

Testimony

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs**

By

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on

Countering a Resurgent Russia

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Chairman Engel, Ranking member McCaul, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today. Am honored to be here with my esteemed colleagues, Secretary Nuland and Ambassador Fried to discuss such a critical national security and foreign policy challenge.

RUSSIA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES AND GOALS

Given my background and that of my colleagues I thought it may be useful to the committee if I offered some remarks on the national security and defense challenges that the US and our allies are facing in countering a resurgent Russia that desires to change the international order that has existed for 70 plus years, relitigate the end of the cold war, return Russia to the world stage as a global power while challenging the American hegemon and increasing its own sphere of influence in a multi-polar world. This sphere of influence, which is historically based, has grown rapidly in less than 2 decades to include Eastern Europe, The Middle East, South Asia, Latin and South America, Africa and the Arctic.

Russia as the world's largest land mass nation has no natural geographic barriers such as oceans, mountains or deserts. As such Russia has always sought to provide security by territorial expansion of its borders. Given that a Frenchman in the 19th century set Moscow on fire and a German in the 20th century came within 30 miles of Moscow, the Kremlin has always desired a strategic buffer to the west. After the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union with the catastrophic loss of Eastern Europe, most of it shockingly migrating to NATO, Russia is pre-occupied with returning that strategic buffer by weakening the transatlantic alliance and, if possible, eventually breaking it. It explains the aggressive intimidation and coercion campaign in the Baltics and other Eastern European aligned countries and the territorial expansion into non-aligned Georgia, Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

Equally disturbing is Russia's bold and systematic assault on the European and American democracies by meddling in national elections to undermine the peoples' confidence in their political system. Certainly the aftermath of the 2016 American election meddling resulting in countless investigations and causing deep political divisions in the US, has likely exceeded Russia's original expectations.

Russia's intervention in Syria in the fall of 2014 was the first out of region operation in 39 years since the invasion of Afghanistan. While the Iranians pressured Russia to intervene, Putin saw it as a significant strategic opportunity to replace the US as the most influential country in the Middle East. Russia saw the US unwilling to engage in Syria in any consequential way, and after the US abandoning Mubarak in Egypt during the Arab Spring in 2010, withdrawing from Iraq in 2011 and not assisting the newly elected regime in Libya that replaced Qaddafi, Putin recognized the value and obvious contrast with the US, in Russia coming to the aid of an ally in propping up the Assad regime. The leaders of the Middle East now all take Russia into consideration as a strategic player to include Israel which has not participated in the sanctions against Russia. Most Arab states are executing arms deals with Russia as a hedge against Iran who is Russia's political and military ally. Turkey is purchasing Russia's most sophisticated air defense system the S-400 and Russia is building multiple nuclear power plants in Turkey, Egypt and developing plans for Jordan.

ASSESSMENT OF US NATIONAL SECURITY/DEFENSE STRATEGY

I was a member of the Congressional Commission on the National Defense Strategy for over a year appointed by the late Senator John McCain, and we rendered a report to the Congress at the end of 2018.

The Commission agreed with the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the National Defense Strategy (NDS) which identified a strategic framework that is complicated and challenging in facing a return to big power competition with Russia and China while confronting North Korea, Iran and radical Islam. However, the Commission believes the implementation and execution of the NDS is less than satisfactory.

Compounding this challenge is the harsh reality that US military capability and dominance has seriously eroded. The 9/11 wars and defense reductions which began as the wars were winding down contributed to Russia closing in on the technology advantage that the US enjoyed since the collapse of the Soviet Union (precision guided munitions, space based technology, stealth, offensive and defensive missiles etc) and in some areas they have advanced beyond the US (electronic warfare, anti-ship missiles, long-range artillery, improved strategic and tactical nuclear weapons etc).

Russia was stunned by the US conventional dominance in the first Gulf War in liberating Kuwait in 1991 displaying a sophisticated integration of air and ground forces and once again a decade later in the liberation of Iraq in 2003 in decisively overwhelming Iraq's forces. While Russia recognized they had to avoid a conventional confrontation with the US they needed improved military capability to support their strategic and geopolitical goals. They developed two strategies:

1. Conventional Warfare – Build military capacity that is asymmetric and defensive to deny US and NATO air and maritime power the ability to penetrate Russian defenses. The so-called anti access, area denial. Once NATO use of air power to include cruise missiles is ineffective then NATO loses air superiority and the NATO ground forces are vulnerable in a way not seen since WWII. Also, given

the US is an ocean away from the conflict requiring a major strategic deployment, then deny the US a permissive deployment which the US executed successfully in the Gulf Wars and in Afghanistan. Russia plans now to conduct aggressive cyber attacks against US homeland critical infrastructure and military units in the US during the pre-deployment and deployment phases as well as kinetic interdiction of the strategic deployment.

2. Hybrid Warfare – New doctrine designed to operate below the level of conventional conflict by conducting massive disinformation campaign against adversaries, their allies and the Russian people. Introducing special operation forces to create fake unrest or accelerate the unrest among the civil population requiring the introduction of force, disguised as non-Russian. All designed to paralyze opponents into not making a decision to intervene until it is too late. This form of warfare is now the norm, given its success in Crimea and Ukraine and it is what Russia practices during its exercises along with the introduction of conventional capability.

