

UNITED STATES HOUSE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF
GENERAL TOD D. WOLTERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
COMMANDER
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND

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UNCLSSFIELD

Chair McCollum, Ranking Member Calvert, and distinguished members of the House Appropriations Committee on Defense, on behalf of the dedicated men, women, and their families preserving peace in the European theater, it is an honor to testify before you today for a final time a U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) Commander. It has been a privilege to continue to serve alongside our dedicated patriots in a mission essential to our national security. Their selfless service and determined commitment is an inspiration. Together, with Allies and Partners, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Guardians, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians work tirelessly to deliver peace and secure the United States' interests.

For the last eight decades, European nations have been key Allies and Partners for the United States, and today, they collectively serve as exporters of global peace and security. The Interim National Security Strategy articulates how a free and prosperous Europe, defended by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Alliance, remains foundational to our security in a competitive geopolitical environment. USEUCOM aligns operations, activities, and investments to meet the challenges of Strategic Competition with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Through our strategy, we compete for long-term sustainable advantage, deter attacks from potential aggressors, and prepare with our Allies and Partners to respond decisively. Standing alongside our teammates, USEUCOM remains ready, should deterrence fail, to fight and win. We value collaboration across the Joint Force to implement U.S. and Allied strategic direction, and express gratitude for your continued Congressional interest and support.

In Europe, malign activity and direct military aggression, energy competition, and forced migration stress the rules-based international order and strain the resources of states. Strategic competitors use all instruments of national power to exploit these conditions to gain advantage and create instability. This nexus challenges governments and institutions like NATO and the European Union (EU) to develop coordinated and complementary policies to counter malign activity. To address these issues, USEUCOM's strategy prioritizes supporting NATO's

deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area, countering malign influence, strengthening strategic relationships, and enabling U.S. global operations. We have seen NATO, EU, and global partners unite to collectively push back against Russia's invasion of Ukraine and efforts to undermine the rules-based international order.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES IN THE USEUCOM AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (AOR)

USEUCOM's geographic region encompasses 50 countries and territories. It contains a vast maritime domain, encompassing a large part of the Arctic region, the North and central Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea, and multiple strategic chokepoints. We work diligently across the Euro-Atlantic to secure our common interests and to deter and respond to aggression.

Russian Federation

Russia's nuclear arsenal and strike capability remains an enduring, existential threat to the United States, democracy, and our peaceful Allies and Partners. A central concern is Russia's non-strategic nuclear weapons stockpile and the Kremlin's potential to use these weapons in crisis or conflict.

Russia pursues malign activities, including military aggression, aimed at undermining democracy, the rules-based international order, and has a willingness to use force to achieve its aims. Russia pursues these activities despite widespread international condemnation and economic sanctions. President Putin leverages coercive and aggressive policies to counter Western influence and threaten peace and stability in Europe.

Russia employs grey area activities to maintain its purported sphere of influence, and attempts to coerce neighboring sovereign nations and form fractures between Allies at NATO. Russia meddles in European politics, abrogates its responsibilities under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, engaged in an unprovoked and unjustified armed attack against Ukraine, and retains a military presence on sovereign soil in Moldova and Georgia against the will of those nations. Russia maintains a large conventional force presence along NATO's borders and conducts snap exercises to increase instability. Russia employs

unconventional tools, ranging from disinformation campaigns, malicious cyber activities, and the manipulation of energy markets to support Moscow's efforts at political subversion and economic intimidation. These tools and others are intended to coerce, weaken, and divide our Allies and Partners in the European theater and beyond. Russian leadership habitually misinterprets warnings and has directly instigated armed conflict with Ukraine, while continuing to expand the space below the level of armed conflict in other Allied and Partner nations.

Beyond Ukraine, Russia continues its military modernization while displaying its destabilizing capabilities during operations in Syria, and Libya. As a result, the Russian government has growing confidence in its military leadership and menu of hybrid, conventional, strategic, and non-strategic nuclear capabilities needed to underwrite its 21st century security approach. Today, Russia underpins its military with Integrated Air Defense Systems (IADS), tactical undersea warfare capabilities, cyber and electromagnetic systems, anti-satellite weapons and counter-space capabilities, unmanned aerial and ground systems, and long-range hypersonic and precision fire capabilities.

