Ambassador Lincoln P. Bloomfield, Jr.
Chairman Emeritus, Stimson Center

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and Splintering NATO: Russian Disinformation"
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Chairman Royce, Ranking Member Engel, Members of the Committee, thank you for the honor of appearing before you this morning to discuss Russia's efforts to meddle with our democratic political process and those of other countries. As I do not answer to any boss or client or institution, I hope my remarks will be understood as the personal view of one who has served in the Pentagon, White House and State Department under three presidents in five administrations, and who also had the good fortune of serving as Chairman of the non-partisan Stimson Center for eight years until the end of 2016.

There are two questions at the heart of the challenge posed by Russia's disinformation campaign against the United States and other countries including our NATO allies: what corrective actions we Americans should take in response to the revelation that the Russian government has been attempting to undermine the public's trust in our governing institutions by interfering with the free and vigorous national conversation that marks our domestic politics; and the appropriate response to this hostile behavior by the Russian government led by Vladimir Putin.

The Challenge of Reacting Constructively to Disruptive Change

In addressing the first issue, I start by suggesting that we Americans should not be too hard on ourselves. The world has been changing fast in this century, and it has created pressures on society and government, here and elsewhere. Globalization and robotics have impacted our economy such that manufacturing jobs have migrated to lower-cost foreign labor markets. Government and major media outlets have lost the near-monopoly they once exercised as the public's source of information about important events and issues. Today anyone can put a video broadcast or well-packaged news story on the internet, and we find sensational allegations and conspiracy theories spread through social media without any check on their veracity. This is fueling popular mistrust of the government and of traditional news organizations.

At the height of the Cold War, as the free world and the Soviet bloc competed for primacy while carefully controlling steps that could escalate toward the unthinkable prospect of nuclear war, our national security secrets were tightly walled off from public disclosure. Not so today, as sensitive information finds its way into the public realm on almost a daily basis. A capital city that was once a relatively quiet factory for policy and bipartisan legislation has been transformed by the central focus on managing the news cycle, the high financial stakes associated with laws and regulations, and the influence of political donors and lobbying groups.

We live in a changed and changing world. With these and other pressures building up in America, our political system was destined to experience a major shake-up sooner or later. The tumultuous 2016 election process elevated the voices of not one but two candidates – President Trump and Independent Senator Bernie Sanders – challenging both major political parties by tapping into public anxiety and hunger for a more vibrant economy, a more effective federal bureaucracy, a more successful international security role, and a process in Washington that more clearly elevates the public interest above special interests. It was a close election, and had it gone the other way we could well be back to business as usual until the next election.

But in the end, this was a change election, and we are living in anything but ordinary times. I have no doubt Russian meddling sought to take advantage of the anxiety and discontent so evident from the beginning of the election season; others will judge how much of a difference this made. The question is what should happen now. One answer needs to focus on our country, our economy, our society, our politics, and how America needs to adapt to a faster-moving, hyper-connected and technology-driven world. We need to assess what Russia hoped to accomplish by interfering in our political affairs, and consider how best to inoculate our free and open traditions from hostile interference. The issue of how to respond to Russia's provocative actions is a separate and no less important question.

What Russia Hopes to Gain by Meddling in Others' Politics

The fact is that Russia's security services have used disinformation as a primary tool of influence going back to the beginnings of the Soviet Union. Not unlike US strategists, Russian national security leaders have embraced the ancient Chinese General Sun Tsu's philosophy that it is always preferable to achieve strategic goals without having to fight for them. A 2014 article about Russian so-called "new-generation warfare" in the Aspen Institute's Central Europe publication, by Janis Berzins, Managing Director of the Center for Security and Strategic Research in the National Defense Academy of Latvia, offered useful insights about Russian tactics under Vladimir Putin. Among these were the idea of exerting "direct influence" in lieu of "direct destruction," waging "culture war" instead of a war with weapons, and promoting "internal decay" rather than destruction of an enemy.