The Commission concluded that in a war with Russia in Europe, US/NATO forces would take casualties to personnel and high value assets that we have not seen in many decades and that indeed we would struggle to win. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and the Joint Chiefs sounded the alarm in 2017 that the US is at risk in a conventional war with Russia. The Commission also concluded that the US does not have a comprehensive strategy to confront hybrid warfare which requires a major inter agency effort to succeed in cooperation with our allies.

COUNTERING A RESURGENT RUSSIA: RECCOMENDATIONS

- Develop Comprehensive Strategy: The US and our allies should develop a credible capability to DETER Russia, the moral courage to CONFRONT Russia

despite the legitimate concern over escalation and the willingness to ENGAGE Russia to find common ground with mutual benefits to national interests. The strategy should articulate the ways, means and ends to counter the Russian challenge and it should be publicly endorsed by the President, using a whole of government approach and developed in collaboration with allies.

- Declaratory Policy: The hybrid war threat advantages doubt and confusion. Making a positive declaratory statement puts Russia on notice. “The US/NATO will regard the appearance of any Russian military forces whether in uniform or out and including private military companies, in any NATO member state as an attack defined by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and will come to the defense of the member state.”

- NATO: The world’s most successful, enduring political and military alliance which to date has prevented the calamity of another World War. It is the bastion of the most advanced democracies on the planet who collectively have created unparalleled prosperity for its citizens while upholding individual freedoms, equal rights and democratic values. NATO as an institution and as an alliance must be strengthened not just in terms of financial burden sharing but in specific military capabilities that directly contribute to deterrence. Nations should be asked by NATO leadership to provide capabilities that add real value to collective deterrence and are not unnecessarily redundant.

- Forward Deployed Forces: While there has been some improvement in forward deployed forces in Eastern Europe, namely the Baltics and Poland it is inadequate for credible deterrence. While European forces need to be increased it is essential that the US deploy a corps level joint and combined headquarters with corps level enablers, a division headquarters with two combat brigades and their

enablers. This is not a return to the Cold War force levels where there were two US corps level headquarters and four US divisions.

- Ukraine: Russia will try to manipulate the new, inexperienced President Zelensky who may move down the path of normalizing relations with Russia in order to get the Ukraine economy moving forward and to placate the oligarchs in getting Russian money. US and Europe must engage to support Ukraine's anti-corruption efforts and to strengthen their economic viability and military capability and, in general, encourage a close alignment with the West.

- The Middle East: The US should persist in its leadership role in forming The Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) to counter Iran and reduce Russia's influence. Publicize Russian atrocities in Syria and those it facilitates by the Assad regime and Iran. Move diplomatically to reduce Russia's influence in Egypt and Libya.

- Venezuela: Russia who has made significant military and economic investments in Venezuela for years is attempting to accomplish in the Western Hemisphere what was successful in the Middle East in Syria; to prop up a repressive regime which is an ally and, if successful, diminish US influence in its own region. Russia in January deployed 400 personnel from the Wagner Group, a private military firm that operates as a military unit. Their mission is to protect Maduro. Last month Russia brought in actual military leaders and personnel to help with Venezuela's overall security and to repair the Russian missile defense systems. The Trump team should respond with more than rhetoric by increasing the lethal military aid to Ukraine (in Russia's backyard) and expose the economic assistance Russia is providing to North Korea in violation of the UN resolution which Russia supported.

- The Arctic: As climate change opens northern Arctic shipping lanes and specifically the Northern Sea Route (NSR), Russia is reopening 7 military bases in the Arctic and is spending billions to dominate the region, control the NSR and tap the colossal hydrocarbon reserves that lie beneath. Russia has the only nuclear icebreakers rapidly expanding to nine with scores of conventional icebreakers while the US has one conventional icebreaker. During the summer the NSR is now open for 3 months given the reduced ice cap and it is predicted to gradually expand by days and weeks. Trafficking the NSR requires an icebreaker and is 40% faster from Europe to China than the Suez Canal, dramatically reducing fuel costs and carbon emissions. The US is expected to release a new Arctic strategy this summer to describe how best to defend US national interests and support security and stability in the region.

- Sanctions: The most important issue for the Committee is keeping sanctions on Russia. They help with the conventional threat because they continue to deprive Putin of resources he needs to build his military to conduct major conventional operations. They help with the hybrid threat to deprive Putin of resources to buy influence in other countries. Continue to sanction additional oligarchs and entities involved in illegal activity. Ban US financial institutions from acquiring new Russian sovereign debt.

- Human Rights: One of the best pressure tools available given Russia's continued pushback. The President should speak to this issue not just the national security team and hold Putin accountable. Reagan demonstrated that personal diplomacy with Gorbachev was still effective despite his identification of human rights abuses.

In conclusion, countering Russian aggression requires steadfast American leadership in collaboration with our allies that establishes a credible deterrence to war, the courage to confront aggression and the openness to continue to engage Russia on issues of mutual benefit and concern. Certainly nuclear disarmament is at the top of the engagement list. There is much more work to be done in developing a comprehensive strategy to counter the Russian advance despite the progress made. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.