People's Republic of China (PRC)

The PRC seeks to increase its access, presence, and influence in Europe and globally to achieve its objective of being socially-stable, economically prosperous, and militarily powerful by 2050. The PRC engages in aggressive and subversive economic and diplomatic activities in the USEUCOM AOR not only to find markets to strengthen the Chinese economy, but also to establish presence at key transportation nodes and increase its political influence. China's foreign direct investment, government-backed business ventures, and infrastructure deals not only secure the PRC's advantage in global trade, market access, and technological standards, but also provides Beijing an avenue to assert influence at the expense of enduring U.S., Allied, and Partner interests. The PRC primarily pursues bilateral deals, as well as engagements, through PRC-led forums such as the *16+1 Cooperation Framework* (Lithuania withdrew in 2021) with Central and Eastern European nations. European nations are growing increasingly

skeptical of these engagements and have identified the formats as divisive.

The PRC focuses on seizing the “high ground” in critical and emerging technology sectors with military application, including Artificial Intelligence, advanced robotics, quantum technologies, and hypersonic systems, and at the same time it seeks to export its national technology standards globally. The PRC’s efforts to expand 5G networks throughout Europe via state-backed firms, such as Huawei and ZTE, pose significant security risks to the interests and military forces of the U.S., Allies, and Partners. These networks place intellectual property, sensitive information, technology, and private personal information at heightened risk of acquisition and exploitation by the Chinese government. PRC continues to invest significantly in European ports and transportation nodes, as well as other critical infrastructure in Europe.

USEUCOM works closely with our European defense counterparts to articulate risks and establish a shared understanding of the security environment. We also support the U.S. interagency in highlighting the shared values, interests, and equitable business practices that distinguish the current rules-based international order. European nations are becoming increasingly aware of, and concerned about, the strings attached to capital and investment from the PRC, and are recognizing that the PRC is a systemic rival. Together, we must hold the PRC accountable for its predatory and unfair practices and ensure that Western technologies do not facilitate the PRC’s military buildup. Several countries have removed Huawei from their networks, imposed new investment screening mechanisms, and have decided not to choose Chinese investments particularly because of the threat this poses to European security. More than at any time in recent years, our European Allies and Partners recognize the risk PRC presents to European security.

Eastern Flank

NATO’s Eastern Flank remains a strategic focal point. It remains at risk of Russian aggression and lies on the territorial periphery of Russia’s invasion of peaceful Ukraine. The geopolitical alignment of the Bucharest 9 – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary,

Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia – reminds Russia of its limited sphere of control and NATO's appeal to regional states. These states have made significant contributions to assist Ukraine against Russia's aggression. Collectively, they have provided both lethal and non-lethal assistance, have opened their borders to Ukraine refugees, closed their air space, and supported economic sanctions against Russia.

In the Baltics, the Russian government actively targets ethnic Russian population with extensive propaganda and malign influence operations, while conducting cyber operations to weaken Alliance resolve. Russian forces along NATO's periphery in its Western Military District and Kaliningrad hold a geographic and numerical advantage over regional military and NATO enhanced Forward Presence forces. This imbalance emphasizes the importance of timely indications and warnings that enable the positioning of combat-capable forces to deter and respond if deterrence fails.

NATO Allies continue their commitment to collective defense. Enhanced Forward Presence bolsters NATO's posture in the east with four multinational battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia are all currently working on additional posture plans within a NATO context. In the face of Russia's aggression, the United States and our NATO Allies have committed additional forces demonstrating our collective resolve. NATO air and missile defense forces reinforce collective security and stability through Baltic air policing operations and air defense exercises. Each of these states contributes to their own defense and the three Baltic States have expanded their efforts to control the maritime domain in their littoral.

Poland continues to meet Alliance commitments through defense budget increases, infrastructure improvements, and logistical support via the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, and its modernization efforts include Abrams tanks, Patriot air defense, and F-35 weapon system acquisitions. Poland also hosts the U.S. Army's Fifth Corps forward headquarters in Poznan, providing a needed level of command and control to synchronize multi-

national tactical formations operating in Europe. Poland also demonstrates its commitment to collective security by hosting additional U.S. forces during the current crisis.