The author concluded that "the Russian view of modern warfare is based on the idea that the main battlespace is the mind." In reading this, I was reminded of a statement last November in a presentation at the Halifax International Security Forum by LTG H.R. McMaster, USA, who has since become our country's National Security Advisor. Speaking of the U.S. and its allies, General McMaster said, "We have largely vacated the battleground spaces beyond the physical space." As National Endowment of Democracy Vice President Christopher Walker wrote last week in Politico,

> *"In contrast to inward-leaning democracies, which have an "End of History" sense of complacency, today's autocrats are vibrant internationalists in the ideas sphere. In recent years, the leading autocracies have forged a diverse constellation of*

efforts to shape perceptions and project their preferred worldview, while contesting the ideas they find anathema. They have upped the competition in this arena at a time when the world's leading democratic states have largely gone to the sidelines."

If Russia believes it can demoralize the American people, divert the energies of our media, and provoke debilitating intramural squabbles among our elected leaders and representatives, we all need to pay more attention to the net impact of what takes place in the highest-profile political arena here in Washington, and its effect on the morale and civic spirit of our citizens as well as the confidence of our allies.

With comparable pressures and anxieties felt by populations in Europe, exacerbated by the destabilizing flow of refugees from North Africa and Syria as well as terrorist attacks perpetrated by ISIS in major European cities, Russia sees a similar opening to weaken the NATO alliance. Disinformation and propaganda are meant to undermine the confidence of Europeans in their leaders and institutions. As in the United States, this is a wake-up call for Western democratic politicians to reconnect with their people, embrace changes that will restore the public trust, and show that our governments can successfully address today's challenges.

The Center for Naval Analysis has produced some useful research on Russian efforts to focus disinformation in countries formerly within the Soviet bloc where ethnic Russian populations live. Mr. Putin's government has sought to diminish the solidarity and sovereign vitality of countries like Ukraine, Latvia, Belarus and others by targeting so-called "Russian compatriots" within neighboring countries with influence operations. Foreign television broadcasts by RT – formerly Russia Today – cast aspersions on Western politics and culture, while other outlets fill print and online social media with similar content. Large numbers of so-called "trolls" working for the Russian government saturate social media with propaganda themes, including entirely fictitious stories and images, posted under false identities. Countries burdened by official corruption and lack of transparency are particularly vulnerable.

<u>The 21st Century Geopolitical Contest – Free-Market Democracies versus Autocratic Powers</u>

There is a larger geopolitical contest being played out here, and I believe that this context must inform Washington's response. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, Mr. Putin and the Russian intelligence services have made it their top priority to preserve the levers of power and control even as dictatorships elsewhere collapsed. A long list of countries have experienced popular uprisings – often called "colored revolutions" – and thrown off authoritarian rule for more open and democratic governance. From South and Central America to Central and Eastern Europe, to Central Asia, Southeast Asia and most recently with the Arab Spring, the historical tide has swept away autocrats, reflecting the aspirations of ordinary citizens who are now connected by cellphones and the internet.

While other countries worked to realign their political systems with the historical trend empowering individuals and advancing their rights, the leadership circles of Russia along with

China, Iran and some other countries including Syria have instead concentrated on holding onto power indefinitely, in defiance of pressures for political reform. They censor and control media within their territory, and punish political opposition, with as much violence as it takes. They also try to convince their populations that rights-based free-market democracies are inferior and unstable, and cannot be trusted to provide for their needs. When free-market economies have suffered downturns, such as the Asia financial crisis of 1997 and the global recession in 2008, these authoritarian regimes have seized upon the opportunity to denounce democratic systems and to claim that their model of stable governance is superior to ours.

Vladimir Putin's effort to sow doubts about the legitimacy of our electoral process and stir up controversy here in Washington is consistent with Russia's longer-term goals of discrediting America's global reputation, sowing internal divisions and weakening our resolve to lead in the world, thus making it easier for Russia to wall off historical pressures for political reform at home and in countries along its western and southern periphery. These actions are in pursuit of but one objective: to preserve and extend his circle's hold on power in Russia. The Key Judgments in the January 6 Intelligence Community Assessment titled "Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections" labeled these activities "the most recent expression of Moscow's longstanding desire to undermine the US-led liberal democratic order."

