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UNITED STATES POLICY AND STRATEGY IN EUROPE

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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UNITED STATES POLICY AND STRATEGY IN EUROPE

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 2017

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:34.m. in Room SD–G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator John McCain (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators McCain, Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cruz, Strange, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Kaine, King, Warren, and Peters.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN, CHAIRMAN

Chairman MCCAIN. Good morning. The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on United States policy and strategy in Europe.

I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses this morning: General Philip Breedlove, who was relieved of his obligation to appear before this committee when he retired last year, yet has graciously agreed to submit himself before us once again. I have no doubt he will soon regret that decision and will wish for a speedy return to Georgia Tech where he is Distinguished Professor at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs.

We are also pleased to be joined by Ambassador William Burns, an old friend of this committee and of America, who is the President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; and Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, who is a Distinguished Fellow at the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security.

All three of these gentlemen combined have many, many decades of service to this country and we are grateful they would come and join us this morning.

Since the end of the Cold War, American policy and strategy in Europe have been guided by the idea that Russia was, or at least might become, a reliable security partner. To varying degrees, each of our last three Presidents pursued a partnership with Russia on these terms, and each time, high hopes ended in disappointment, not for lack of good faith or effort on the American side, but because of the simple fact that Vladimir Putin has no interest in such a partnership. He believes achieving his goal of restoring Russia as a great power means diminishing American power, as well as the values and institutions it sustains and defends.

Unfortunately, we as a country were slow to recognize that fact. Russia invaded Georgia and Ukraine, annexed Crimea, repeatedly threatened our NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] allies, violated the INF [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty] Treaty, rapidly modernized its military, executed a major military buildup along its western border, and interfered in American elections, all before policymakers on both sides of the aisle truly began to come to terms not only with the reality of Vladimir Putin's neo-imperial ambitions, but also with the heavy price we have paid for a policy General Breedlove once described as, quote, hugging the bear.

Until the end of the Cold War, there were a quarter of a million United States forces stationed permanently in West Germany alone. Today we have just a quarter of that number on the entire European continent. This drastic reduction was not merely the product of a post-Cold War peace dividend. Indeed, as recently as the two years before Russia invaded Ukraine, the United States withdrew two brigade combat teams from Europe. As a result, while Russian tanks rolled into Crimea in 2014, the United States had zero tanks permanently stationed in Europe.

Likewise, we let American intelligence on Russia's tactical and operational capabilities languish, weakening our ability to quickly detect Russia's large military movements and effectively attribute its, quote, hybrid warfare tactics. We unilaterally disengaged from the information fight, allowing Putin's propaganda machine and army of trolls and hackers to wage a war on truth with alarming success.

The bottom line is that three years after the invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, the United States has yet to heed the wakeup call. We still have not adjusted to the scope, scale, and severity of the new strategic reality we face in Europe. We continue to lack coherent policy and strategy to deter conflict and prevent aggression in Europe while confronting a revisionist Russia that is hostile to our interests and our values.

The good news is we have begun to fix the damage done by years of false assumptions and misguided policy with the European Deterrence Initiative. But that is just a first step. The new administration has an opportunity to turn the page and design a new policy and strategy in Europe backed by all elements of American power and decisive political will. Each of our witnesses has deep experience in the formulation and execution of national security strategy, and I hope they can begin to describe the basic pillars and underlying principles of such a policy and strategy.

Some of the features of a new approach in Europe are already clear: enhancing forward presence of United States military forces; increasing investments in capabilities necessary to counter Russia's advanced anti-access, area denial threat; following through on modernization of our nuclear triad; devising gray zone strategies for competition below the threshold of major conflict in domains such as cyber and unconventional warfare; providing defensive lethal assistance to Ukraine; and working together with allies and partners to arm ourselves to resist Russia's war on truth, counter Russian disinformation, and strengthen the resiliency of our societies and institutions.

What is also clear is that no United States policy or strategy in Europe can be successful without our NATO allies.

As Chancellor Merkel reminded us years ago, the Freedom Bell hangs in Berlin. It was a gift from the American people, modeled after our own Liberty Bell. It rang on the day of German reunification. But it also rang after the September 11th attacks. Sixteen German citizens died when the towers fell that day. When our NATO allies invoked article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty for the first time in history in response to those attacks, German troops went to fight side by side with American troops in Afghanistan. Fifty-four of them have given their lives, and nearly 1,000 are still serving there today. We must never forget or diminish the price our allies have paid in blood fighting alongside America.

I thank our witnesses for their testimony this morning.

Senator Reed?

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JACK REED

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing on the security environment in Europe.

I also want to thank our distinguished panel for appearing before us this morning, and thank them for their extraordinary service to the Nation in many different capacities over many, many years. So we look forward to your testimony, gentlemen.

This morning's hearing provides an opportunity for the committee to begin to examine in more detail the threat posed by Russia's malign activities aimed at undermining the United States-led international order, one where countries are sovereign and free to make their own choices about integrating economically and politically with the rest of Europe, rather than being coerced into a sphere of influence. Hopefully this morning we can also discuss what we need to do to respond to and defend against that Russian threat.

This threat was brought especially close to home last year with Russia's interference in our own presidential elections. Countering Russia's malign activities is a matter of national security, and we have a responsibility to ensure that any examination of such activities by Congress, the intelligence community, or the executive branch is not politicized. Russia's attack on American democracy is just one part of a broader Kremlin-directed assault on the cohesion of the NATO alliance, the European Union, and other Western institutions and a rejection of the post-Cold War vision of an integrated and stable Europe. Our national security depends on our better understanding Putin's world view and Russia's strategic aims in its aggression toward the West. I am interested hearing our witnesses' views on these matters.

President Putin has proven willing to use a broad range of military and non-military tools to advance what he sees as Russia's strategic interests. Militarily, Putin has used force and coercion to violate the sovereignty of Russia's neighbors and undermine their further integration into Europe. In the Republic of Georgia, the Russian military has occupied two separatist regions since 2008 and Moscow has recognized the regions' independence from Geor-

gia, contrary to the international community's determination that these regions are sovereign Georgian territory.

In Ukraine, Russia uses hybrid warfare operations by combining influence operations with clandestine military and financial support to separatists to seize Crimea, changing the boundary of a European nation by force for the first time since the end of the Cold War. Since then, Russia has sought to consolidate its control by providing direction and equipment, including heavy weapons, to separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, while failing to fulfill its commitments under the Minsk ceasefire agreements.

We have also seen Putin draw upon similar tools to prop up the Assad regime in Syria, while seeking to mislead the international community by stating the purpose of its military involvement there is to counter ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria].

Putin has even gone so far as to engage in nuclear saber rattling, conducting nuclear exercises during the 2014 Crimea invasion. According to recent news reports, Russia is fielding a missile system that violates the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, or INF, Treaty and threatens all of NATO. I would be interested in hearing from General Breedlove and our other witnesses about their thoughts on whether United States and NATO military forces are appropriately postured and trained to deter Russian aggression across Europe and to respond in the event of a crisis.

At the same time, the Kremlin's playbook also includes a wide range of non-military tools at Putin's disposal to influence the West. Russia employs an array of covert and overt asymmetric weapons short of military conflict, including cyber hacking, disinformation, propaganda, economic leverage, corruption, and even political assassination. General Breedlove, I would be interested in your recommendations from your time as EUCOM Commander and SACEUR [Supreme Allied Commander Europe] on how to detect and respond to the appearance of "little green men" in Ukraine and Russian disinformation operations intended to conceal Russian aggression on the ground.

In addition, we need to better understand how the Kremlin is conducting influence activities as part of a concerted effort to harm Western cohesion and opposition to Russia. There needs to be a recognition that Russian state-controlled media, such as RT [Russia Today] and Sputnik, disseminates fake news, amplified through social media, to undermine people's faith in democratic institutions in Europe and in the United States. Just last week, we heard warnings in the Banking Committee about how divisions within the EU could weaken sanctions imposed against Russia following its seizure of the Crimea peninsula in Ukraine.

Moreover, Russia appears to be growing bolder in its use of influence operations to coerce its neighbors and undermine Western opposition. The January 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment of Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent United States Elections found that Russia's influence efforts in the 2016 United States presidential election reflects a significant escalation compared to Russia's previous information operations. The report also warned that these cyber-enabled multifaceted influence operations that the Kremlin used to target the United States democratic process likely represent a new normal in Russian conduct toward the United

States and our European allies and partners. This pattern of Russian interference will only continue and intensify over time if it goes unchallenged.

Countering this national security threat will require a whole-of-government approach that brings together the Departments of Defense, State, Homeland Security, and others. I would be interested in our witnesses' thoughts on how the United States Government needs to be organized to counter the Russian influence threat and how Congress might resource such an effort. I will ask our witnesses whether they agree that significant cuts at the State Department and other civilian agencies would significantly hamper our ability to use diplomacy, strategic communications, and other foreign policy tools to counter these Russian malign activities.

Finally, what is clear is that we need a comprehensive strategy for countering the anti-Western aggression from the Kremlin. Such a strategy will need to be based on a clear-eyed understanding of Russia's strategic aims and how it is using the full range of influence operations to achieve these goals. I intend to work with Chairman McCain to undertake the necessary effort within this committee to examine this question in depth. I believe we can work in a bipartisan fashion to address this national security threat. I look forward to this morning's hearing to begin to shed light on this critical issue for our country and for European security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. I welcome the witnesses. General Breedlove?

STATEMENT OF GENERAL PHILIP M. BREEDLOVE, USAF (RET.), DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, SAM NUNN SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

General BREEDLOVE. Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, thank you for this invitation to testify before you again. It is an honor to be here to talk about United States strategy and policy in Europe, and in particular, I applaud your inquiry into United States-Russia issues.

United States-Russian relations are very much in the news these days. I believe it is appropriate given their importance, and I believe it is essential to look at these relations in a thorough, dispassionate way. That is what I hope we do today. There is much to talk about a new start with the Kremlin, and given the right framework and circumstances, I believe that has merit.

Our current vector in United States-Russian relations is not a good one, and I believe if we do not find the right framework for engagement, it will not improve. The key is that framework and how we proceed.

Russia is a great power with a proud history, and they have the world's largest country in terms of territory, and they are a player on the world stage. Russia possesses the world's second most powerful military: a nuclear arsenal comparable to ours and conventional forces that are easily the most powerful in Europe. While its economy is stagnant and it has been hit hard by the low prices of oil and natural gas, it is still the 12th largest in terms of dollars. We cannot simply dismiss Russia as a declining and regional power.

Again, given the right framework, it makes great sense for our Government to have meaningful discussions with Russia at a number of levels. We have much to discuss with the Kremlin. First, we would like to make sure our relationship does not deteriorate further. While we have more strategic matters to discuss, we need to address shared concerns about Moscow's current practice of flying warplanes dangerously close to us, at times without their transponders on, and causing problems with American and other NATO planes and ships. Such incidents risk fatal accidents and even a clash between the United States and Russia. We need to reestablish substantive communication between our militaries in order to avoid such incidents and, when they occur, to move toward deconfliction.