Black Sea Region

Russia continues to exert malign influence and demonstrate its willingness to use overt force in the Black Sea region to include use of its Black Sea fleet to attack Ukraine. The war in Ukraine, instigated solely by Russia, continues to destabilize Ukrainian security and the entire region. In addition to armed attack against Ukraine, Russia continues to subvert the Ukrainian government through malicious cyber activities and information operations, illegally recognizing Ukraine's eastern areas of Donetsk and Luhansk as sovereign states, and continuing to illegally occupy Crimea. Contrary to Russia's intent, these coercive actions reinforce Ukraine's aspirations of membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions. Russia's aggression also led to a deployment of U.S. forces in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary.

The Russian government exerts influence over South Caucasus countries by exploiting regional tensions and unresolved military conflicts, and employing economic levers and provocative information activities. Russia maintains leverage over Georgia by occupying the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, blocking free movement of people and goods within Georgia's territory, detaining and harassing civilians living in and near occupied areas, and undermining the NATO membership aspirations of Georgia and other partner nations. After brokering a ceasefire arrangement between Armenia and Azerbaijan in November 2020, Russia increased its military presence in the region by deploying 2,000 troops to Nagorno-Karabakh as "peacekeepers." Since the early 1990s, Russia has continued to occupy the Transnistria region of Moldova with 1,500 "peacekeepers" without host nation consent. Moldovan President Sandu has called for the withdrawal of Russian troops and we continue to support a peaceful resolution to the Transnistrian conflict and full reintegration of Transnistria with Moldova.

Atlantic and the Arctic Region

As part of the global ocean, the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans must remain open and free to facilitate commerce between Europe, North America, and other international markets. We ensure these vital sea lines of communication remain open by securing the Greenland, Iceland, United Kingdom gap, enabling access between the Atlantic and Arctic. USEUCOM coordinates with U. S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in these regions ensuring a comprehensive approach between Euro-Atlantic and homeland security. Collaborating with our European defense counterparts, we work to enhance interoperability and proficiency, while demonstrating collective resolve to counter malign behavior.

In the Arctic, Russia continues to develop its Northern Sea Route and the PRC seeks increased access to expand its Polar Silk Road initiative. The Chinese government continues to invest in Russian energy and seeks economic footholds among Arctic nations to gain influence over regional governance. To ensure openness, USEUCOM joint forces maintain near persistent North Atlantic and Arctic presence while strengthening all-domain relationships with Allies and Partners. Alongside our UK, French, Norwegian, and Canadian counterparts, U.S. maritime forces continue to demonstrate maritime capability and credibility presence in the region.

The existing rules-based international order benefits all Arctic nations by facilitating sustainable economic development, fostering cooperation, and promoting a stable, conflict-free region. As a strategic corridor, a more open and active Arctic region will increasingly connect the U.S. Homeland, Europe, and the Indo-Pacific. In concert with other Arctic advocates, via a whole-of-government approach, USEUCOM must continue to maintain a credible Arctic deterrence to ensure that growing competition in this dynamic region does not lead to conflict.

Western Balkans

The Western Balkans remains a strategically significant region as a nexus for strategic competition where Russia, and now PRC, use malign influence to roil existing ethnic tensions and seek to foster instability. Russia uses social and political pressures to impede these

countries' Euro-Atlantic alignment and integration. Since Russia's attack on Ukraine, Balkan NATO members and partners have joined efforts for assistance and support. PRC's emergence as an alternative patron for economic and defense cooperation, under suspect terms, further disrupts the region. With our four newest NATO Allies, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Albania, we have expanded bilateral defense relations to the benefit of European collective security on NATO's southern flank.

Despite Kosovo declaring independence in 2008, Russia, the PRC, and some other states have failed to recognize its sovereignty. Kosovo and Serbia have to make more significant progress towards the normalization of relations. We support the EU-facilitated dialogue between the parties as it works for a peaceful, lasting solution. NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) retains a small but significant U.S. contribution that continues to bolster regional stability. KFOR enables the security conditions required for a safe and secure environment and conducive to reaching a political solution on normalizing of Serbia-Kosovo relations. The United States continues important work assisting the Kosovo Security Force's planned 10-year transition to a limited, territorial defense force.

