

**THE PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 118TH CONGRESS**

**Opening Statement, General (ret.) Philip M. Breedlove, USAF, Former Commander,
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Himes, and distinguished members of the committee. It is my great honor to testify before you today. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my insights and am proud to be among such prominent and well-respected panelists. And while I am sure the text and tone of our testimonies may overlap, I do not intend to tread on my fellow panelists' respective areas of expertise.

I offer my remarks from the perspective of a former super-user, the US EUCOM commander, and the NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe. In my 39-plus-year military career, I had no greater honor or privilege than leading the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guard, and civilians of the US European Command and NATO Allied Command Europe. I thank this committee for your continued support of these remarkable men and women.

Today, the revelations I will share draw on my experience as EUCOM commander during Russia's two-pronged invasion of Ukraine in 2014—the illegal occupation and subsequent annexation of Crimea and Moscow's invasion and direct support to the separatist forces in Donbas. I was vocal then, and I remain vocal now, we should not be surprised by Russia's actions. We have become too reactive in the European theater and must do more to improve the decision-making, cohesion and agility of our key leadership bodies.

At the moment, the situation on the ground in Ukraine is extremely volatile and fragile. Ukrainian forces have skillfully pushed back initial Russian advances, even conducting their own masterful counteroffensive in retaking Kherson and the surrounding region. Our NATO Allies and non-NATO partners have rallied to Ukraine's side in providing critical weapons and munitions to Kyiv—most recently represented by the joint commitment to provide Ukraine with desperately needed main battle tanks. In reality, President Putin's re-invasion of Ukraine has provided the fuel for the Alliance's renewed unity and recommitment to cooperative security, crisis management, and collective defense.

However, as intense fighting continues around Bakhmut and Russian forces seem poised to launch another full-scale offensive in the coming months, I cannot overemphasize our need to comprehensively consider Russian actions. At the height of the Cold War, we had a huge pool of Russian analysts in the intelligence community, who were primarily responsible for keeping an eye on Soviet Russia. By the fall of the wall, that number had come down drastically. What I found in 2014 in speaking to the directors of the CIA and DIA is that the number had decreased even more. And I believe that challenges our operational and tactical understanding of the Russian forces.

While many of those analysts were repurposed for key assignments on the Middle East and China, this finite group of Russian-focused personnel is too small to quickly and accurately analyze the Kremlin's full range of military actions at the operational and tactical levels. We need to accept

that our attempts at a “reset” with Moscow have failed. It is imperative that we understand President Putin seems hell-bent on blatantly changing the rules-based system of European security while maximizing his personal power. Solving this personnel shortage will be critical for protecting our vital interests in Europe. As a great power, we should have the capabilities and adequate personnel to keep an eye on *both* Russia and China at the same time.

President Putin’s recent words indicate that Moscow is digging in for a more protracted conflict, with the danger of “freezing” the conflict, as has been done in Georgia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Karabakh. This raises the important opportunity to rethink how we view the wider region. We must continue to bolster Ukraine’s air defense capabilities, and we should establish a comprehensive Black Sea strategy with our Ukrainian partners and NATO Allies. Perhaps most concerning, we need to provide a stronger response to the growing military relationship between Russia and Iran. As Moscow’s imports of Iranian drones increase, we might consider sending our own similar tech to Ukraine in response—and sooner rather than later.

Western weapons systems, and the Ukrainians’ skill in learning to use these systems quickly and effectively, have made a world of difference on the battlefield. But the decision-making process has become too slow, resulting in severe delays of key weapons and munitions deliveries to Ukraine. I believe more can be done to improve how we look at those decisions and how we apportion and allocate scarce intelligence resources.

We must also find solutions for serious budget challenges and restraints that limit our ability to be more proactive and agile in responding to the changing global threat environment. Improving the overall decision-making process, especially at the highest levels, will ensure our efforts are organized and funded appropriately.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Himes, and distinguished committee members, it is my position that we must do more to find an acceptable, lasting solution for Russia’s war against Ukraine—one that respects Ukraine’s state sovereignty and territorial integrity. By improving our internal processes and cooperating with our NATO Allies and non-NATO partners, we can strengthen our shared commitment to security, prosperity and inclusive peace in Europe and its neighborhood.