If Moscow really wants to improve relations, progress on these questions should not be hard to achieve. With an incremental approach and incremental successes, we can start to look for more substantial meetings to take on more difficult questions. Once we make progress in deconfliction, we can address more global issues of mutual interest. Holding a summit possibly in the future to launch that dialogue would signal a commitment by Washington and Moscow and would provide an important opportunity to address an issue important for over half a century, that of nuclear disarmament. This area has been dormant for some time now. Of course, before we can move to new agreements on nuclear issues, it is important that Moscow moves quickly to cease its violation of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces agreement.

Iran is another important area for discussion. Moscow and Iran have worked together closely in Syria, and Iran has even provided Russian warplanes a base for a brief period of time. Yet, at the same time, Moscow worked with us and others in persuading Tehran to sign the agreement on its nuclear program. Our administration has indicated that it wants to take a second look and improve the terms of that agreement. Is Moscow really willing to partner on this, or does it prefer good relations with Tehran at the expense of stability in the Persian Gulf?

A third area to discuss is working with the Russians to counter Daesh or the Islamic State of Iraq and in the Levant and other violent extremist organizations. If Moscow were a reliable partner against Daesh, the advantages are obvious. The complication, though, is that Moscow's military operation in Syria has devoted little attention to these extremists. It has instead been directed against our moderate allies and lately as it works with Ankara against the Kurds.

In addition, Moscow's saturation bombing against towns and cities has fueled refugee flows, exacerbating the refugee crisis in Europe. In fact, there has been very little overlap in our strategic objectives in Syria, and Moscow's principal objective in Syria is to shore up the weak, yet savage Assad regime. If we back off active opposition to Assad, which I think would be a serious concession to Mr. Putin, can we depend on Moscow to be a real partner in Syria and beyond against Islamic extremism?

We can add other issues to this possible dialogue. Cooperation in dealing with drug trafficking and space exploration should be on the table. There is ample opportunity that the Kremlin and the

White House can achieve a great deal when our interests are similar and we work together.

But we must, however, be realistic and not turn our eyes from places where Moscow is challenging our interests. President Putin has made clear that he wants to upend the post-Cold War order established in Europe. He and senior Russian officials have justified aggression in Ukraine by claiming a right to protect ethnic Russians and Russian speakers there. They have said that this principle applies elsewhere. Their goal is to weaken NATO, the European Union, and the transatlantic relationship.

Clearly there are two sides to every story. However, over the past nine years, as both of you have mentioned, the Kremlin has committed multiple acts of aggression in Georgia in 2008, in Crimea in 2014, and since then, an ongoing, not-so-covert war in Ukraine's east. It has agreed to two ceasefires and violated each repeatedly.

Moscow has indicated by actions and statements that if it succeeds in Ukraine, there could be future targets. All three of our NATO allies in the Baltics, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, are worried. Two of them, Estonia and Latvia, with their large ethnic Russian populations are concerned that Russia might try to use them as an excuse. Moscow sent this message when it kidnapped an Estonian intelligence official from Estonia on the same day that the Wales NATO summit ended in September of 2014.

We have a vital interest in stopping Moscow's revanchist policies before they move to other countries, especially our NATO allies in the Baltics. Yes, we can conduct negotiations with Moscow on global issues, but we also need to continue to strengthen NATO's presence along its eastern flank. The Warsaw NATO summit last summer took decisions to do that. The administration should endorse those decisions and reaffirm our article 5 commitment to defend each NATO member under threat, and it should take the lead in enhancing NATO capacities to deal with hybrid war, as you both mentioned, the appearance of disguised Russian agents or "little green men" in allied countries as an example. To underscore our commitment to the Alliance, I agree with the President's plan to meet first with his NATO colleagues before seeing Mr. Putin.

Mr. Putin understands the value of negotiating from strength. We can demonstrate our strength by developing a more forward defensive force and a more forward defensive force posture to deal with the Kremlin's challenges to Europe. Additionally, we should more fully support Ukraine against the Kremlin's aggression. In our past, we have been reluctant to provide Ukraine with defensive weapons so as to better defend itself. Our team should review that decision.

Part of this is maintaining the economic pressure on Moscow. Our and Europe's economic sanctions, which cost the Russian economy 1 to 1.5 percent of its GDP [Gross Domestic Product] in 2015, were imposed as an incentive for Moscow to meet its Minsk commitments and withdraw from Ukraine's east and as a deterrence against any additional aggression. It would be a sign of weakness to ease those sanctions for anything less than Moscow's full compliance with Minsk, which means a full restoration of the internationally recognized border between Russia and Ukraine. The more

trouble the Kremlin has in conducting its war in Ukraine, the less likely it is to cause trouble for us with our eastern NATO partners.

The last six months have demonstrated that we must greatly improve our cyber defense to block and deter operations that the Kremlin has been conducting against us and others. The latest dump of documents via Wiki is another reminder of the need to raise our cyber defense. We also need to consider how we can respond to future cyber attacks in ways—perhaps not public—that would deter future cyber aggression. This is another subject for discussion with Moscow once we strengthen our position.

Finally, sir, the world and the United States have enjoyed extraordinary peace, stability, and prosperity since the end of World War II and the Cold War. As just one measure, in 1970 over two billion of the world's three billion people lived in extreme poverty. In 2015, less than 1 billion of the globe's nearly seven billion people are in extreme poverty. An important reason for this is the peace and stability created by the great institutions that the United States, with its European partners, put together at the end of World War II, and that, sir, includes NATO.

We have a vital interest in maintaining a strong NATO and a vibrant Europe.

A dialogue with Moscow is possible. So too is cooperation. If the Kremlin is ready to work with us against Daesh or to improve the Iranian nuclear deal, we should be ready. But we should not be shy or hesitant about defending our interests when we are under challenge from the Kremlin. A policy of strength requires nothing less.

[The prepared statement of General BREEDLOVE. follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY GENERAL PHILIP M. BREEDLOVE, USAF (RET)

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, thank you for this invitation to testify before you again. It is an honor to be here to talk about United States Strategy and policy in Europe, and in particular I applaud your inquiry into United States-Russian relations.

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Again, given the right framework it makes great sense for our Government to have meaningful discussions with Russia at a number of different levels. We have much to discuss with the Kremlin. First, we would like to make sure our relationship does not deteriorate further. While we have more strategic matters to discuss, we need to address shared concerns about Moscow's current practice of flying warplanes dangerously close, and at times without their transponders on, to American and other NATO planes and ships. Such incidents risk fatal accidents and even a clash between the United States and Russia. We need to re-establish substantive communication between our militaries in order to avoid such incidents, and when they occur, to move toward de-confliction.

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We must however be realistic and not turn our eyes from places where Moscow is challenging our interests. President Putin has made clear that he wants to upend the post-Cold War order established in Europe. He and senior Russian officials have justified aggression in Ukraine by claiming a right to protect ethnic Russians and Russian speakers there; and they have said that this principle applies elsewhere. Their goal is to weaken NATO, the European Union, and the Transatlantic relationship.

Clearly there are two sides to every story, however, and over the past nine years, the Kremlin has committed multiple acts of aggression: in Georgia in 2008; in Crimea in early 2014; and since then an ongoing not-so-covert war in Ukraine's East. It has agreed to two ceasefires—Minsk I and II—and violated each repeatedly.

Moscow has indicated, by actions and statements that if it succeeds in Ukraine, there could be future targets. All three of our NATO Allies in the Baltics—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—are worried. Two of them, Estonia and Latvia, with their large ethnic Russian populations, are concerned that Russia might try to use them as an excuse. Moscow sent this message when it kidnapped an Estonian intelligence official from Estonia on the same day that the Wales NATO summit ended in September of 2014.

We have a vital interest in stopping Moscow's revanchist policies before they move to other countries, especially our NATO allies in the Baltics. Yes, we can conduct negotiations with Moscow on global issues; but we also need to continue to strengthen NATO's presence along its eastern flank. The Warsaw NATO summit last summer took decisions to do that. The new Administration should endorse those decisions and reaffirm our article 5 commitment to defend each NATO member under threat; and it should take the lead in enhancing NATO capacities to deal with hybrid war—the appearance of disguised Russian agents or little green men—in Allied countries. To underscore our commitment to the Alliance, I agree with the President's plan to meet first with his NATO colleagues before seeing President Putin.

Mr. Putin understands the value of negotiating from strength. We can demonstrate our strength by developing a more forward defensive force posture to deal with the Kremlin's challenges to Europe. Additionally, we should more fully support Ukraine against the Kremlin's aggression. In our past, we have been reluctant to provide Ukraine with defensive weapons so as to better defend itself, our team should review that decision.

Part of this is maintaining the economic pressure on Moscow. Our, and Europe's, economic sanctions—which cost the Russian economy 1–1.5 of GDP in 2015—were imposed as an incentive for Moscow to meet its Minsk commitments and withdraw

from Ukraine's East, and as a deterrence against additional aggression. It would be a sign of weakness to ease those sanctions for anything less than Moscow's full compliance with Minsk, which means a full restoration of the internationally recognized border between Russia and Ukraine. The more trouble the Kremlin has conducting its war in Ukraine, the less likely it is to cause trouble for us with our eastern NATO partners.

The last six months have demonstrated that we must greatly improve our cyber defenses to block and deter the operations that the Kremlin has been conducting against us and others. The latest dump of documents via Wiki Leaks is another reminder of the need to raise our cyber defense. We also need to consider how we can respond to future cyber-attacks in ways—perhaps not public—that would deter future cyber aggression. This is another subject for discussion with Moscow—once we strengthen our position.

The world and the United States have enjoyed extraordinary peace, stability and prosperity since the end of World War II and the Cold War. To take just one measure, in 1970 over two billion of the world's three billion people lived in extreme poverty. In 2015 less than one billion of the globe's nearly 7 billion people are in extreme poverty. An important reason for this is the peace and stability created by the great institutions that the United States created with its European partners at the end of World War II to include NATO and the European Union.

We have a vital interest in maintaining a strong NATO and vibrant Europe.

A dialogue with Moscow is possible. So too is cooperation. If the Kremlin is ready to work with us against Daesch or to improve the Iranian nuclear deal, we should be ready. But we should not be shy or hesitant about defending our interests when we are under challenge from the Kremlin. A policy of strength requires nothing less.

The Atlantic Council takes no institutional positions on policy issues and has no affiliation with the United States Government. All statements of fact and expressions of opinion contained herein are the sole responsibility of the author.

Chairman MCCAIN. Ambassador Burns, welcome back.

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. BURNS, PRESIDENT, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Ambassador BURNS. Thank you very much. Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, members of the committee, I am honored to be with you again, and I am honored to join General Breedlove and Ambassador Vershbow. I am glad to offer a few very brief thoughts on the challenges posed by Putin's Russia and what to do about it.

In the quarter century since the end of the Cold War, profound grievances, misperceptions, and disappointments have often defined the relationship between the United States and Russia. I lived through this turbulence during my years as a diplomat in Moscow, navigating the curious mix of hope and humiliation that I remember so vividly, and the Russia Boris Yeltsin and the pugnacity and raw ambition of Vladimir Putin's Kremlin. I lived through it in Washington, serving both Republican and Democratic administrations.