Serbia has maintained its strategic goal of joining the EU, while seeking balance between East (Russia and the PRC) and West. However, Serbia recently joined 140 other nations of the United Nations General Assembly in condemning Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Serbia has a long road to its eventual EU accession, and its full alignment with EU foreign policy remains an important part of that. The United States and our Allies have improved bilateral defense ties with Serbia in recent years, with increasing cooperation in military exercises, training, and cooperation on international peacekeeping. Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to face political and ethnic instability. Fueled by Russian influence, obstructionists seek greater autonomy for Bosnia and Herzegovina's Serb-majority political entity, Republika Srpska, to weaken state authorities and frustrate further alignment with Western institutions. Nationalist politics and narratives of ethnic divisions between Bosniaks, Bosnian-Croats, and Bosnian-

Serbs challenge Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to chart a path of lasting stability and eventual NATO membership. Nevertheless, the United States maintains robust ties with the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, assisting its progress toward NATO-standard capability targets.

PRC seeks to expand influence in this region primarily through economic means. PRC investments focus on large-scale transportation, energy, and information infrastructure. USEUCOM is concerned about PRC motives as these initiatives expose EU and NATO member states to coercion and adversely affect the security of critical infrastructure. Furthermore, the PRC continues to expand its defense and security ties with Serbia, particularly via high-level visits, arms sales, and exercises.

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO)

We continue to support U.S. interagency counter-VEO initiatives and those of our European counterparts. VEOs remain a transnational threat with decentralized command and control, finance, and facilitation networks spreading from conflict zones into Europe. In particular, VEOs threaten to attack the U.S. and European Allies, with the actions of lone actors presenting the primary terrorist threat to Europe. Extremists also exploit instability in Afghanistan, North Africa, Iraq, and Syria to prepare for possible attacks in Europe. Successful VEO-inspired and organized attacks in Europe complicate integration efforts, potentially isolating refugee and migrant communities and increasing the possibility for VEO recruitment. Despite diminished capabilities, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and other VEOs desire to conduct external operations, requiring global vigilance to prevent a resurgence and preclude future attacks against the U.S. Homeland and the Euro-Atlantic area.

Climate Change

Climate change will exacerbate risks to security as the physical impacts increase and geopolitical tensions mount on how to respond. Increasing physical effects such as droughts, ice melts, sea level rise, and extreme weather events will strain national governance, budgets,

and stability in Europe. This year, we supported Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response efforts in Germany, providing war stock bridges following flash flooding, as well as air support in Turkey and Greece in response to widespread forest fires. For populations most vulnerable to climate change, migration can serve as a form of adaptation, further challenging international stability and governance. In the Arctic, melting sea ice increases maritime access to this resource-rich region for exploration and commerce while thawing permafrost increases vulnerabilities to existing infrastructure, including forward operating locations and military bases. Working across the region, USEUCOM will prioritize adaptation strategies that promote resilience to climate change effects. Additionally, we are integrating climate change considerations into strategy, plans, budgeting, and exercises to ensure we are able to train, fight, and win in an increasingly complex environment.

USEUCOM OPERATIONS, ACTIVITIES, INVESTMENTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Strategy Implementation

Along with Allies and Partners, USEUCOM confronts challenges by competing to secure long-term sustainable advantage, deterring aggressors, and preparing to respond decisively. As the coordinating authority for the Russia Problem Set, USEUCOM advises the Secretary of Defense on force structure, resources, and synchronization of Department of Defense activities to deter Russia and counter its global malign activities. We work tirelessly with our defense cohorts and the U.S. interagency to address the evolving challenges posed by our adversaries. We display vigilance in this complex security environment, and—should deterrence fail—we remain ready to respond with lethal and resilient force in all domains.

Congress provides critical support to the USEUCOM area of responsibility through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) in our baseline appropriation. EDI enhances our posture to deter adversaries and compete in a contested logistics environment alongside our European defense counterparts. Increases in forward-stationed and rotational forces strengthen our contact, blunt, and surge layer capabilities, providing an ability to compete and win in a multi-

domain crisis or conflict. EDI investments improve theater infrastructure and prepositioned stocks. Funding for exercises, training, and building partner capacity strengthens the readiness, architecture, and interoperability across the Euro-Atlantic area. These advances enable our deterrence and defense efforts through rapid deployment and sustainment of forces.

Support NATO's Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area

USEUCOM's primary mission is to compete, deter, and prepare to respond to aggression with the full weight of the NATO Alliance. NATO adapts continuously to meet the challenges and complexities of our dynamic security environment. Together, we continue improving our posture, transparency, alignment, and speed of response. Through new strategic concepts, establishing new commands, investing in critical military capabilities, implementing enhanced readiness, and pursuing a robust array of operations, missions, and activities, we demonstrate our combined ability to deter and defend. The cohesion of these efforts has strengthened NATO, bolstered deterrence, and brought the Alliance even closer together.

