

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry, thank you for the privilege of appearing before you today.

I would like to address three specific topics in my opening statement and then look forward to your questions. They are: US capabilities in Europe, the importance of the Black Sea region, and the importance of preserving our strategic relationship with Turkey.

US strategic interests are shifting increasingly towards the Indo-Pacific region but the relationship with Europe remains vital to American security and prosperity. American economic prosperity depends in a very large part on stability, security, and prosperity in Europe. Our best and most reliable Allies come from Europe, as well as Canada and Australia. Continued leadership within NATO, the most successful Alliance in the history of the World, is the mainstay of US security efforts in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

The current US posture in Europe is understandably significantly less than what it was at the height of the Cold War. But given the security environment now, it is too small and without depth, and depends to a significant degree on continuous employment of rotational Regular and Reserve Component forces, which is only possible with sustained Congressional support. Permanent, forward-based US military capabilities under US European Command in Germany, Spain, Italy, Greece, UK, and Turkey enable execution of US strategy. Rotational forces (Regular and Reserve) are employed along the eastern flank in central and eastern Europe.

The announcement on 29 July by the US Secretary of Defense, the VCJCS, and COMEUCR that the White House is to withdraw up to 12,500 US Soldiers and Airmen from Germany was in fact a concept brief and not a plan. It appears that the planning will take months and the execution will take years. My estimate is that what actually ends up happening will bear little resemblance to what was initially briefed. This is a good thing.

The press briefing on 29 July, with its lack of detail, demonstrated that the Administration's decision was not the result of strategic analysis or a coordinated, inter-agency process.

Russia has not improved or changed its behaviour anywhere...and in the face of that we are giving up capabilities essential to effective deterrence and rapid reinforcement as well as operations in three different theatres (Europe, Africa and the Middle East).

But I do know that there are really good, smart people in the Pentagon and in the various HQ's in Germany who will lay out the challenges and risks and lost capabilities and try to come up with means to mitigate those risks...and a timeline in which to do it. They'll do their best.

The good news is that the Congress will require the Administration and the Pentagon to demonstrate all of the outcomes this statement claims the proposal will accomplish.

NATO is still capable of effective deterrence. The combined militaries of 30 Allies plus Partners in Europe represent significant potential combat power that, if trained and ready to operate in multinational formations and organizations, are a key component of effective deterrence. The key to maximizing the benefit of this hard power potential is Speed:

- (1) speed of recognition of Kremlin intentions, despite cyber-attacks and disinformation efforts, as well as exercises and movements, which will require improved intelligence fusing and sharing processes;
- (2) speed of decision at all echelons of the Alliance and/or national forces; and
- (3) speed of assembly to prevent or respond to a potential crisis, which requires substantial improvements in "Military Mobility" in Europe. Training and resourcing should be prioritized towards readiness and "speed".

Potential vulnerabilities which undermine NATO deterrence along its Eastern Flank include:

- (1) a perceived lack of cohesion which could lead to miscalculation by the Kremlin;
- (2) inadequate readiness levels of some Allies;
- (3) inadequate integration of air and missile defense capabilities; and
- (4) shortfalls in military mobility.

My second point of emphasis regards the strategic importance of the greater Black Sea region.

Great Power Competition prevents great power conflict. Failure to compete and demonstrate interest and a willingness to protect those interests, in all domains, can lead to power vacuums and misunderstandings of interests which can in turn lead to escalation of tensions and then to actual conflict. In an era of Great Power competition, countries like Russia and China are creating and maintaining spheres of influence, including the Black Sea. The Black Sea region must now be the place where NATO and the West hold the line against anti-democratic forces, take the initiative, and begin to expand our influence.

The Black Sea matters to the West because it matters to the Kremlin. Taking the initiative away from the Kremlin, denying it the ability to launch operations into Syria and Libya, will reduce the flow of refugees into Europe and limit the Kremlin's ability to spread its malign influence in the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East.

If Ukraine is not secure, then Russia completely dominates the Black Sea, presents a threat to NATO allies (Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey), and continues to occupy 20% of Georgia. If Ukraine is not secure then Belarus becomes even more vulnerable to pressure from the Kremlin and Russian ground troops are soon back in Belarus...which raises the risk for our Allies in Lithuania, Poland, and Latvia.

So to avoid escalation and ensure effective deterrence, without a resort to force, we must gain the initiative in the region. The West needs to change the rules of the game, develop its own approach to hybrid warfare and shape events by using all the tools of national and alliance power including diplomacy, private investment, and effective deterrence instead of reacting to or ignoring or accepting Kremlin initiatives, coercion, false narratives and impediments to economic growth.

For any of this to be effective and successful, we need sustained American leadership and high-level coordination between the United States, the European Union, and NATO.

Finally, my third point of emphasis...it is time for TURKEY-USA 2.0.

We must specifically address the relationship between Turkey and the West, as an essential NATO Ally. Washington DC and Brussels must find a way to embrace Turkey as the strategic pivot linking the Black Sea, Levant, and North Africa and as a major regional power that is at the crossroads of several regions and challenges. Turkey is essential for deterrence of the Kremlin in the Black Sea as well as a critical part of the Bulwark against ISIS and Iran. Protecting all of this must be a priority for Brussels and for Washington DC. And it should be a priority for Turkey as well.

Turkish geostrategic thinkers and planners know that the Black Sea has been an historical vulnerability for them for the last few centuries. They would like to do more to advance NATO's interests in the Black Sea, but they are distrustful of the willingness of the USA and the rest of NATO to come to their support if they do in fact push back firmly against the Kremlin. It would be helpful if the USA made it clear that it would stand with Turkey in such a case. Turkey has fought more wars with Russia in its history than any other opponent, and without much success.

The danger of not taking a strong, cooperative approach with Turkey is that the EU's priority of solidarity among its Members risks further alienating Turkey within the Transatlantic Community, including in the Black Sea.

So what do we do?

Think long term, beyond the current Turkish Administration. That will eventually change but the geography of Turkey and its surrounding region will never change.

Start by rebuilding trust between Turkey and the USA and NATO. Cease providing weapons to YPG, recognize that Turkey has a legitimate internal security concern wrt the Gulenists, and find a way to resolve the current legal impasse regarding Gulen. Recognize that Turkey is on the 'front line' of the Middle Eastern refugee crisis, with more than 3.5 million refugees in Turkey or on its border with Syria.

Reframe the relationship from its Cold War structures, including changing the EUCOM/CENTCOM and Department of State regional boundaries which currently sit on the Turkish-Syrian border to one that is more mindful of Turkey's strategic situation.

Offer Turkey a way out from the S400 purchase...consider a special case for Patriot sales to Turkey that include some technology transfer and co-development with Turkish defense industry, similar to the arrangement for F35 production...and then bring Turkey back into the F35 program.

Resolve the Turkey-Greece issues in the eastern Mediterranean. If the US is not willing to lead this effort, then Germany must lead, with strong US and British support.

Offer to support construction of the proposed Istanbul Canal, not for the purposes of evading Montreux Convention, but for the purposes

of improving economic potential of the Black Sea region...and do it before China or Russia step in to offer to do it.

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Thornberry, thank you. I look forward to your questions.