There have been more than enough illusions on both sides. The United States has oscillated between visions of an enduring partnership with Moscow and dismissing it as a sulking regional power in terminal decline. Russia has moved between notions of a strategic partnership with the United States and a later deeper desire to upend the current international order where a dominant United States consigns Russia to a subordinate role.

The reality in my view is that our relationship with Russia will remain competitive and often adversarial for the foreseeable future. At its core is a fundamental disconnect in outlook and about each other's role in the world.

President Putin's deeply troubling interference in our elections, like his broader foreign policy, has at least two motivating factors.

The first is his conviction that the surest path to restoring Russia as a great power comes at the expense of an American-led order. Resentful of what he and many in the Russian political elite perceive as a pattern of the West taking advantage of Russia's moment of historic weakness, Putin wants Russia unconstrained by Western values and institutions, free to pursue a sphere of influence.

The second motivating factor is closely connected to the first. The legitimacy of Putin's system of repressive domestic control depends on the existence of external threats. Surfing on high oil prices, he used to be able to bolster his social contract with the Russian people through rising standards of living. But Putin has lost that card in a world of lower energy prices and Western sanctions and with a one-dimensional economy in which real reform is trumped by the imperative of political control and the corruption that lubricates it.

The ultimate realist, Putin is not blind to Russia's relative weakness but regularly demonstrates that declining powers can be at least as disruptive as rising powers. He tends to see a target-rich environment around him. If he cannot easily build Russia up, he can take the United States down a few pegs with his characteristic tactical agility and willingness to play rough and take risks. If he cannot have a deferential government in Kyiv, he can grab Crimea and try to engineer the next best thing, a dysfunctional Ukraine. If he cannot abide the risk of regime upheaval in Syria, he can flex Russia's military muscle, emasculate the West, and preserve Bashar al Assad atop the rubble of Aleppo. If he cannot directly intimidate the European Union, he can accelerate its unraveling by supporting anti-union nationalists and exploiting the wave of migration spawned in part by his own brutality. If we cannot directly confront NATO, he can probe for fissures within it and make mischief in the Balkans.

So what do we do about all of this? Russia is still too big, proud, and influential to ignore and still the only nuclear power comparable to the United States. It remains a major player on problems from the Arctic to Iran and North Korea. The challenge before us, it seems to me, is to manage without illusions a difficult and combative relationship. I would highlight five key elements of a realistic strategy.

First, we need to sustain and, if necessary, amplify the steps we have taken in response to Russian hacking. It would be foolish to think that Russia's serious assault on our election can or should be played down however inconvenient. Russia challenged the integrity of our democratic system, and it sees Europe's 2017 electoral landscape as the next battlefield.

Second, we have to reassure our European allies of our absolute commitment to NATO, as General Breedlove stressed. In diplomacy, remembering your base is just as important as it is in politics, and it is what should guide our policy toward Russia. Our network of allies is not a millstone around America's neck, but a powerful asset that sets us apart from relatively lonely major powers like Russia and China.

Third, we have to stay sharply focused on Ukraine, a country's whose fate will be critical to the future of Europe and the future of Russia over the next generation. This is not about the distant aspirations of NATO or European Union membership. It is about helping Ukrainian leaders build the successful political and economic system that Russia seeks to subvert. This is just one dramatic example of why the administration's proposed foreign assistance cuts are so terribly shortsighted.

Fourth, we should be wary of superficially appealing notions like a common war on Islamic extremism or a common effort to contain China. Russia's bloody role in Syria and its continued attachment to Assad make the terrorist threat worse, not better. Its long-term concerns about a rising China to its east are real, but for now, Putin has little inclination to sacrifice the relationship with Beijing, critical to the more immediate objective of eroding an American-led order.

Fifth and finally, we need to focus on critical and practical priorities like rebuilding habits of communication between the United States and Russian militaries, again as General Breedlove stressed, to help forestall inadvertent collisions in Europe or in the Middle East. As former Senator Sam Nunn has argued, we should engage in our own cold-blooded self-interest, as well as Russia's, on issues where we can both benefit, particularly reducing the risks of nuclear confrontation and of nuclear or radiological materials falling into the wrong hands. For all our profound differences, Russia and the United States share a unique capability and a unique responsibility to reduce nuclear risks.

Mr. Chairman, I have no illusions about the challenge before us. It really pays to neglect or underestimate Russia or display gratuitous disrespect, but I am also convinced that firmness and vigilance and a healthy grasp of the limits of the possible are the best way to deal with the combustible combination of grievance and insecurity that Vladimir Putin embodies. We have a better hand to play than he does. We should play it methodically, confident in our enduring strengths, and unapologetic about our values.

Thank you very much.

[In lieu of a written statement, Ambassador Burns submitted the following articles:]

The New York Times

How We Fool Ourselves On Russia

William J. Burns

New York Times, January 07, 2017

In the quarter-century since the end of the Cold War, profound grievances, misperceptions and disappointments have often defined the relationship between the United States and Russia. I lived through this turbulence during my years as a diplomat in Moscow, navigating the curious mix of hope and humiliation that I remember so vividly in the Russia of Boris N. Yeltsin, and the pugnacity and raw ambition of Vladimir V. Putin's Kremlin. And I lived through it in Washington, serving both Republican and Democratic administrations.

There have been more than enough illusions on both sides. The United States has oscillated between visions of an enduring partnership with Moscow and dismissing it as a sulking regional power in terminal decline. Russia has moved between notions of a strategic partnership with the United States and a later, deeper desire to upend the current international order, where a dominant United States consigns Russia to a subordinate role.

The reality is that our relationship with Russia will remain competitive, and often adversarial, for the foreseeable future. At its core is a fundamental disconnect in outlook and about each other's role in the world.

It is tempting to think that personal rapport can bridge this disconnect and that the art of the deal can unlock a grand bargain. That is a foolish starting point for sensible policy. It would be especially foolish to think that Russia's deeply troubling interference in our election can or should be played down, however inconvenient.

President Putin's aggressive election meddling, like his broader foreign policy, has at least two motivating factors. The first is his conviction that the surest path to restoring Russia as a great power comes at the expense of an American-led order. He wants Russia unconstrained by Western values and institutions, free to pursue a sphere of influence.

The second motivating factor is closely connected to the first. The legitimacy of Mr. Putin's system of repressive domestic control depends on the existence of external threats. Surfing on high oil prices, he used to be able to bolster his social contract with the Russian people through rising standards of living. That was clear in the boomtown Moscow I knew as the American ambassador a decade ago, full of the promise of a rising middle class and the consumption of an elite convinced that anything worth doing was worth overdoing. But Mr. Putin has lost that card in a world of lower energy prices and Western sanctions, and with a one-dimensional economy in which real reform is trumped by the imperative of political control and the corruption that lubricates it.

The ultimate realist, Mr. Putin understands Russia's relative weakness, but regularly demonstrates that declining powers can be at least as disruptive as rising powers. He sees a target-rich environment all around him.

If he can't easily build Russia up, he can take the United States down a few pegs, with his characteristic tactical agility and willingness to play rough and take risks. If he can't have a deferential government in Kiev, he can grab Crimea and try to engineer the next best thing, a dysfunctional Ukraine. If he can't abide the risk of regime upheaval in Syria, he can flex Russia's military muscle, emasculate the West, and preserve Bashar al-Assad atop the rubble of Aleppo. If he can't directly intimidate the European Union, he can accelerate its unraveling by supporting anti-Union nationalists and exploiting the wave of migration spawned in part by his own brutality. Wherever he can, he exposes the seeming hypocrisy and fecklessness of Western democracies, blurring the line between fact and fiction.

So what to do? Russia is still too big, proud and influential to ignore and still the only nuclear power comparable to the United States. It remains a major player on problems from the Arctic to Iran and North Korea. We need to focus on the critical before we test the desirable. The first step is to sustain, and if necessary amplify, the actions taken by the Obama administration in response to Russian hacking. Russia challenged the integrity of our democratic system, and Europe's 2017 electoral landscape is the next battlefield.

A second step is to reassure our European allies of our absolute commitment to NATO. American politicians tell one another to "remember your base," and that's what should guide policy toward Russia. Our network of allies is not a millstone around America's neck, but a powerful asset that sets us apart.

A third step is to stay sharply focused on Ukraine, a country whose fate will be critical to the future of Europe, and Russia, over the next generation. This is not about NATO or European Union membership, both distant aspirations. It is about helping Ukrainian leaders build the successful political system that Russia seeks to subvert.

Finally, we should be wary of superficially appealing notions like a common war on Islamic extremism or a common effort to "contain" China. Russia's bloody role in Syria makes the terrorist threat far worse and despite long-term concerns about a rising China, Mr. Putin has little inclination to sacrifice a relationship with Beijing.

I've learned a few lessons during my diplomatic career, often the hard way. I learned to respect Russians and their history and vitality. I learned that it rarely pays to neglect or underestimate Russia, or display gratuitous disrespect. But I also learned that firmness and vigilance, and a healthy grasp of the limits of the possible, are the best way to deal with the combustible combination of grievance and insecurity that Vladimir Putin embodies. I've learned that we have a much better hand to play with Mr. Putin than he does with us. If we play it methodically, confident in our enduring strengths, and unapologetic about our values, we can eventually build a more stable relationship, without illusions.

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS

POLICY OUTLOOK

FEBRUARY 2017

Guiding Principles for a Sustainable U.S. Policy Toward Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia

KEY JUDGMENTS FROM A JOINT TASK FORCE

SUMMARY

Developing an effective U.S. strategy toward Russia and its neighbors is an increasingly complex and difficult challenge.[1] The breakdown in U.S.-Russian relations is a product of long-standing disagreements about the fundamentals of U.S. and Russian national security interests and policies. It cannot be repaired quickly or easily, or without a major course correction by either or both sides. Closer ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin cannot—or should not—be an end in themselves. Nor should we fool ourselves that they will be sufficient to overcome these disagreements. The U.S.-Russian relationship will remain largely competitive and adversarial. The challenge for Washington will be managing unavoidable tensions with Moscow while advancing American interests and staying true to U.S. principles. The new administration should avoid fueling unrealistic expectations of a breakthrough and instead seek incremental progress on specific topics based on a set of guiding principles. Setting and observing priorities will be key to managing this relationship, as will be separating the critical from the desirable and being realistic about what can be accomplished.

The United States should be guided by the following principles in managing relations with Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia:

- The United States' commitment to defend its NATO allies will remain unconditional and ironclad. America's top near-term goal should be to bolster deterrence with a series of defense improvements and reassurance measures for the alliance's eastern flank.
- The United States and its allies will defend the norms that underpin European security and, more broadly, the international order. These include the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris, which have been aggressively challenged by Russian actions.
- The United States will continue its strong support for Ukraine. The fate of Ukrainian reform is of critical importance to Europe. Halting the conflict in Donbas, deterring further Russian aggression, and supporting Ukraine's far-ranging domestic reforms will be top priorities for U.S.-EU diplomacy.
- Engagement with Russia will not come at the expense of the rights and interests of Russia's neighbors. At the same time, the United States must recognize that the long-term challenge of promoting democracy in Russia and Eurasia will be a demand-driven rather than supply-driven process.