In 2020, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) released the Concept for the Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA). This concept guides the Alliance's approaches to competing with Russia and to countering international terror groups during peacetime and crisis, uniting national, regional, and theater-wide military efforts towards a common purpose. DDA outlines how NATO competes with Russia and directs the development of SACEUR's AOR-wide Strategic Plan (SASP). SASP provides the foundation for USEUCOM's efforts towards further contingency plans convergence. This architecture provide maximum military coherence at the operational and strategic levels, across all domains, in both everyday peacetime campaigning and if required, through periods of potential crisis and conflict.

NATO nations continue to invest in critical military capabilities, contributing to common defense and support of the Alliance. For the past seven years, Allies have increased their total defense spending, and future projections remain positive despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

NATO Allies and Partners are increasing interoperable combat power through major acquisitions to include cyber capabilities; M1 Abrams and Patriot Missiles in Poland; fourth and fifth-generation aircraft in Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, and Switzerland; and High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) capability in Romania and Poland. Within USEUCOM, integration of Fifth Corps' forward headquarters and the establishment of the 56th Field Artillery Command and the 2nd Multi-Domain Task Force increases U.S. and NATO capabilities across multiple domains. Also, the 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade's deployment to Georgia, Latvia, North Macedonia, Poland, and Romania strengthens Allied and Partner capabilities.

USEUCOM demonstrated joint capabilities during the U.S.-led exercises DEFENDER Europe and ASTRAL KNIGHT. In February, USEUCOM began exercising the ability of the United States and Allies to deploy into the Eastern Flank and conduct defensive operations during exercise SABER STRIKE, which will continue during the BALTOPS exercise with NATO and partner defense of the Danish Straits and Baltic Sea. This month, we will participate in the Norwegian-led multi-national and multi-domain cold weather exercise, COLD RESPONSE, focused on interoperability, the ability to fight in the Arctic, and demonstrating Allied resolve. These multi-domain exercises directly complement NATO-led exercises that maintain maritime air defense, anti-submarine warfare, and maritime interdiction capabilities. Ongoing enhancements to multinational information sharing systems enable USEUCOM execution with NATO and our Partners. Ultimately, military exercises with our Allies remain an integral part of demonstrating Alliance readiness, interoperability, and capability.

USEUCOM participation in NATO activities further demonstrates U.S. commitment to the Alliance. Our soldiers serve in Poland as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence mission in one of four battlegroups deterring Russian aggression in Poland and the Baltics. Allied nations will host Enhanced Vigilance Activity and battlegroups in Central and South-East Europe operating alongside host nation defense forces as a powerful statement of will and

Alliance cohesion. These Battle Groups will demonstrate improved readiness, military equilibrium, and posture coherence force. U.S. Air Forces in Europe support NATO Enhanced Air Policing and Icelandic Air Surveillance missions, safeguarding the sovereignty of Allied airspace against Russian incursions. We plan to support Standing NATO Maritime Group Two in 2022 with U.S. naval capability to counter maritime challenges in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and the Baltic Sea. Operation ATLANTIC SENTRY, conducted by U.S. Aegis destroyers based in Rota, Spain, and the Aegis Ashore system in Romania provides the foundation of NATO's ballistic missile defense capability.

We leverage Dynamic Force Employment (DFE) to demonstrate operational unpredictability to adversaries, improve deterrence, and support Allies. Recent DFE operations include posturing a guided missile destroyer to the High North, Bomber Task Force missions, and an F-35 deployment with Allies. Each force presence and operation demonstrates our ability to generate significant combat power across the AOR, while improving posture and warfighting readiness. This operational flexibility enhances cross-combatant command coordination and resource sharing, allowing for seamless transition and handover across Unified Command Plan boundaries to deploy forces for emerging requirements.

Rotational Army, Marine, and Special Operations Forces (SOF) maintain a presence across the theater. These forces work alongside Allies and Partners to deter aggression, counter malign activities, build host nation defense capability, and enhance interoperability. For example, in Eastern Europe, a rotational armored brigade combat team and combat aviation brigade participate in Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE to hone Alliance warfighting skills and increase NATO's deterrent posture. Additionally, deliberate deployments of Marine Forces in Norway reinforce NATO's Northern periphery while training in Arctic conditions with our Norwegian allies. Rotational forces are critical to our ability to deter Russia and assure Allies.