As we consider specific responses to Russia's hostile actions, we must align these responses with a consistent national security strategy to resist and actively discourage this rival model of governance, which is undemocratic, economically statist and inefficient, and sustained by ever more severe coercion. Over the long term, the durability and survival of international law and norms that underpin a stable and just international order are at stake. Our national interests will be harmed if this 21st Century model of cruel and corrupt dictatorship gains wider adoption and disrupts the maturation of young democracies. With Russia, as with China and Iran, if we understand the larger stakes and act in defense of our principles, it is only a matter of time before their citizens will demand political participation, economic opportunity and an end to repression, corruption and censorship, as we have repeatedly seen all over the world.

Defensive Responses: Reducing Our Vulnerability to Russian Disinformation Campaigns

As the Congress investigates Russia's waging of "new-generation warfare" against the United States, its NATO allies and neighboring countries that broke free of the Soviet Union a quarter-century ago, the following kinds of responses are recommended:

1. Expose Russia's activities in detail, building upon the Intelligence Community's recent assessment. This should also include investigation of unconfirmed press reports about criminal Russian hacking of American entities potentially involving extortion. As with most unwanted secret activity, sunlight is the strongest disinfectant. The best response to Russia's covert interference in our internal affairs is transparency, a hallmark of our democracy.
2. Conduct Intensive Dialogue and Collaboration with Allies to Forge a Unified Policy. Congress should discuss its findings with Parliamentarians and Ministers in targeted

European countries, while urging the Administration to work with both NATO and the European Union to forge common policies aimed at detecting, exposing and discrediting Russian disinformation. Alliance-wide strategic communications should educate the public about Russia's nefarious activities and the Putin ruling clique's vulnerability to geopolitical trends favoring popular sovereignty, good governance and the rule of law.

3. Continued National Focus on Cyber Policy. Given the ever-growing critical dependence of the US economy, the military and the American lifestyle on cyber technology utilizing the internet, the challenge of protecting US interests from malicious intrusions is greater than ever. The fact that in America major cyber systems are in the hands of the private sector only underscores the importance of a well-considered, well-managed policy in Washington involving effective collaboration with all stakeholders including the general public. Hopefully Congress and the Administration will address this challenge and find common ground. Doing so will afford Russia and other external actors fewer opportunities to harm the national interest.

4. Show that Our Democracy Works. Perhaps the greatest strength of our republic is the exercise of political freedom, allowing all voices to be heard and a vigorous competition of ideas. We cannot allow the Russian provocation or any hostile interference to curb our open democratic process. What has made America the most successful political system in history is our capacity to adapt and change with the times, faster and more effectively than any other society. America has always owned the future. With the disruptions we are now experiencing in Washington from economic, social, technological and geopolitical pressures, the solution is to adapt, and address these challenges with vision and confidence.

Russia's hope is that our political differences can be exacerbated, and internal divisions sharpened, such that the left and the right, Republicans and Democrats, coastal elites and the red state heartland, will never find common ground. As the January Intelligence Community Assessment noted, pro-Kremlin bloggers had prepared a #DemocracyRIP Twitter campaign at the time of our November election. No one would deny that the United States is undergoing a turbulent political episode, spurred mainly by global trends but also exploited by hostile foreign influence operations. Now Russia has been caught, and the next move is up to us. If we are to preserve our cherished right to say no to policies we oppose, we must now demonstrate our capacity to say yes to the things that matter most.

This chaotic period in Washington – where budgets, organizational structures, decision processes and policies suddenly appear so uncertain – is also a dynamic opportunity to make sensible changes for the better. I hope my testimony will persuade Members that the first step in defeating the rival authoritarian model threatening the international order is to show that our system works, reaching common ground on core issues affecting our security, our future solvency and our reputation in the world. Every Member of Congress, indeed every American citizen, is part of the home team. We need to come together and agree on steps, including

bold changes if needed, that will enable America once again to embrace the future and thrive, serving as an example to the world.

Responding to Moscow: Is "New-Generation Warfare" an Act of War?