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1. This policy outlook was written by Carnegie scholars Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, and Andrew S. Weiss. It summarizes the findings of the joint Carnegie Endowment for International Peace–Chicago Council on Global Affairs Task Force on U.S. Policy Toward Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia co-chaired by former deputy secretary of state Ambassador Richard Armitage and Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT). In writing this policy outlook, the authors relied on the task force's deliberations and a series of published white papers available on Carnegie's website. However, they alone bear responsibility for the analysis and judgments expressed herein. The work of the task force was made possible in part by the generous support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

U.S.-Russian relations are at their lowest point since the end of the Cold War. The fault lines between the United States and Russia reflect major differences in interests and values. Russia's annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine have upended the post–Cold War security environment in Europe. By trying to carve out a sphere of influence in its neighborhood using military force and other tools, Moscow seeks nothing less than to rewrite basic principles of the international order, which America has long defended. Unfortunately, it is far from clear whether the new U.S. administration views this situation in comparable terms.

In Europe, Russian propaganda, information operations, and Cold War–style subversion have magnified a dangerous wave of populist nationalism and threats to U.S.-EU unity. In the Middle East, the Kremlin's military intervention in Syria has given Bashar al-Assad's regime a new lease on life and has imposed enormous costs on innocent civilians and lives, while the latest round of Russian-led ceasefire diplomacy excluded the United States. At home, the Kremlin continues to rally support for Putin by relying on anti-Americanism and attacks on civil society and deeply embattled independent groups.

Russia's unprecedented cyber operations during the recent U.S. presidential election and attempts to tilt the outcome have made a dangerous situation worse. The Barack Obama administration's decision to hit back and impose sanctions on Russian intelligence agencies, senior officials, and entities involved in these cyberattacks is an essential first step to make sure that the Kremlin understands the costs of such brazen interference. While necessary, these steps will not put an end to Russian cyber and information operations in the United States or Europe. More will need to be done to counter these activities ahead of several key European elections throughout 2017–2018. Perceptions that the United States stands to lose more than Russia from confrontation in the cyber domain should not deter it from responding forcefully.

The severity of the break between Washington and Moscow is underscored by the fact that, in the Kremlin's narrative, these Russian actions are meant merely to restore the balance of power. Having rebuilt a measure of Russia's strength, Putin is transparent about his desire to impede U.S. ability to operate at will and to retaliate for the alleged humiliation that Russia suffered in the 1990s. A majority of Russians share Putin's views. U.S. policymakers should recognize that they have a long-term Russia problem on their hands that extends beyond the headaches of dealing with Putin and his inner circle.

The rivalry between Russia and the United States has consequences beyond their bilateral relations. Russia's neighbors feel it most—the very countries the United States has tried to help leave Russia's shadow. Russia wants to control these countries' security, political, and economic orientation, and, unfortunately, it will have opportunities to meddle in the affairs of the smaller states

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along its periphery. There is a long-standing and strong bipartisan consensus in the United States that Moscow's goals and tactics are unacceptable. Defusing the current tensions can help these countries escape the geopolitical tug of war between Russia and the West, but there can be no return to the days of relegating smaller countries to Moscow's orbit.

MANAGING AN ADVERSARIAL RELATIONSHIP

For the past twenty-five years, U.S.-Russian relations have alternated between high expectations and bitter disappointments. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama have each in turn attempted a breakthrough with Russia only to see the relationship unravel by the end of their terms. Rather than pursuing a new reset, the incoming U.S. administration should try to break out of this boom-and-bust pattern by focusing on careful management of deep-seated differences with Moscow. There should be no illusions that pursuing a full-scale rapprochement with Putin would not entail a major retreat from core U.S. principles, inflict enduring damage to transatlantic relations, undermine U.S. global influence, and threaten the survival of the international order.

Yet whether the United States likes it or not, Moscow will remain a major factor in regions and issues where key U.S. interests are at stake. Putin is a skilled and agile operator—more daring, less predictable, and less encumbered by bureaucratic inertia than even his Soviet predecessors. With little regard for established norms and a willingness to take risks, he has forced others to reckon with him—more often than not on his terms. Dealt a poor hand—a stagnant economy, technological backwardness, and a modest defense budget—he has played it well and positioned himself as a major force on the global stage.

Pushing back against Russia will often be necessary. But so will be dealing with it. A sustainable U.S. approach will require a mix of firmness, caution, and deliberation. The risk of escalation and direct conflict is real. Putin is willing to escalate disputes with the West in dangerous and irresponsible ways, knowing full well that the United States is constrained by its commitments as a responsible stakeholder of the international system. Moscow's reliance on asymmetrical tools—so-called hybrid war, cyber operations, disinformation, and old-fashioned subversion—will be an ongoing challenge. But that does not mean that Russian actions should go without a response. The United States has a range of core strengths and tools at its disposal that it can deploy to respond to and deter future Russian adventurism.

TOWARD A NEW POLICY FRAMEWORK

The United States and Russia have been drifting for some time now toward a version of Cold War II. Prospects for halting this dangerous trend will hinge on two factors. First, is Putin prepared to make a strategic decision that he wants better relations with the United States? And second, is the Trump administration for its part willing to make clear to Putin that just as he insists on protecting Russian interests, the United States is committed to securing its core interests

and the alliances and institutions that are at the heart of the existing international order? The success of a U.S. approach to Russia that emphasizes conflict management, rather than conflict resolution, will require hard thinking about American priorities and what are not only desirable but also feasible outcomes, given the many impediments to a true reconciliation of policies and interests.

WHAT IS CRITICAL?

Business as usual between Washington and Moscow has been largely frozen since Russia's annexation of Crimea. The Trump administration's apparent interest in restarting regular, senior-level dialogue between the two governments is not inherently problematic, provided that it is aimed at managing differences, lowering tensions, avoiding misunderstandings, and seizing opportunities for cooperation. The Kremlin may take advantage of this opening only to proclaim that Russia is no longer isolated internationally. However, should a meaningful dialogue resume, the following four areas should be given priority.

The Cyber and Information Domain

If the Trump administration were to rescind the sanctions that were recently imposed on Russia for its interference in the U.S. presidential election, this decision would signal to Moscow that there is little cost or consequence to such actions, thereby rewarding bad behavior. Russian state-sponsored attacks on the institutions and processes that guide modern democratic societies must be exposed and answered. The United States must also significantly strengthen the resilience of its critical infrastructure, support European efforts to thwart and expose Russian interference in their domestic politics, and develop closer transatlantic coordination of retaliatory measures. At the same time, the new administration should make it a priority to reinvigorate discussions on new rules of the road and norms of behavior to govern U.S.-Russian competition in cyberspace—a goal that would also be undermined if the recent sanctions were lifted.

Military Risk Reduction Measures

Russia's provocative military activities pose a real risk of direct conflict either as an accident or as a result of a miscommunication. The United States and Russia already have agreed rules of the road for the responsible conduct of peacetime military operations, but Moscow is ignoring them. The Trump administration should try to re-establish properly functioning military-to-military channels to facilitate full implementation of existing rules and negotiate any new rules that may be necessary. The deliberately vexing nature of Russian behavior may make this impossible to achieve, but an attempt should be made nonetheless. The effort to de-conflict Russian and U.S.-led coalition air operations in and around Syria shows what is possible when there is political will on both sides.

Syria's Future

The fall of Aleppo and the staying power of the Assad regime leave little prospect for a successful U.S. strategy built around the moderate Syrian opposition. In addition, the conflict between the Assad regime and the increasingly radicalized opposition is likely to continue despite the Russian-Turkish-Iranian negotiated ceasefire. With Russia focused

on supporting Assad and securing its own foothold in Syria (rather than defeating the so-called Islamic State), meaningful U.S.-Russian cooperation to counter the group will be a tall order due to the countries' competing priorities and the lack of trust between security establishments. Still, the Trump administration can support efforts to establish a comprehensive ceasefire, to provide humanitarian relief, and to negotiate a peaceful transition toward some form of power sharing in a new Syrian government.

Ukraine in the Balance

Washington, Brussels, and key European allies need to demonstrate in words and deeds their long-term commitment to supporting Ukraine. Moscow is betting that the United States and Europe will eventually lose interest and that the current sanctions regime will crumble amid stalled implementation of the Minsk accords and slow progress by Kyiv on crucial reforms. While Western policymakers should have no illusions that sanctions by themselves will force a change in Russia's Ukraine policy, they are an important source of leverage over Moscow's behavior and should not be lifted for free.

WHAT IS DESIRABLE?

There are several areas that offer somewhat better prospects for cooperation either because of convergent interests or based on prior experience. These include nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear security, the fight against nuclear terrorism, and the future of the Arctic. These are generally technical issues, and progress can be made at technical working levels without involving senior officials. More challenging arms control measures, such as preserving the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and convening formal negotiations on deeper cuts in U.S. and Russian strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals, will require a political decision and therefore appear unlikely absent a breakthrough in the relationship. That said, both countries are developing military capabilities the other finds threatening, and the Kremlin has a worrying predilection for nuclear muscle flexing. A serious dialogue about strategic stability, military doctrines, and force structures is needed to identify ways of enhancing stability, especially in crises.

WHAT IS FEASIBLE?

The history of U.S.-Russian relations over the past twenty-five years underscores the importance of engagement with the Kremlin at the highest level. President Trump will have multiple opportunities to engage with Putin early in his tenure, but feel-good interactions with Putin should be avoided and should not come at the expense of G7 solidarity.

A stable relationship with Russia is important to achieving many of the highest U.S. priorities. However, the problems that divide the two countries are likely to evade quick or easy solutions. Defusing tensions, re-engaging on issues of mutual interest, preventing or deterring Russian meddling in U.S. and its allies' domestic affairs—in other words managing the relationship with patience and firmness—will constitute success until a measure of trust is restored between Washington and

Moscow. Such a state of affairs would not be transformational, but it is far preferable to the wild ride U.S.-Russian relations have been on for the past twenty-five years. With time, such a methodical approach may produce more sustainable and productive relations between the two countries that will benefit them and the entire international system.

The joint Carnegie Endowment–Chicago Council on Global Affairs Task Force on U.S. Policy Toward Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia is co-chaired by former deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage and Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut.

Specifically, the task force is focused on

- Identifying U.S. and Western interests in this complex and diverse region;
- Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of U.S. and Western policy toward Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia since the end of the Cold War;
- Preparing an analytically rigorous assessment of U.S. and Western policy challenges in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and the rise of a more assertive, unpredictable Russia under President Vladimir Putin; and
- Offering a set of guiding principles for a durable U.S. policy framework while sustaining and promoting transatlantic unity.

More information on the work of the task force and a series of in-depth white papers are available at **carnegieendowment.org/specialprojects/TaskForceonUSPolicyTowardRussiaUkraineandEurasia/**.

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Chairman McCain. Thank you. Ambassador Vershbow?

