



WESTEXEC ADVISORS

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“NATO at 70: An Indispensable Alliance”

Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee

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Chairman Engel, Ranking Member McCaul, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today about the importance of NATO, and our alliances more broadly, to U.S. national security.

At the end of World War II, the United States had the remarkable foresight to build a set of alliances in Europe and Asia as a means of protecting and advancing U.S. national interests and as pillars of a new rules-based international order designed to prevent another world war, safeguard democracy, and promote prosperity. These alliances have underwritten 70 years of unprecedented economic development, prosperity, security, and stability. This system of alliances, which we too often take for granted today, is without precedent in human history and has proven to be of great strategic value to the United States and the American people.

Our NATO alliance – as well as our bilateral alliances in Asia with countries like Australia, Japan and South Korea – provide the United States with enormous advantages:

- Our allies are our most reliable partners in confronting shared challenges – from WMD proliferation to climate change – global challenges that no single nation, no matter how powerful, can address alone.
- Our allies tend to be our closest trading partners: The United States and the European Union (EU) have the largest bilateral trading relationship in the world, totaling more than \$1 trillion in goods and services per year.
- Our allies contribute to U.S. national security as our closest military partners, going into harm’s way, shoulder to shoulder with American troops, providing essential basing and support to our military operations overseas, enhancing the familiarity of U.S. forces with overseas theaters of operation, and cementing military-to-military relationships that are the human basis for interoperability and effectiveness in coalition operations.
- Perhaps most importantly, these allies help underwrite deterrence, prevent conflict, and address persistent threats like terrorism.

- Our allies can also be incredibly powerful partners in advancing our shared values, from supporting democracy to protecting human rights.

Our transatlantic alliance, embodied for nearly 70 years in NATO, is particularly valuable. Over its long history, NATO has provided a number of strategic benefits to the United States that are too often forgotten or overlooked in today's political discourse:

- Thanks to NATO, we were able to contain the Soviet Union, prevent the spread of communism, deter a potentially nuclear confrontation, and ultimately win the Cold War.
- Thanks to NATO, after the Berlin Wall fell, we were able to create a Europe whole, free, and at peace.
- Thanks to NATO, we were able to conduct military operations that set the conditions to end war in Bosnia and brought the Serbs to the negotiating table. NATO then provided the Stabilization Force to secure Bosnia-Herzegovina's reconstruction. Five years later, NATO ended the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo and provided a peacekeeping force there.
- Thanks to NATO, America was not alone in fighting Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. NATO invoked the Article V collective defense clause for the first time in its history after 9/11, when our European allies pledged their support for us after the worst terrorist attacks on American soil.
- Our NATO allies sent and sustained a rotational force of some 40,000 troops to fight alongside us in Afghanistan, and they took the lead in providing security and stability in the north, saving the U.S. an estimated \$49 billion.
- They have also contributed \$2.3 billion to the NATO Afghan National Army (ANA) Trust Fund to date and have pledged to support the Afghan military through 2024.
- NATO remains at our side today with 17,000 troops in the Resolute Support mission providing support and training to the Afghan forces now leading the fight.
- Most importantly, we should never forget that more than 1,000 non-US NATO troops lost their lives in Afghanistan, making the ultimate sacrifice.

Today, our NATO allies remain among our most critical partners in dealing with the array of 21st century threats we now face:

- Many of our NATO allies are our closest partners in fighting terrorism globally. For example, France is leading the fight against jihadists in the Magreb, where it has deployed 4,500 troops. In Syria, the United Kingdom (UK) has participated in US-led airstrikes and offered 2.7 billion pounds in humanitarian assistance since 2012.
- In Iraq, NATO has provided 350 trainers and NATO Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACs) have flown more than 1,000 hours in support of the Counter-ISIL campaign since 2015. This year, NATO will set up a new non-combat mission to advise



the Iraqi government on post-conflict governance, including several hundred trainers, advisors, and staff.

- Our European allies are also among our closest partners in combating the spread of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The UK, France and the EU were critical partners in concluding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which sharply curtailed Iran’s nuclear program.
- After Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and its invasion of Eastern Ukraine, it was our European allies who stood united with us in imposing the harshest economic sanctions Russia has ever experienced. And they have borne the brunt of the costs of this policy. The total loss of exports to sanctioning western countries is estimated to be over \$44 billion, of which 90% fell to EU countries, not to mention the loss of hundreds of thousands of export-related jobs across Europe.
- Our NATO allies have also stepped up to strengthen deterrence in order to prevent Russian aggression in the Baltics, Poland and other frontline states.
 - NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence consists of four multinational battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, including 4,500 troops.
- In addition, NATO has bolstered the readiness of its forces via:
 - The Very High Ready Joint Task Force (VJTF), including 13,000 personnel.
 - The Enhanced NATO Response Force (eNRF), including 40,000 personnel.
 - NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUS), including eight new command centers (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia). These support the rapid deployment of 20,000 forces, including 5,000 ground troops.
 - The “Four 30s” Readiness Initiative, which seeks to have 30 heavy or medium maneuver battalions, 30 battleships, 30 air squadrons available within 30 days notice.
- As cyberattacks have become more frequent and more severe, NATO has established a new NATO Cyber Operations Center which has three core functions: (a) situational awareness, (b) centralized planning for cyberspace, and (c) coordination for concerns about cyberspace operations.
- This is in addition to two other key entities:
 - NATO Computer Incident Response Capabilities (NCIRC): A staff of 200 that provides round-the-clock cyber defense and maintains a rapid reaction team that can be sent to member states, and
 - Cooperative Cyber Defense Center of Excellence: (CCD CoE): A policy institute that organizes large-cyber exercises and gives allies the opportunity to test their systems.
- NATO allies continue to make substantial contributions to a host of other shared missions, from conducting joint counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean, to providing humanitarian relief after natural and manmade disasters.



All of this is to say that there are many factors to weigh in assessing the value of these alliances and the fairness of our burden sharing arrangements. The Trump administration has been right to implore our European allies to spend more on defense, particularly at a time of intensifying strategic competition – the Bush and Obama administrations did so as well.

The good news is that our allies are stepping up and spending more:

- In 2017, non-US NATO members spent \$300 billion on defense, an increase of \$28 billion since 2014.
- They have also promised to spend an extra \$100 billion on defense by 2020.
- Half of NATO members plan to meet the 2% GDP-defense spending benchmark by 2024.

The bad news, however, is that using the 2% of GDP goal as the *only* measure of burden sharing ignores their other critical contributions and, most importantly (and unforgivably), their shared sacrifice. This is disrespectful, short-sighted, and wrong.

Given our allies' track record of invaluable contributions to U.S. national security over the years, President Trump's persistent disparagement of the NATO alliance constitutes foreign policy malpractice and undermines U.S. interests.

Most disturbingly, Trump's continued bad-mouthing of our NATO allies – and the question mark he has drawn over whether the United States would come to Europe's defense in a crisis – has opened up a serious debate in Europe about whether the U.S. remains a credible leader and a reliable partner. If the U.S. is no longer willing to lead NATO, if it no longer values its allies, what should Europe do to chart its own course? After 70 years of shared sacrifice and success, it is appalling that the last two years could put this historic alliance in jeopardy.

As NATO's 70th anniversary approaches, it is worth honoring and celebrating the most powerful alliance in human history. The United States must take stock of the many ways in which our allies have contributed to our security. Now is not a time to disparage, abandon, or nickel-and-dime NATO. As we face an increasingly complex set of security challenges and a period of intensifying competition with a revisionist Russia and a rising China, now is the time to double down and make the shared investments necessary to adapt and strengthen this invaluable alliance for the future.

