always so graciously allowed me. Thank you.

I appear before you today in my personal capacity, but drawing on my 37 years of active service in the US Navy, four years as a NATO Commander, and my current work at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory. The views I express are mine alone.

Of the many global challenges, the one that is at the very top of my list is the security situation in Europe as it relates to Russia under President Vladimir Putin. Russia's direct challenge to the transatlantic partnership through the illegal annexation of territory and unilateral action in Syria threatens the vision we all share of a Europe "whole and free," especially for our NATO allies and other close partners.

First let me briefly lay out the military balance in Europe today.

NATO remains Europe's primary security provider, as it has been for almost seven decades. The good news is that taken as a whole, the 28 nations of NATO produce 52% of the world's GDP and spend nearly \$1 Trillion on Defense. Yet, since 2009, NATO's overall funding has fallen by almost 20%. The continuing financial crisis in Europe has made shouldering the burden for defense a challenge for all members of the alliance, but

especially for our friends in Europe. Average European defense funding levels have declined as a percentage of gross domestic product to just 1.43%, well below the 2% goal, with just five of the 28 NATO members meeting the 2% threshold. The financial realities of defense reveal a NATO that is less prepared than it must be. We cannot expect NATO to do more with less, thus we must commit to reversing this disconcerting trend.

Putin's Russia is in many important ways a declining power; but under his aggressive leadership it manifests a confident position in the global scene. Despite Russia's economic slowdown (the result of sanctions and the cut in oil prices), it remains intent on pursuing an assertive foreign policy. The Kremlin has boosted defense spending over 25% since seizing Crimea in 2014 even though Russian GDP is forecast to decrease again in 2016. This dramatic spending increase shows intent to consolidate its current territorial gains and may hint at expansionist military plans for the future.

I know that this committee is well aware of the details of Russia's revisionist attempts to expand into Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine; and with the annexation of Crimea, to redraw borders that improve its strategic position relative to the western order. As you are well aware, this order, founded on the rule of law and democratic values, is fundamental to stability on the European continent.

Russia has used an aggressive blend of special forces, information warfare, cyber warfare, and conventional military activity that some have called "hybrid warfare." As

we have seen, definitively attributing responsibility to the state directing these operations is difficult, while countering this “hybrid warfare” approach is in many ways more difficult than countering a “conventional” approach.

Russia repurposed the Open Skies Treaty to take advantage of our commitment to the rule of law. They have flouted the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with tests of ground-launched cruise missiles to prohibited ranges. Russian submarine activity has risen to a level not seen since Cold War days, while Russian aircraft continue to challenge the sovereign airspace of NATO members. These and other activities, combined with “snap exercises” of questionable intent, form a distinct and unabating aggressive tone that is difficult to ignore. Our allies in the Baltics in particular are deeply worried about Russian intent, and logically enough seek reassurance. A recent RAND study postulated that Russian forces could sweep into Baltic capitals in 60 hours, with little immediate resistance from NATO writ large. This is understandably extremely disconcerting to them given their history and proximity to Russia. A recent CNAS War Game in which I participated clearly demonstrated European concern about this issue, yet a lack of cohesion on the part of some of the allies.

Unfortunately, we are not currently configured to detect and respond to these types moves in a robust and immediate military fashion. General Phil Breedlove, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Commander, European Command, has consistently described how NATO’s indicators and warnings have atrophied. Even if we had perfect intelligence, the simple geography of Europe, and in particular the Baltics, makes

responding to a Russian incursion incredibly difficult. Additionally, our decision to remove two Brigade Combat Teams from Europe was weakened a sense on the part of our Allies that we are truly committed to the defense of the Alliance's borders.

While I am comfortable that over time, NATO has the military capability to defeat Russia and expel Russian forces from Alliance territory, any effort to recapture the Baltic States, for example, would be grisly and would likely involve a drastic escalation, as plainly stated in Russian military doctrine. Worst of all, it would bring into question the use of nuclear weapons, a capability President Putin often reminds the west that Russia possesses and is unafraid to use.

This said, there is hope. This hope can be realized through increased troop levels, commitment to our nuclear deterrent program, and rational diplomatic communication with Moscow. In other words, we must apply smart power, combining both hard military power with a sophisticated campaign of information, collaboration, and Alliance burden sharing.

NATO cannot solely rely on what some have called "virtual presence" in the form of rotational forces from the United States to counter a resurgent Russia. A more credible deterrent to Putin's challenge involves ensuring force commitments that result in actual presence. As a first move, the four-fold budget increase in resources to counter Russian aggression, as part of the Defense Department's budget released last week, is a credible start. The National Commission on the Future of the Army and other studies reiterate that the Army must increase force levels in Europe and maintain a robust overall presence

in the range of a million troops – active, reserve, and guard. The same can be said about invigorating naval and air capacity and presence in the region. These are necessary expenditures. We must also insist that our NATO partners undertake similar increases in defense spending, to make the actual presence durable.

Our NATO forces must accelerate already occurring training and conduct integrated exercises on a regular basis to improve their combat readiness and show strength. While determining what level of combat power and military factors deter Russia is difficult, Russia responds to strength. Increasing US and NATO's physical presence along NATO's eastern flank will change how Putin, and the Kremlin, view our resolve and commitment to our allies.

We also must remain committed to a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent program in Europe. This determined continuation of our nuclear program supports our NATO allies and our strategic national interests.

Having said all of that, this enhanced military activity described above should be accompanied by robust diplomatic communication with the Russian Federation. There is no need to stumble backwards into another Cold War. We must explain the context, reasoning, and purpose for NATO's additional presence in Eastern Europe, and state clearly that NATO will not accept Russian revisionist claims and aggressive actions against NATO member states. We should cooperate with Russia where we can – Afghanistan, counter-terror, counter-narcotics, Piracy – but confront where we must, with

a particular emphasis on the message that the borders of NATO nations are ultimate red lines for the Alliance and the United States of America.

These recommendations will reassure our allies in Europe and around the world, prevent Russian overreach in the Baltic States, and perhaps help to check potential Russian activities in other parts of the world, e.g. Syria, the Arctic. Disengagement and abandonment are not an option for the United States. We must stand strongly with our NATO allies and even more closely work with them to ensure Europe's long-term security.

We must also continue to insist that our NATO Allies meet the 2% spending of their GDP on defense. This is a minimum that the Alliance has collectively pledged to support, but thus far is failing to meet. Over time, the misbalance in the burden sharing between the US and the rest of the Alliance cannot continue. This should be a central US point of concern at the upcoming NATO summit.

In the end, we will prevail by out-thinking our opponents. This requires an expansive approach to Russia that uses a balance of hard and soft power – smart power as some have called it. Such an approach will require education and the building of human capital here in the US, including learning and studying the history, culture, and strategy of Russia. I believe that by constructing the right strategy to deal with Russia, we will help ensure a more stable global system going forward. Hearings like this are an important part of that process, and I conclude by thanking you for permitting me to share my views.

I look forward to your questions

Thank you for your time.