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ALEXANDER R. VERSHBOW, DISTINGUISHED FELLOW, BRENT SCOWCROFT CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Thank you. Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, other members of the committee, it is an honor for me to be able to speak before you today on United States security strategy and policy in Europe and, in particular, how to meet the challenge posed by an aggressive revisionist Russia.

I submitted a longer prepared statement in which I describe the many dimensions of the Russian challenge. Of course, the watershed event occurred exactly three years ago with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the launching of the ongoing campaign to destabilize other parts of Ukraine. President Putin tore up the international rulebook, and he ended a period, as you said, Mr. Chairman, of more than 20 years when we looked to Russia as a potential partner.

Three years later, the Russian challenge has become even more serious. Not only have they continued the aggression against Ukraine, they have engaged in political aggression against our societies using cyber attacks, disinformation, and influence operations to affect the outcome of elections and undermine confidence in our democratic institutions.

In essence, Russia is trying to undo decades of progress toward a more stable and integrated Euro-Atlantic community and to go back to the days when Russia dominated its neighbors through force and coercion. It aims to weaken and divide NATO and the European Union and to reduce their attractiveness to other European nations. It even sponsored an armed coup d?etat in Montenegro last year to derail that country's accession to NATO. It wants to reduce U.S. influence in the world. But I think the main driver of what is going on is a determination to preserve the Putin regime's grip on power by discrediting any Western-oriented alternative and distracting the Russian people from the country's economic decline. So as Bill Burns said, that requires an external enemy.

Of course, now the challenge to the international order extends to the Middle East with devastating consequences for the people of Syria while contributing little to international efforts to defeat ISIS. All of this is occurring against a backdrop of a massive upgrading of Russian military forces in every domain while Russia flouts its obligations under arms control agreements, including violating the INF Treaty.

So while we should always seek constructive relations with Russia, we must approach that relationship without any illusions. Since it is Russia's actions which have fundamentally changed our relationship, any change for the better depends on changes in Russian behavior. To get there, we need a comprehensive strategy that builds upon the combined material and moral strength of our close allies and partners in Europe and around the world. As in the Cold War, we must engage with Russia but from a position of strength.

Now, what would be the elements of a comprehensive strategy? As you know, I spent the last five years as Deputy Secretary-General of NATO, and I am pleased to say that the Alliance is in a much stronger position than it was three years ago militarily and

politically to meet the Russian challenge. General Breedlove deserves a lot of the credit for that.

Since 2014, NATO has carried out the most significant increase in its collective defense posture for a generation. Allies have begun to reverse the decline in defense spending. They have increased NATO's ability to reinforce allies at short notice, increased the scale and frequency of exercises, boosted cyber and missile defense, strengthened intelligence sharing, and tried to speed up decision-making in a crisis.

At Warsaw last July, allies decided that credible deterrence also required additional forces on the ground. So they agreed to deploy multinational battalions in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and also to increase NATO's presence in Southeastern Europe as well. So now if Russian troops or "little green men" cross the borders, they will immediately face troops from across the Alliance from both sides of the Atlantic rather than just national forces.

I am pleased to say that the United States is playing a very key role in implementing these decisions, leading the battalion in Poland and contributing additional combat capabilities under the European Deterrence Initiative. This initiative is critical to the credibility of NATO's defense and deterrence posture, and I hope it will continue to receive full support from the new administration and the Congress as a demonstration of our unequivocal commitment to the Alliance.

But the United States is not shouldering this burden alone. I am pleased to say that the UK, Canada, and Germany are leading NATO's battalions in the three Baltic States, and 12 other allies have stepped up to provide units.

Nevertheless, there is a lot more that our allies need to do in the coming years, which I spell out in my written statement. They have to contribute more follow-on forces, more investments in air and missile defense, precision strike, anti-submarine warfare capabilities to counter Russian A2/AD capabilities. That all requires resources, and I hope that by the time of the mini-summit in late May, that all allies will have concrete plans to accelerate the increasing of their defense spending to meet the two percent of GDP goal.

Now, we cannot just circle the wagons and strengthen NATO's 28 members alone. There is also a need to do more to bolster the capabilities of Russia's neighbors who are directly threatened by Moscow and strengthen our partnerships with countries like Sweden and Finland who can help the Alliance, especially in the Baltic Sea region. Our packages of support for Ukraine and Georgia through NATO have helped with the defense reforms, but they would benefit from a lot more resources.

Bilaterally, the United States nonlethal defensive weapons assistance and training has helped Ukraine's armed forces prevent further Russian incursions in the Donbas, but we should consider expanding the support quantitatively and qualitatively to include lethal systems such as anti-tank weapons, UAVs [Unmanned Ariel Vehicles], and air defenses if Russia continues its aggression in eastern Ukraine.

Of course, while it is not our focus today, NATO needs to look south as well as east when it comes to strengthening its neighbors.

A bigger effort in defense capacity building for partners in the Middle East and North Africa could address the root causes of terrorism and migration.

Now, Russian interference in our presidential election and its similar efforts in Europe call for a strong response both at the national level and through NATO and the EU [European Union]. We need to do more to ensure the integrity of our election processes and institutions against cyber attacks and foreign manipulation. We should devote additional resources to detecting and analyzing Russian propaganda and influence operations, work with the social media companies to label or take down false stories before they go viral, and expand radio, TV, and Internet broadcasting, especially in the Russian language, to debunk disinformation and fake news. We should not fight propaganda with propaganda, however, but project a positive narrative about what the West stands for.

I think NATO could take a bigger role in the countering influence operations and Russian active measures. These may not be traditionally in NATO's mandate, but defending societies is just as important as defending borders. Here we should join forces with the European Union to forge and integrate a strategy for countering the whole spectrum of hybrid warfare methods since NATO does not have all the necessary tools.

Now, just a few words on how to engage with Russia. First of all, I would agree that we need a unified approach with our democratic allies, one consistent with our shared values and principles. This means, first of all, that engagement should address head on the fundamental reason why relations have deteriorated in the first place: Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its violation of the rules that have kept the peace in Europe since the end of World War II.

Time is of the essence. In recent days, Russia has increased its military and political pressure on Ukraine. The Minsk process led by Germany and France may have prevented further deterioration up until now, but it does not provide sufficient leverage to induce Russia to reverse course and withdraw its forces and its proxies from the occupied territories. So I would argue that stronger, high-level United States diplomatic engagement working with Kyiv, Berlin, and Paris may be necessary to achieve real progress and avoid another intractable frozen conflict.

So I would urge the Trump administration to make solving of the conflict in eastern Ukraine the litmus test and the essential first step in any reengagement effort with Moscow, and as a first step, we should consult with our allies to develop a common strategy. There may be things to talk about with Russia on Iran, ISIS, North Korea, but the core issue that we need to tackle head on is the aggression in Ukraine. Any bargain with Moscow and any easing of sanctions should be contingent on fully implementing the Minsk agreements and restoring Ukrainian sovereignty over the Donbas, including control over its international borders. Anything less would reward Russian aggression and only embolden Mr. Putin further.

Last but not least, successful pursuit of the kind of strategy I have outlined depends on Western unity and resolve. That unity and resolve is being tested not just by external challengers like

Putin and ISIS, it is also threatened from within: Brexit, public dissatisfaction with illegal migration, and slow economic growth, a Turkey that seems to be drifting away from Western values, to name just a few. As in the past, United States leadership will be essential in holding NATO together and in ensuring that decision-making by consensus continues to be effective. At the same time, the United States needs to demonstrate in word and deed that it supports a strong, united Europe as an indispensable partner in dealing with Russia and other challenges even as we work to overcome differences on trade or refugee policy.

The perception that the Trump administration is skeptical about the European Project could exacerbate internal divisions within Europe and provide openings for Russian mischief making.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Vershbow follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR ALEXANDER VERSHBOW

THE RUSSIAN CHALLENGE

Three years ago this month, Russia illegally annexed Crimea and laid the groundwork for its campaign to destabilize Ukraine. That moment marked the end of a period of more than twenty years when the countries of the West looked to Russia as a partner. Of course, even before 2014, Russia had demonstrated a pattern of destabilizing countries in its neighborhood, particularly Moldova and Georgia. But Russia's aggression against Ukraine—including the first changing of borders by force in Europe since World War II—represented a new strategic reality, and a wake-up call for the United States and its NATO Allies.

That new strategic reality is even starker today: Russia has not only continued to undermine the post-WWII and post-Cold War international order—an order based on respect for the sovereignty of nations, and the rule of law—through its illegal occupation of Crimea and its ongoing war of aggression in Eastern Ukraine; Russia has also engaged in political aggression against our societies, using cyber-attacks, disinformation, propaganda, and influence operations (what the Soviets called "active measures") to affect the outcome of elections and to undermine confidence in our democratic institutions.

In essence, Russia is trying to undo decades of progress toward a more stable and integrated Euro-Atlantic community. It wants to turn back the clock to a time when Russia dominated neighboring countries through force and coercion. Using military intimidation, economic warfare and "active measures," it aims to weaken and divide NATO and the European Union, which it sees as the main obstacles to its expanded power in Europe, and to reduce their attractiveness to other European nations. It openly works to destabilize countries that seek closer ties to the Euro-Atlantic community, as we are seeing in the Western Balkans, even sponsoring an armed coup d'état in Montenegro last year to derail its accession to NATO. All of this is driven by a determination to preserve the Putin regime's grip on power by discrediting any Western-oriented alternative and distracting the public from Russia's economic decline.

Moscow's challenge to the international rules-based order now extends beyond Europe to Syria and the broader Middle East. As Russia has provided greater levels of military support for President Assad—including bombing moderate opposition groups and critical infrastructure, and driving tens of thousands of civilians from Aleppo and other cities—it has made it even more difficult to find a long-term end to the war in Syria, while contributing little to international efforts to defeat ISIS. Now, Russia may be seeking a foothold in Libya, putting at risk international efforts to support the government of national accord and end the civil war.

All of this has occurred against the backdrop of a massive upgrading of Russian military forces, both conventional and nuclear. After their forces' poor performance against Georgia in 2008, Russian military spending has increased by one-third and its modernization programs have transformed Russian capabilities in every domain. At the same time, Russia continues to flout many of its obligations under arms control and transparency regimes, as we have seen with the recent news about the deployment of a long-range ground-launched cruise missile in violation of the INF Treaty.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

While we should always seek constructive relations with Russia, we must approach the relationship without illusions. We need to recognize that it is Russia's actions which have fundamentally changed our relationship, and that any change for the better depends on changes in Russian behavior. Meeting the Russian challenge in the years ahead calls for a comprehensive strategy, building on the combined material and moral strength of our close Allies and partners in Europe and around the world.

To achieve a more stable and constructive relationship with Moscow that is sustainable for the long term, we must speak with Russia from a position of strength. During the Cold War, a strong deterrence paved the way for détente, for arms control agreements, and for our relatively predictable and stable relationship with the Soviet Union. Our situation today is different, but it requires a similar approach. A combination of strength and engagement is the best way to bring Russia back to compliance with international law and with Helsinki principles.

