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BEFORE THE

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ON

THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN REASSURANCE INITIATIVE

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Chairman Hartzler, Ranking Member Speier, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present this opening statement outlining the United States' European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), and the strategy, implementation, and challenges related to this initiative. In addition to these points, my remarks will highlight measures NATO has taken including outcomes from the NATO Summit held last week in Warsaw, Poland.

In response to Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea and destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe, the United States, individual Allies and partners, and NATO have worked together since 2014 to develop a broad range of efforts designed to demonstrate our collective commitment to the security and stability of the transatlantic space. Since then, these measures have evolved in step with the security environment in Europe, with initial efforts to assure Allies and partners shifting to a focus on reinforcing deterrence and defense.

Turning first to those efforts undertaken by the United States, President Obama in June 2014 called on you, Congress, to approve up to \$1 billion to support the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). Under ERI – for which Congress provided \$985 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 and \$789.3 million in FY 2016 – the United States launched Operation Atlantic Resolve (OAR) to maintain a persistent, rotational presence of air, land, and sea forces on the territory of the eastern Allies, from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. In FY 2015 and FY 2016, activities funded under ERI focused on expanding exercises and training with NATO Allies and partners; building the capacity of our regional Allies and partners; and augmenting prepositioned European Activity Sets of equipment for use in joint exercises. Building on this, our current FY 2017 ERI request of \$3.4 billion represents a significant augmentation of these efforts, enabling us to move from assurance to deterrence by expanding and deepening activities within five lines of effort:

- Increased Presence. In addition to maintaining our commitment to a persistent, rotational presence of air, land, and sea forces, the United States will contribute to the broader deterrence posture by rotating an Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) on a heel-to-toe basis into Europe. We will also deploy the rotational ABCT headquarters to Poland, and the ABCT will be able to move around Central and Eastern Europe as appropriate to participate in training and exercise activities. This, together with the two brigades already stationed in Europe, will provide for a division-sized ground force capability that can respond across the theater, if necessary.
- Enhanced Prepositioning. To support this increased presence, the United States will use ERI to place additional Army Prepositioned Stock (APS) in Europe. These additional combat vehicles and supplies are intended to reduce force deployment times and enable a rapid response to any potential contingencies.
- Improved Infrastructure. Improvements throughout Europe to areas such as airfields, training areas, and ranges on military installations will improve military readiness and provide for quick dispersal of forces, if required.
- Bilateral and Multilateral Exercises and Training. ERI will also enable us to continue extensive U.S. participation in exercises and training activities with NATO Allies and partners with the aim of demonstrating resolve and improving overall readiness and interoperability.
- Building the Capacity of Allies and Partners. ERI funding will continue to help build the capacity of Central and Eastern European Allies and partners to defend themselves and bolster their full participation as operational partners in responding to crises.

Yet, as President Obama discussed at last week's NATO Summit in Warsaw, our ERI contributions are but one part of the broader NATO efforts. At the Wales Summit in 2014, NATO developed its Readiness Action Plan (RAP), under which it decided to enhance the NATO Response Force (NRF), generate the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), and create NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) to facilitate rapid reinforcement of forces. At last week's Warsaw Summit, NATO, like the United States, took concrete steps to strengthen deterrence by announcing the deployment of a NATO battalion-sized battlegroup, the so-called Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), into each of the three Baltic nations and Poland. The United States will be the eFP Framework Nation for Poland, with the UK, Canada, and Germany serving as Framework Nation for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, respectively. These eFP NATO battalions will result, for the first time, in rotational units being deployed persistently in the region whose mission is specifically focused on countering any action by aggressive actors in the region. Taken together, these U.S. and NATO combat forces will represent the greatest gathering of Allied deterrent power in the Baltic nations and Poland since the end of the Cold War.

Although these U.S. and NATO steps to reinforce deterrence and defense are significant and contribute to greater transatlantic security in the short run, challenges remain. First, NATO must continue to adapt institutionally to ensure its decision making, command structure, and defense planning processes are flexible and agile. Additionally, the United States must continue to encourage our European Allies to meet the Wales Defense Investment Pledge target of spending 2% Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defense within a decade and to make the necessary investments in readiness and capabilities. Since the Wales Summit, a majority of NATO Allies have taken steps to reverse negative trends in defense spending, with 23 of 28 Allies having halted the decline in their defense spending in absolute real terms. Collectively, Allies will spend more on defense in 2016 than the year prior, making this the first time since 2009 that total NATO defense spending has increased. Finally, we must weather the trends of internal political

fractiousness and stand united against those who seek to divide the Alliance and undermine the rules and norms that underpin our security.

In closing, I thank Congress for its continued support of ERI. I also thank and applaud the performance of the entire team – including the Military Departments and Services, the Joint Staff, U.S. European Command (USEUCOM), and NATO – all of whom have been central to implementing this strategy. The transatlantic community stands stronger together; we are working together to strengthen transatlantic and, in turn, global security. I look forward to this session and to answering any questions you may have.