Counter Russian Activities and Malign Influence

Every day, USEUCOM and NATO work to deter the large and increasingly capable

military underwriting Russia's power. Simultaneously, we counter Russian malign activities that undermine the rules-based international order. Aside from USEUCOM's own capabilities, we leverage European defense initiatives and the unique attributes our U.S. interagency team brings to deterrence and defense.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO must remain a nuclear Alliance. NATO's nuclear capability preserves peace, prevents coercion, deters aggression, and instills confidence in the transatlantic bond. The United States continues to make available its strategic nuclear forces to the defense of NATO and they are the supreme guarantee of the security of our Allies. The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and also contribute significantly to the overall security of the Alliance. In addition to strategic forces, the United States continues to forward deploy nuclear weapons to Europe. These weapons combined with U.S. and Allied dual-capable aircraft and supporting infrastructure tangibly demonstrate Alliance cohesion and resolve through an equitable and sustainable distribution of roles, responsibilities, and burdens. NATO continues to adapt its nuclear posture to ensure these capabilities remain credible, resilient, and adaptable. USEUCOM fully supports modernization and recapitalization of our nuclear forces. Sustained Congressional funding for these programs demonstrates commitment to our operations and NATO solidarity.

In the ground domain, we expect to establish a U.S. division-sized capability through forward-stationed forces, rotational forces, and Army Prepositioned Stocks (APS). Continued investment in APS equipment facilitates increased agility and lethality by enabling rapid integration of rotational combat units into USEUCOM and NATO operations. During Exercise DEFENDER-Europe 21, U.S. Army Europe and 26 participating nations demonstrated readiness to command and control large-scale operations by exercising at the battalion and brigade levels while building interoperability. In Exercise DEFENDER-Europe 24, we plan to assemble a divisional formation on NATO's eastern flank for the first time since the end of the

Cold War, conducting a multinational command post exercise with U.S. and multinational divisions and brigades operating under U.S. Army Europe leadership. These prepositioned stocks enabled us to respond swiftly in response to Russia's aggression in and around Ukraine.

In the maritime domain, we will execute integrated, all-domain naval operations and theater security cooperation alongside our Allies and Partners. Our operational maritime forces provide an essential capability in Strategic Competition. In addition to our forward deployed Naval Forces, we will continue to leverage Carrier Strike Group and Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Units to contribute to the maritime force. U.S. Sixth Fleet provides maritime command and control capability across the USEUCOM AOR while U.S. Second Fleet complements and contributes to reinforce NATO's western flank. In exercise NORTHERN VIKING, we will enhance our partner capabilities and further deter Russian aggression while sharpening our competitive edge. We are committed to a robust prepositioning program in coordination with our Allies, further building our agility and resilience in the maritime domain.

In the air domain, we are improving our assortment of sensors, fighter aircraft, and ground-based air defense systems to enhance Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD), support Allies' air defense efforts, and increase long-range strike capability for deterrence. During ASTRAL KNIGHT 22 in May, the U.S. Air Force will lead a joint and combined IAMD exercise with our Allies in Poland and the Baltics. This exercise will assess the execution of an enduring regional IAMD architecture and our ability to transfer authority to NATO during the follow-on, NATO-led IAMD exercise RAMSTEIN LEGACY. In recent Bomber Task Force missions, U.S. bombers launched from bases in the U.S. and Europe fly vast distances across the AOR while integrating with NATO and partner nation forces. Through Agile Combat Employment, we seek to enhance current posture, complicate adversary decision-making, and impose costs while assuring our NATO Allies. Agile operations, supported by Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control, and improved communications and domain awareness capabilities, will demonstrate a credible, networked combat deterrence from potential airfields

across the continent. This expansion of European contingency air operation and deployable air bases enhances the survivability of our forces.

In the space domain, we coordinate across the Department of Defense and NATO to protect U.S. and Allied interests. Maintaining assured access to space capabilities and stability within the space domain are vital to USEUCOM and NATO operations. We coordinate with U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) to leverage space capabilities that ensure our ability to execute multi-domain operations, and protect Allied space capabilities from malign actors. We synchronize our messaging on responsible behavior in space and seek to deter unsafe or provocative actions in space by our adversaries. Additionally, we work with the United States Space Force (USSF), along with USSPACECOM, and our Allies and Partners to expand space partnerships within our AOR and further integrate space capabilities into joint and combined operations and activities.