ELEMENTS OF A STRATEGY

A comprehensive strategy for meeting the Russian challenge should have many elements, including: bolstering our defense and deterrence against potential Russian threats; supporting Russia's neighbors in their efforts to build strong, resilient societies and defend their sovereignty; countering the Russians' revisionist, anti-Western propaganda and other forms of "hybrid" warfare aimed at undermining our democracies; and continuing to support the aspirations of the Russian people for freedom and democracy over the longer term. In all of these lines of effort, we have a greater chance of success by working closely with our European allies and partners.

Bolstering Defense and Deterrence

When it comes to bolstering defense and deterrence, the NATO Alliance today is in a much stronger position than it was three years ago to meet the Russian challenge. Since the Wales Summit in 2014, NATO has carried out the most significant increase in its collective defense posture for a generation. Allies have begun to reverse the decline in defense spending, with total spending up by 3 percent last year. Through the Readiness Action Plan, Allies have increased their ability to reinforce any Ally at short notice with a much larger NATO Response Force of 40,000 troops and a quick-reaction Spearhead Force, ready to move within days to wherever it might be needed. They also increased the scale and frequency of military exercises, developed a strategy for countering "hybrid" warfare, boosted NATO's cyber and ballistic missile defenses, strengthened intelligence sharing within the Alliance, and introduced measures to speed up decision-making in a crisis.

At the Warsaw Summit last July, Allies took even more far-reaching decisions to strengthen deterrence for the long term. Allied leaders decided that, with Russia's continuing military build-up and its growing anti-access/area denial capability, it is not enough to rely on reinforcements alone. Credible deterrence also requires additional forces on the ground. So at Warsaw, NATO leaders agreed to enhance NATO's forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance with the deployment of multinational battalions in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and to increase its presence in southeastern Europe as well. So, should any country act aggressively against a NATO Ally, they would immediately face troops from across the Alliance, from both sides of the Atlantic, rather than just the national forces of one country.

The United States is playing a key role in implementing these decisions, serving as lead nation for the multinational battalion in Poland, and contributing additional combat capabilities as part of the billion-dollar European Deterrence Initiative. The EDI (and its predecessor, the European Reassurance Initiative) have ensured an almost continuous presence of United States combat forces across NATO's eastern flank—reassuring our Allies, enhancing interoperability and readiness, and leaving the Russians in no doubt that they would pay a heavy price for testing Alliance resolve. EDI is critical to the credibility of NATO's defense and deterrence posture, and I hope it will continue to receive full support from the new Administration and the Congress.

When it comes to the eastern flank, the United States is not bearing an outsized share of the burden. American contributions are being matched by increased efforts on the part of the European Allies and Canada. The UK, Canada and Germany have taken the leading role in NATO's enhanced forward presence in the three Baltic States, reinforced by units from 12 other Allies, and seven European Allies are serving in succession as lead nation for NATO's rapidly deployable "spearhead" force. This is a good example of transatlantic teamwork.

Nevertheless, there's more that needs to be done in the coming years. For example, while our Allies have stepped up by providing forces for the eastern flank, they will also need to do their share in fielding the follow-on forces—ground, air and naval—and the critical enablers needed to back up these "first responders." Right now, the U.S. provides the majority of these forces, and allies should commit to shouldering at least 50 percent of the burden within the next few years.

Allies will also need to do their part in countering the Russians' growing anti-access and area denial capabilities in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, which could seriously impede NATO's ability to bring in reinforcements. This means investing more in air and missile defense, precision strike, and anti-submarine warfare capabilities. Allies will also need to commit more assets to the standing NATO maritime groups to ensure that the Alliance is able to maintain freedom of navigation in the North Atlantic. Despite the renewed emphasis on territorial defense, Allies need to maintain and strengthen their expeditionary capabilities so that NATO is fully equipped to fight terrorism and manage crises beyond NATO's borders.

All of this requires additional resources. Allies must not only adopt concrete plans to fulfill the pledge to raise defense spending to 2 percent of GDP by 2024, as Secretary of Defense Mattis called for in February; they should accelerate these efforts if possible. They should also speed up efforts to meet the even more important target of devoting 20 percent of their defense budgets to new equipment and R&D—a benchmark now met by only ten of the 28 allies.

Enhancing the Resilience of Allies and Partners

Spending more on defense is vital, but it is not enough. Russia exploits the weakness and vulnerabilities of our societies and uses cyber-attacks and propaganda to turn a country's citizens against their own government and toward Russia. Allies must therefore strengthen their resilience in key practical areas. Governments must ensure that their cyber defenses are strong, that they have a high degree of civil preparedness, and that their critical national infrastructure is protected. Resilience is the essential first rung of the deterrence ladder.

Moreover, we can't just circle the wagons and strengthen the resilience of NATO's 28 members alone. Allies also need to bolster the capabilities of Russia's neighbors who are threatened by Moscow, and strengthen NATO's partnerships with other European partners, such as Sweden and Finland, who can help the Alliance in key regions like the Baltic Sea.

NATO has been engaged for many years in assisting Georgia and Ukraine to carry out defense reforms, to raise the proficiency of their armed forces, and to bring them closer to NATO standards. Since 2014, NATO has expanded these efforts through the Substantial NATO–Georgia Package and Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine, and it has deployed a team of resident defense advisors to each country. But both these efforts are relatively under-resourced in comparison to European Union efforts in the police and judicial sectors, and I recommend that the Trump Administration push for their expansion.

Bilaterally, the United States has provided non-lethal defensive weapons assistance to Ukraine, and together with Canada, offered valuable training to Ukrainian armed forces. This has helped them prevent further Russian incursions in the Donbas. We should consider expanding this support both quantitatively and qualitatively, to include lethal defensive weapons such as anti-tank weapons and air defenses, if Russia continues its aggression in Eastern Ukraine.

When it comes to strengthening its neighbors, NATO needs to look South as well as East, by doing more to project stability to its partners in the Middle East and North Africa. Helping Middle Eastern neighbors build reliable defense institutions, secure their borders, and fight terrorism in their own regions is the best way to prevent them from becoming failed states and safe havens for ISIS. It would be a tangible way for NATO to address the root causes of the migration crisis and homegrown terrorism in Allied countries. It would also reduce opportunities for Russian meddling. In many areas, such as North Africa, defense capacity building could be done in partnership with the European Union. It makes no sense to compete with one another, when there is more than enough work to go around for both organizations.

Defending our Societies and Countering Russian Disinformation

Russian interference in the United States presidential election last year and its similar efforts to influence the outcome of European elections call for a strong response at the national level, but there is also a role for NATO and the EU as well.

Nationally, we need to ensure the integrity of our election processes and institutions against cyber-attacks and foreign manipulation; we should devote additional resources to detecting and analyzing Russian propaganda and influence operations;

we should work with social media platforms to label or take down false stories before the go viral; and we should expand radio, television and internet broadcasting aimed at debunking disinformation and "fake news." We shouldn't fight propaganda with propaganda, however, but project a positive narrative, one that conveys what the West stands for, to our own publics and to Russian-speaking audiences.

Multilaterally, we should urge our NATO allies to support a bigger Alliance role in countering influence operations, disinformation and "active measures" by Russia. These are not traditionally problems within NATO's mandate, but defending our societies is just as important as defending our borders. Here too, closer collaboration between NATO and the EU would make sense—in countering propaganda and disinformation, in sharing intelligence about cyber and other asymmetric threats, and in conducting joint exercises to ensure that "little green men" are not able to do to our countries what they did to Ukraine. I hope the Trump Administration will give its full support to the development of an integrated NATO–EU strategy for countering hybrid warfare, building on the Joint Declaration by NATO and EU leaders issued in Warsaw.

Principled Engagement with Russia . . . starting with the Ukraine crisis

The last, and most challenging, piece of a new political strategy for the United States and its Allies is how to engage with Russia, even as we seek to deter and counter the multiple threats it poses. Relations with Moscow are at their lowest point in decades, and President Trump is certainly right in wanting to explore possibilities to reduce the risk of conflict, lower tensions and find areas for mutually beneficial cooperation. But it is essential that any engagement with Russia be based on a unified approach with our democratic allies, one that is consistent with our shared values and principles. Most importantly, engagement should address head-on the fundamental reason why relations have deteriorated in the first place—Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its violation of the rules that have kept the peace in Europe in the decades since the end of World War II.

Recently, Russia has increased its military and political pressure on the ground in Eastern Ukraine while using multiple levers to undermine and discredit the Ukrainian Government and its policies of reform. The Minsk process, led by Germany and France, has been useful in preventing a further deterioration of the situation, but does not provide sufficient leverage to induce Russia to reconsider its approach and withdraw its forces and its proxies from the occupied territories. Stronger, high-level United States diplomatic engagement, working in close coordination with Kyiv, Berlin and Paris, may be necessary to achieve real progress and avoid another intractable frozen conflict. Time is of the essence.

If the Trump Administration wants to pursue improved relations with Russia, solving the conflict in Eastern Ukraine should be the litmus test and the essential first step. Any "bargain" with Moscow should be contingent on full implementation of the Minsk agreements and restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over the Donbas, including control of its international borders. Anything less would reward Russian aggression and only embolden Putin to further destabilize his neighbors. Trading away Ukraine's sovereignty and independence in return for greater cooperation against ISIS would be a devil's bargain, and it would ultimately fail: the 45 million people of Ukraine will not quietly accept being consigned to a Russian "sphere of influence." Indeed, if Putin remains intransigent, we and our Allies should be prepared to increase the pressure on Russia even further by tightening sanctions and stepping up military and economic assistance to Ukraine.

CHALLENGES TO TRANSATLANTIC UNITY

Pursuing a strategy along the lines suggested above would provide the foundation for engaging Russia in a dialogue that upholds our values and restores the credibility of the international rules-based order. But as noted previously, success depends on Western unity and resolve. That unity is being tested not just by external challenges like Russia and ISIS; it is also threatened from within.

NATO has not been seriously affected by Brexit or the refugee crisis, but Alliance cohesion and solidarity could be challenged in several ways: by a failure of Allies to follow-through on rectifying the imbalance in defense spending; or by an inability to maintain the balance in addressing threats from the East and the South that is essential to Allied cohesion. The latest, and perhaps the most serious, challenge comes from a Turkey that seems to be drifting away from Western values and developing closer links with Moscow. As in the past, U.S. leadership will be essential in holding NATO together and ensuring that decision-making by consensus is not paralyzed.

For its part, the European Union will be increasingly preoccupied by negotiations over the terms of Brexit, while struggling to manage popular dissatisfaction over il-

legal migration and feeble economic growth. The perception that the Trump Administration is skeptical about the whole European project could exacerbate internal divisions within Europe and provide openings for Russian mischief-making. The United States needs to demonstrate, in word and deed, that it supports a strong, united Europe as an indispensable partner in dealing with Russia and other challenges, even as we work to overcome differences over trade and refugee policy.

Chairman MCCAIN. Thank you, Ambassador.

General Breedlove and Ambassador Burns, Ambassador Vershbow just mentioned the need to provide lethal defensive weapons to Ukraine. Do you agree with that, Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. If Russia continues its aggression in eastern Ukraine or stimulates another significant escalation of fighting, I do.