To the second question posed by Russia's provocations – what is the appropriate response? – compelling arguments will be made that the use of deceptive propaganda and disinformation, the hacking and theft of domestic political communications, the bribing of officials in some countries, and like activities emanating from Russian sources under the control of Vladimir Putin, are a seamless extension of Russia's hard power threats to its neighbors, NATO and the US. Russia has violated security agreements, seized foreign territory, issued ominous nuclear threats, and placed nuclear-capable missiles to the west of the Baltic states in Kaliningrad, among other actions of concern.

It is entirely appropriate, and will be salutary, for the US and its NATO allies to engage in a joint assessment and high-level consultations regarding Russia's attempt to undermine our solidarity and weaken our collective security. If such consultations lead to decisions to adopt new defensive military measures, they will be perfectly legitimate responses by the member states of the alliance.

There is, however, an alternative mode of response to Putin's secret campaign. Russia obtained sensitive private communications pertinent to our domestic politics, and arranged for their disclosure at times calculated to perturb and distract our national conversation approaching the November election. For better or worse, we Americans are becoming accustomed to hearing about matters that used to be kept private. We read personal emails, we hear details about intelligence and law enforcement investigations, and even our 44th and 45th Presidents have openly discussed intelligence-related matters that earlier Presidents would likely have kept from the public discourse.

In spite of the constant disclosures, revelations and leaks of personal, proprietary, and apparently classified information here in Washington, our republic will not be threatened by any such disclosures. Can Mr. Putin say the same thing about his secrets?

After reading sources including the meticulously documented history of Vladimir Putin's rise to power, Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia? (2014) by Professor Karen Dawisha at Miami University in Ohio, I would like to suggest that the Congress and Administration seriously explore a campaign of public exposure to see how Mr. Putin and his political allies fare when his secrets become known to the world, including 143 million Russians trapped in a weak economy.

I do not advocate propaganda or deception, nor should the American response complicate the life of ordinary Russians. Our weapon in this strategic contest is the truth. Recall that in 1982, the Soviet Defense Ministry published a propagandistic monograph called "Whence The Threat To Peace." The following year, the Pentagon released a monograph called "Soviet Military Power", detailing with declassified information the buildup of destabilizing Soviet forces. The United States had the more credible reputation, and its international leadership was, if anything, strengthened by the contest of narratives.

In that spirit, I conclude by recommending that the Congress consider encouraging the White House and the Intelligence Community to issue a series of well-researched, unclassified reports regarding the Russian leadership. These would represent our government's best assessment of the truth, and could in fact become a NATO-wide effort, issued by the member states of NATO in various formats including video, audio, print and digital, and in several languages including Russian.

Topics for these reports could include the following:

- Estimated funds and properties controlled by Russia's leader and security services in foreign banks and countries; share of national wealth reaching the population.

- A comprehensive narrative of Russia's "hybrid operations" (what some term "gray warfare") in Crimea and eastern Ukraine, including violations of the Geneva Conventions such as the absence of identifying markings on uniforms. The study would review Russian media (mainly state-controlled television) to confirm that the government concealed from the population the Red Army's intervention in Ukraine.

- A comprehensive review of the shoot-down of Malaysian Airlines flight 17 over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014, summarizing all available evidence that indicates not only Russia's culpability but its denials and efforts to cover up its role.

- The details of liberal politician Boris Nemtsov's writings about an alleged $30 Billion in official corruption surrounding the Sochi Olympics, and the intervention in Ukraine, leading up to his assassination in February 2015 on a bridge near the Kremlin; and the raid by regime authorities of the hard drives in his apartment following his death.

- A compendium of the several mysterious deaths and poisonings of critics of the Putin government, with details of available evidence indicating Moscow's likely culpability.

- A comprehensive review of Russian combat operations in Syria over the past year, including the targeting and destruction of numerous hospitals and other sites protected under international law (building on the Atlantic Council's excellent work on this topic).

- An estimate of Russian-Iranian cooperation and collaboration, including negotiations over future arms sales and other prohibited forms of cooperation, during the P5+1 talks prior to conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in July 2015.

I thank the Committee for its consideration, and look forward to responding to any questions.