In the cyber domain, USEUCOM coordinates with Joint Forces Headquarters - Cyber and U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) to counter Russian malign cyber activities and enhance our Allied and Partner capabilities. USEUCOM synchronizes USCYBERCOM's persistent engagement activities with USEUCOM operations, activities and investments (OAs) to enhance warning of adversary actions, enable defense, and build trust with Allies and Partners. In coordination with USCYBERCOM, USEUCOM identifies cyber options to compliment OAs and support response actions should deterrence fail. Recognizing the worldwide cyberspace capabilities of Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, USEUCOM works with other combatant commands and interagency partners to enhance global cyber defenses and our ability to impose cost on malicious adversary behavior. USEUCOM has also invested in sharing information on foreign malign cyber activities with Allies and Partners to enhance collective cyber defenses.

In the information environment, USEUCOM conducts activities to promote both deterrence and assurance, contest Russian malign narratives, and build resilience among

foreign audiences to counter malign influence and disinformation. USEUCOM generates effects in the information environment through the Russian Influence Group (RIG), a State Department led interagency network focused on countering Russian malign influence. Congressional funding for unique cybersecurity and hybrid warfare programs (i.e., electromagnetic warfare, special operations, and operations in the information environment), particularly through the State Department's Countering Russian Influence Fund - Foreign Military Financing (CRIF-FMF), enables the RIG to challenge adversary narratives and disinformation. Congressional funding for these unique information operation capabilities enables USEUCOM to challenge adversary narratives and disinformation.

Our Special Operations forces (SOF) work with European Allies and Partners to build capacity, counter malign activity, and improve resilience. These unique capabilities enable USEUCOM to identify, attribute, and counter Russian malign influence. Furthermore, our Special Operations personnel provide invaluable contributions in sensing the operational environment, enhancing our ability to deter through indications and warnings. USEUCOM's Theater Special Operations Command (TSOC), Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR), provides a persistent Special Operations presence throughout Europe. SOCEUR regularly leads and participates in bi-lateral and multilateral exercises to improve interoperability with Allies, build partner capacity, and strengthen deterrence messaging. SOCEUR is preparing to lead TROJAN FOOTPRINT 2022, a regional exercise focused on mission command for SOF that rotates between the Baltics and the Black Sea. Exercises like TROJAN FOOTPRINT set conditions for better integration between SOF and conventional forces during combined, joint, and multi-domain warfare.

As part of a whole-of-government approach, our Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center supports interagency efforts to combat Russian malign activities, primarily by assisting federal law enforcement activities. This initiative provides USEUCOM with additional areas for competition. Through these partnerships, USEUCOM leverages a range of interagency-driven

efforts, including criminal investigations, convictions, seizures, sanctions, and designations.

Lastly, our approach in competition considers escalation management and control to maximize deterrence and defense. We make use of authorized military-to-military channels with Russia to safely de-conflict activities, when necessary, in order to maintain strategic stability.

Advance and Strengthen Strategic Relationships

Allies and Partners bolster U.S. initiatives through their own national contributions and by providing critical host nation support to forward-stationed U.S. forces across the region. Since the start of Russia's invasion against Ukraine, we have seen Allies strengthening defense budgets to include Germany's announcement to increase military spending above 2 percent of gross domestic product. Allies and Partners contribute forces to ongoing NATO and U.S.-led coalition missions, advancing our common interests in Kosovo, Iraq, and Syria. Furthermore, Allies underwrite infrastructure investments and defray costs of U.S. military construction through the NATO Security Investment Program. Additionally, we expect improvements by individual European nations and the EU to enhance military mobility, increasing their responsiveness and combat capability. The EU, in consultation with NATO, projects it will invest 1.69 billion euros over the next seven years for civilian and military dual-use transportation infrastructure improvements across the continent.

Turkey remains a key, strategic U.S. and NATO Ally. We recognize Turkey's critical leadership role in hosting U.S. service members conducting a wide array of NATO, bilateral, and unilateral missions including radar and tanker support to ongoing operations, and strong bilateral cooperation on Afghanistan. Additionally, Turkey directly contributes forces to NATO missions in Iraq, Kosovo, Baltic Air Policing, and Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 in the Mediterranean Sea. Turkey has supported U.S. Bomber Task Force missions in the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean regions with tanker and fighter assets. Turkey's military capability and geographic location make it a key stakeholder in U.S. responses to regional events and within NATO. We must continue to execute and advocate for fundamental security cooperation

activities with Turkey such as Professional Military Education, exercises, and Foreign Military Sales. These actions will strengthen NATO interoperability and enable U.S. force projection..