I think that what is important, though, is—all of us I think emphasized the significance of alliance unity and to make sure that we are working these issues with our key NATO partners as well, as well as with the EU, because we want to just keep our eye on the importance of sustaining sanctions as well, the economic sanctions that exist, until there is full implementation of Minsk.

Chairman MCCAIN. Would you not agree that from a morale purposes alone, much less capability, that it would be helpful to give lethal defensive weapons to Ukrainians?

Ambassador BURNS. I think it would, again especially in the face of an escalation of Russian-inspired fighting in eastern Ukraine.

Again, the only thing I would emphasize is the importance of very close consultation with our allies so that this does not become a contentious source of debate and an opportunity for Putin to drive wedges between us and our NATO and EU allies. That is all.

Chairman MCCAIN. Good point.

General Breedlove?

General BREEDLOVE. Sir, I believe that every nation has a right to defend itself, and my recommendation on this has not changed since when I was in my previous capacity and I do support that.

Chairman MCCAIN. Ambassador Vershbow, there is a little country called Montenegro. There are only 650,000 people there. As of February, 23 of the 28 member states approved the accession of Montenegro into NATO. Why is the accession of Montenegro so important, and why does Russia oppose the accession of such a small country?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the number is now up to 25, and I hope the U.S. will join the ranks of those who have ratified.

I think Montenegro's accession is important, in part, as a matter of principle that since the end of the Cold War, we have taken the position, together with our allies, that countries should be able to seek membership in NATO if they can meet the criteria and contribute to stability in their region and in Europe at large. We put them through a lot of rigorous reforms and defense improvements to meet those criteria. Montenegro did what we expected of them.

I think it also is a contribution to stability in the western Balkans, which is still unfinished business. We still see internal divisions in Bosnia. We still see problems now in Macedonia. So I think setting an example that countries that do do their homework, meet the criteria, contribute to stability in their neighborhood can

become members of NATO, even if they do not bring a huge amount of defense capability to the Alliance.

Russia opposes this because they I think are trying to draw a red line in the face of any further NATO enlargement. They are most concerned about Ukraine and Georgia, but I think they see the Balkans as an area of traditional influence for Russia, and they are using all kinds of means, including the coup that I mentioned, to detail Montenegro's accession even at this late stage of the process.

Chairman MCCAIN. Even to the point where they tried to orchestrate a coup to overthrow the democratically elected government.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Indeed, and even Serbia, which is ambivalent about NATO, I think was quite alarmed that their territory was used to hatch a plot against a neighboring state that they consider a friend and not an enemy.

Chairman MCCAIN. Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. No. I agree absolutely. I think it is important for the United States to follow through and join our other NATO allies in approving Montenegro's accession.

Chairman MCCAIN. Some of us believe, General Breedlove, that Vladimir Putin may test us more by further misbehavior in Ukraine. If that happens, which there are some indications of that already, what should be our response?

General BREEDLOVE. Chairman, thank you.

An axiom remains from my childhood behavior with my father, and that is we should not reward bad behavior. I believe that we should better equip Ukraine to meet those challenges.

I think Ambassador Burns made a very important point too. We need to work with our allies to bring them along with us to the same conclusion and set its support. I have offered thoughts in the past about defensive weaponry and ways that we can help Ukraine to have more resiliency in the face of this tough pressure, and I think those are all still very valid.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your outstanding testimony. Very insightful and extremely timely.

One issue I think we all agree upon is that a military response is necessary, strengthening NATO—and I joined the chairman with his leadership in advocating for providing defensive weapons to Ukraine several years ago. That is necessary but not sufficient. What we also require is an economic and geopolitical strategy.

I go to some of the points that were raised by all of the panelists. It seems to me that as Ambassador Vershbow pointed out, the Ukraine is a key test of our resolve. There it is not just defensive weapons, it is significant aid for political capacity building, anticorruption efforts, diversifying the energy from Russian supply exclusively to non-Russian supply. That calls for an all-of-government approach and significant resources. Perhaps the analogy is after World War II, it just was not lots and lots of U.S. soldiers and airmen, but it was the Marshall Plan that helped. Although that might be out of our scope at the moment, we have to make significant commitments beyond just military support.

The point again that the Ambassador made about the weaknesses or the perception in Europe of disarray, EU under pressure,

Brexit. It is alarming when we have American voices sort of cheering on Brexit, cheering on sort of some elements that would encourage the dismemberment of the EU rather than its strengthening.

So I would ask all of you just to comment in general about this notion of necessary military support, but we have to go the extra step across our entire government. General Breedlove?

General BREEDLOVE. Sir, I fully agree, and what we talk about occasionally is using all the elements of our Nation's power. We use a simple model in the military. We are taught DIME, diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. Certainly Russia uses all of those tools in putting pressure on Ukraine, and our not only the United States, but the Western response should contain all of those.

As you mentioned, considering how we can help nations like Ukraine who are under pressure in that more broad front, I completely agree that the answer does not only lie in the military.

Senator REED. Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. No. I absolutely agree. I think that kind of a comprehensive strategy is essential, and I would just add two points, I think one kind of strategic and more specific to some parts of Europe.

The strategic point is that I think now more than ever, it is important for the United States to invest in our transatlantic relationships at a moment when our partners and our allies in Europe are under pressure almost any place you look on the geographic compass from the west, the issue of Brexit; from the south, whether it is terrorism or migration flows; and from the east, a resurgent Russia. It is very important for us to invest in that relationship and recognize its significance to almost anything the United States wants to achieve in the world.

The second and more specific comment has to do with what you said about Ukraine and our earlier conversation about the Balkans. I think what is at stake in Ukraine is enormously important for the United States and for our European allies. It is partly about security and defense, but it is also partly, just as you said, Senator Reed, about the economic and political health of Ukraine. It is true the Ukrainian leadership has to do its own part and has to climb out of a hole, which in part is self-inflected in terms of corruption over the years. But you now have a leadership that is beginning to do that, and we need the kind of sustained focus and resources from the United States, from Europe that is going to help Ukrainians to help themselves at this critical moment. I think the same is true in the Balkans where we have to keep our eye on the ball as well.

Senator REED. Ambassador Vershbow?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Thank you.

I would agree with my colleagues that supporting Ukraine and all of Russia's neighbors that are targeted by Putin for his sphere of influence deserve our support, and that is a comprehensive effort, military, political, economic, helping them fight corruption. And, of course, Ukraine in the last three years, despite having to fight an undeclared war in its eastern provinces, has made more progress on reform than in the previous 20-plus years since independence in 1991. A lot of the support they are getting for that ef-

fort is coming from our European partners. So it is not just the U.S. that is trying to help them shore up their security, their resilience, their economy and to fight corruption, which is the real big challenge that they face.

So the cuts in State Department resources for these sorts of programs are misguided. This is not charity, but it is investing in greater stability and security in Europe because a more resilient and secure Ukraine is really the best response to Putin's aggression. The more that Ukraine succeeds in establishing a democratic society with a robust economy, the more it will send a signal to the people of Russia that the kind of system that they are stuck with under President Putin is less desirable than going back to the path of openness, reform, and better relations with the West at the same time.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Wicker?

Senator WICKER. Well, I appreciate the excellent testimony, and I agree that the more Ukraine succeeds, the better off it is for us in the United States and the West, and I think it is one of the most profoundly important issues that we face in the next year or two.

Let me see if I have discovered a little bit of a distance between our witnesses today. Ambassador Burns, you took most of your testimony from an article that you previously wrote in the *New York Times*. You have four steps, and then you went beyond that in your oral testimony today to mention that, nevertheless, in spite of everything Russia has done and all of our problems, there are still areas of cooperation that we could reach.

So would you restate that and be more specific? Then I will ask General Breedlove and the Ambassador to respond to this idea that you have.

Ambassador BURNS. Sure, I would be glad to, Senator. My only point is that I think cold-bloodedly from the point of view of not only American interests but Russian interests as well and wider international interests, it is important for us to continue to engage with Russia on issues like the safety and security of nuclear materials, the danger of nuclear terrorism, the danger of nuclear and radiological materials getting in the wrong hands. Those are issues where I think the United States and Russia, precisely because of our history and our nuclear arsenals and our capability, really do have unique responsibilities.

I think as General Breedlove said, I think it is also important for us, even as we did at the worst moments of tension in the Cold War, to sustain a habit of military-to-military communication. So we are avoiding inadvertent collisions whether it is over the Baltic States or in the Middle East or elsewhere. I think there is practical in that for us, whatever ever our profound differences with Russia on many other issues.

Senator WICKER. General Breedlove, are you on the same page there?

General BREEDLOVE. Yes, Senator. There is no air between us and those conversations. I would add things like transparency and exercises. Just yesterday, another major SNAP exercise in Crimea aimed at destabilizing Kyiv. Loose nuclear materials. Senator

Nunn is working on that hard. It is a place where we can absolutely find, I think, some common ground, and believe in CT [counter-terrorism] in many ways. They are as worried about what is coming out of Afghanistan and the Balkans as we are. So I do believe, again, reestablishing trust in an incremental way, we need to sit down and work on these things.

Senator WICKER. Ambassador Vershbow, you are on the same page there?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Yes, Senator. I would agree that even with these fundamental differences, we have to try to manage the relationship, as Ambassador Burns said. I think, in the short term, maybe the most we can do, which is try to reduce the risks of some accidental incident escalating out of control, trying to persuade the Russians not to give their pilots the freedom to provoke our ships and surveillance planes, more transparency, bringing more observers to exercise it so we do not miscalculate in a crisis.

There may be geopolitical issues where we could try to cooperate with Russia although, even as we have heard, fighting ISIS is not as clear as it might seam, but the Russians really have the same objectives in Syria or other parts of the Middle East as we do. But we should test Putin on whether he is actually able to contribute something real, and we do not have to trade the sovereignty of Ukraine in order to get him to cooperate on ISIS. If he wants to do that, he should do it on its merits.

Senator WICKER. Okay. Thank you very much.

Will one of you comment or all of you comment on the value of OSCE [Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe] in all of this? OSCE is a 57-nation group. The United States and Canada are members. It is consensus-based, and it has been challenged in recent years by a far more aggressive Russia. The organization's highest profile engagement remains the fielding of an 1,100-person special monitoring mission to Ukraine, an unarmed civilian mission that serves as the international community's eyes and ears in the conflict zone. Of course, there are many other duties of OSCE. But what value should we place on OSCE's continuing role in the European security architecture? Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. Yes, I am glad to start, Senator.

I guess I would say for all the limitations of the OSCE as a big, sprawling institution, as you described, I think it has continuing value, first because it embodies some of the core values that we share with our European allies and partners in terms of sovereignty of states, you know, the inviolability of borders so that——

Senator WICKER. Those Helsinki principles.

Ambassador BURNS. Right, so that big states do not just get to grab parts of smaller states just because they can, and so for all the limitations of the institution, I think its core value is because it really does embody the Helsinki principles, and it is important for us to continue to invest in that. It also does good work in terms of the monitoring function that you described in Ukraine and elsewhere.

Senator WICKER. General?