Turkey possesses the second largest military in NATO, borders a volatile region, and retains a pivotal role in countering Russia. The Turkish and Russian government's relationship remains competitive and transactional, with Turkish engagement often aimed at constraining Russian behavior. Both nations view the Black Sea region within their natural spheres of influence, and each continues to oppose the other in Ukraine, Libya, and Syria. Turkey can best counter Russia through close cooperation with the U.S. and NATO. We laud Turkey's strong support to Ukraine up to and during Russia's invasion, and we will continue to find ways to increase our cooperation with Turkey bilaterally and within NATO.

In the South Caucasus, Georgia remains a steadfast partner in regional security and the effort to counter Russian malign influence. Georgia's status as the largest non-NATO contributor to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan demonstrated the enduring strength of our strategic partnership. In October 2021 in Tbilisi, Secretary Austin announced sunsetting the Georgia Defense Readiness Program (GDRP) and transforming into the Georgia Deterrence and Defense Enhancement Initiative. This initiative will build upon GDRP's success to further develop capabilities and capacities required for effective deterrence and territorial defense, and foster interoperability with NATO.

We strengthen our strategic relationships through security cooperation initiatives. U.S. National Guard forces maintain vibrant relationships and unique access with Allies and Partners through the State Partnership Program (SPP). USEUCOM now has 23 active programs with the addition of the Austria and Vermont partnership. The SPP conducts over 500 engagements annually in EUCOM's AOR, cultivating regional expertise and strengthening personal relationships to improve readiness and alignment across the AOR. Programs such as the Black Sea Maritime Domain Awareness Initiative and enhancing Baltic IAMD represent potent, regionally-focused components of a resilient theater posture.

Enable U.S. Global Operations

Europe and the United States remain the foundation for upholding a free and open international order. Our unique geographic location enables global operations, including U.S. interagency and multinational operations, through synchronization and agreements for access, basing, and overflight permissions within Europe. We work within a whole-of-government framework to maintain essential access and permissions under bilateral agreements and to resist Russian and Chinese strategic investments. Absent these agreements, the United States could not meet treaty obligations or effectively protect vital national interests. The shared ideals, values, trust, and longstanding relationships we have in Europe enable the U.S. to generate coalitions for worldwide operations in support of shared national interests.

Last year, Allies and Partners proved essential during Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome, the evacuation of at-risk civilians from Afghanistan to the continental United States. Germany, Italy, Spain, Kosovo, and Slovakia – among other Allies and Partners – collaborated with the United States both in the evacuations and by accepting refugees into their countries. Close coordination with Germany, Italy, and Spain enabled us to temporarily shelter and care for thousands of evacuees at U.S. airbases in these respective countries. Our close bonds with European Allies and Partners, forged over two decades of conflict in Afghanistan, facilitated the safe movement of over 42,000 evacuees through USEUCOM air bases to safe havens in Europe and the United States. We worked tirelessly with U.S. Central Command, U.S. Transportation Command, and U.S. Northern Command to support the Department of State and Department of Homeland Security to enable this monumental U.S. global operation.

Conclusion

Maintaining a capable U.S. presence in Europe strengthens our national security by generating peace, unity, and cohesion among Europe's sovereign nations. Russia and China present formidable, enduring challenges to preserving a free and peaceful Europe. Nevertheless, the West is more united than it has been in years. NATO is stronger, not weaker, and we are ready to respond decisively. Our strategy addresses the dynamic security environment by ensuring we effectively compete for long-term sustainable advantage, deter attacks from potential aggressors, and prepare our Allies and Partners to respond decisively.

We appreciate Congressional interest in these challenges and your continued pledge to meet them through engagement, funding, and authorities. Your continued support for the European Deterrence Initiative and International Security Cooperation Programs remains critical to our overall strategy. These authorities and funding enhance U.S. and Alliance readiness and posture to respond in crisis or conflict. We stand in a strategically critical part of the world, and the dedicated men and women of USEUCOM are deeply humbled by the trust our nation places in us. Together with the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, Guardians, and civilians of USEUCOM, your support demonstrates our Nation's continued commitment to defend the Homeland forward and protect the peace for the one billion people living in the Euro-Atlantic region.