General BREEDLOVE. Senator, if I could just add a much more tactical—and I am sorry for that—observation. There are limits and I could not agree with that more. But occasionally with some

of the fake news that was created in the Donbas and other places as Russia invaded, even though OSCE was challenged in it, often it was the source of the real news of what was actually going on on the ground. Again, it has challenges but it also provides some pretty good input for us occasionally.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I would agree that OSCE still has value, particularly because of the norms and values that it upholds, even though the Russians are violating a lot of those right now. But it gives us a basis on which to challenge their misbehavior.

Its practical value may have declined because the Russians have sort of turned against OSCE. They do not really like its efforts to promote free elections and transparency in the political processes since that is the antithesis of what their system now represents.

The special monitoring mission in Ukraine I think has been very courageous in trying to make the disengagement work even half well. But even as the Russians authorize missions like that, they shoot down the UAVs that have been purchased by that mission. They threaten some of the monitors. They have denied them access to sensitive areas when they are bringing lots of weaponry. So OSCE is challenged, but I do not see any alternative right now in trying to manage a conflict like in eastern Ukraine.

Senator WICKER. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Shaheen?

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here this morning.

Ambassador Vershbow, you talked about the importance of shoring up the European unity, and NATO is clearly one of our ways to do that, our support for NATO. Do we think that Europeans or NATO members will be concerned when they hear the report that came out this morning that Secretary of State Tillerson is going to skip the next NATO meeting to head to Russia?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Well, Senator, I think there is some concern about that. I think hopefully there will be other ways for him to engage at an early opportunity with his counterparts from the NATO countries. Many of them are coming to Washington in a few weeks for a counter-ISIS ministerial meeting. But still, I would say yes—I am a NATO veteran and NATO junky—that the presence of the U.S. Secretary of State, particularly his first opportunity to join his counterparts at a ministerial, is something that should not be passed up, especially when we face so many challenges. But I think the more basic question is consulting first with your allies before you engage with the Russians. So hopefully there will be other ways that he can do that.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you.

General Breedlove, actually I think all of you referenced the concern about our nuclear arsenals, both ours and Russia's, and the potential for reducing those arsenals. I thought your idea of a summit was particularly interesting, General Breedlove.

What kind of message does it send as we are trying to think about how we reduce the nuclear threat when we have the President of the United States talking about an arms race and saying, "Let it be an arms race," so committing to an arms race against Russia?

General BREEDLOVE. Ma'am, if I could just talk to the basics a little bit. Clearly we have a Russia that has built the discussion of use of nuclear weapons into its escalate to deescalate doctrine. It speaks that often and writes often that nuclear weapons are a logical extension of conventional warfare, things that we would not want to be on the table.

I think the appropriate response from us and our NATO allies is to remain creditable and ready and to have the policy in order to present a clear affront to those thoughts from Russia. What I thought we should do and what we have done I think well in the past in NATO is to try to completely convince that we are ready to respond if required, and I think that is the policy into the future.

Senator SHAHEEN. What should we be thinking about in terms of Russia's violations of the INF Treaty?

General BREEDLOVE. Ma'am, my message on this has not changed. We cannot let that go unchallenged. I tell you I have great confidence in our new Secretary of Defense and in Joe Dunford, who I have worked with before. My guess is that they will modify or come out with a new approach.

But in the past, I think our former Secretary Ash Carter testified in front of this committee and laid out a framework, which I completely agreed with. I think that we have not really started down that framework, and we either should or allow our new leaders to modify and put theirs out.

But the bottom line is, again, we cannot let bad behavior go unchallenged. This was not done by accident and we need to respond.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. I share that view.

Last December, we had folks testifying in response to what we then learned was an emerging story about the Russian cyber attack on our elections. One of the points that was made was that Russia is looking at not just a military buildup, not just pushing the envelope in eastern Europe in terms of its invasion of Ukraine, but it is also looking at a huge propaganda buildup in terms of support for RT and its other channels of communication. It is also looking at disrupting Western elections as part of a deliberate strategy to undermine the West.

Ambassador Burns, can you comment on that—you were clear that you think we ought to respond to Russia's actions—on what else we should be thinking about as we look at the French and German elections upcoming? I am out of time, so maybe you could quickly respond.

Ambassador BURNS. I will be very brief.

I mean, I absolutely agree with you on the seriousness of not only of the Russian hacking of our recent elections, but also what is at stake across the European elections this year as well. I think this is part of a deliberate strategy on the part of Russia. I think we are in the process not only of taking steps ourselves which were announced by the last administration, which are important to sustain the investigations to get to the bottom of this remain extremely important. Then I think working with our allies to shore up their own capacity to resist this kind of disruption is also very important this year.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you. Thank you all.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Ernst.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Gentlemen, thank you very much for being with us today and your continued service to our country, as well as your enduring commitment to forwarding or advancing our shared interests with the people of Europe. I do think that that is very, very important, and in the face of the resurgent Russian threat, I think we can all agree that America needs your leadership as well and expertise in these areas. So thank you for being here.

I am going to go back just to comment about Ukraine. Congress gave the President authority to give lethal assistance to Ukraine, and just last month, I joined a number of my Senate colleagues in a letter to President Trump asking him to expedite the use of that authority. I do think that that is very important. We should honor our commitment to Ukraine and utilize lethal assistance to them.

Now, General Breedlove, we have had a discussion about our initiatives in Europe before. I believe that physical presence is oftentimes the best reassurance, and as part of the European Deterrence Initiative and Operation Atlantic Resolve, Congress authorized $3.4 billion to enhance American presence in the region. If you could, just describe to us what types of presence that we might need, what certain troop levels, what types of forces. Does that include the National Guard or Reserve, naval forces, et cetera? And then also maybe, General, if you could just let me know whether you think rotational forces are appropriate or whether we need to have a more permanent presence.

General BREEDLOVE. Thank you, Senator. I could talk a long time. I will try to be as brief as I can but get to your questions.

The $3.4 billion—and first of all, may I thank this committee and others who have worked on these ERI [European Reassurance Initiative] initiatives across the last two years. They are vital. Twenty years as the chairman called of hugging the bear. We changed our orientation in Europe, and I believe it is now absolutely vital that we reevaluate since we do not have that strategic partner that we looked to have in the past.

The $3.4 billion does, as did the previous years, a broad set of things from improving infrastructure, financing rotational exercises and forces, and actually moving some force to Europe. It is a broad approach, and I think that is right and proper because we do need to relook at how we can reinforce Europe. We are not in the practice anymore of arriving with ships, transloading rail cars, et cetera, and we need to get back to that.

Ma'am, I have testified in front of this committee before that I believe our presence in Europe is not yet appropriate. I used to say it is the road through Warsaw not to Warsaw, meaning the agreements that we made in the Warsaw Summit were the next logical step but probably not the last step.

I have also not changed my mind that I believe actual presence, permanent presence——

Senator ERNST. Permanent presence.

General BREEDLOVE.—is the best answer. But I believe we are realistic in that that may not be a future that we can see. We need to have the appropriate balance of permanent forward forces, rotational forces, and prepositioned materials so that we can rapidly reinforce, prepositioned materials that our great Guard and Reserve

forces can rotate on, et cetera. So I believe it is a balance as the way to get to best solution that we can afford and move forward with in the future.

Senator ERNST. Very good. I appreciate that.

Ambassador Burns, you have stated that we must reassure our European allies of our absolute commitment to NATO. I agree with that. I also think we need to reassure our non-NATO countries that are also good friends to the United States, and that is why I am proud of the Iowa State Partnership Program. We are engaged with Kosovo. That is why I co-chair the Senate Albanian Issues Caucus.

How else can we reassure countries in the Balkans and Caucasus, those who aspire to join NATO, that they have our support?

Ambassador BURNS. I am sure Ambassador Vershbow can add to this as well. But as you well know, there are a number of NATO programs already that we work with partner countries, and I think it is important to sustain those.

A lot of this is also just diplomatic attention as well in the Caucasus, even as far afield as Central Asia, as well as in the Balkans, the day in/day out effort to pay attention, to be able to sustain assistance programs, not just in the security area but in other areas as well, that are a tangible demonstration of our commitment to the health of those societies at a moment when, just as you said, Senator, I think the Russians are busily trying to undermine prospects for the future of many of those societies.

Senator ERNST. Ambassador, did you have any further comment?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I agree with that. I think much more vigorous diplomatic engagement by the United States is needed because things are unraveling internally in some of the countries, Macedonia, Bosnia in particular. The situation between Kosovo and Serbia is also deteriorating, and all of this is because the Russians are throwing a lot of salt in the wounds and trying to exploit historic tensions and grievances.

The European Union spends a lot, and they are actively engaged diplomatically, but I think the countries in the region still look to the U.S. because of our role in ending the wars in the 1990s. I think strong United States leadership, working with the Europeans, is essential to hold off the Russian meddling and help countries like Macedonia finally get back on the path of European integration, NATO membership, which they have been struggling with for more than a decade and a half.

Senator ERNST. Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Warren?

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

Right now, everybody knows that the American intelligence community has concluded that the Russians conducted successful cyber attacks against the United States last year in order to influence our election. But people may not know that we are not Russia's only target. A decade ago, some of NATO's Baltic States also endured cyber attacks, which were believed to have originated in Russia.

Now, in 2014, NATO updated its cyber defense policy to clarify that cyber attacks are covered by article 5, NATO's collective defense clause, meaning an attack on one is viewed as an attack on all. But the Alliance has not publicly clarified the threshold at which a cyber attack would trigger article 5 or describe any of the types of responses that it might employ.

So, General Breedlove, I want to thank you for your work strengthening the NATO alliance. But I want to focus in this particular area. Do you think the Russians are taking advantage of NATO's apparent reluctance to determine when a cyber intrusion is an armed attack and to make it clear when we will respond?

General BREEDLOVE. Senator, thank you for the question, and the thrust of your question I think is spot on in that we need to better understand and better articulate to the world possibly where this all stands.

I think this is good new/bad news, and I will try to be short. The good news is that three days before I started my—or three days after I started my term as the SACEUR was the first doctrine signed by NATO. So literally in the last three and a half years, we have come a long way. Now NATO does have some policy and doctrine and a wonderful center at Talinn, Estonia, if you have not been there, to fight this, one of the real capabilities of NATO. That is the good news. We have come a long way.

Senator WARREN. Right, and the bad news?

General BREEDLOVE. The bad news is there still is, as you have correctly pointed out, some definitive things that need to be laid out and we are slow getting to those.

Senator WARREN. Do you want to say a word about what those are?

General BREEDLOVE. Well, ma'am, I have been critical that we do not have an offensive policy in NATO. It is completely defensive. As a fighter pilot, I think the best offense is a missile in the air headed in the other direction.

Senator WARREN. All right. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Russia will undoubtedly continue to use cyber tools to try to interfere with and destabilize our NATO allies. If we are ever going to deter that behavior, then we need to strengthen the Alliance's capabilities and make clear what our response will be both within the NATO alliance and make that clear to the Russians.

I have one other question I want to ask about, and that is the Syrian civil war started six years ago this month, and the humanitarian crisis there has pushed massive numbers of refugees to Europe. I saw some of this up close a couple of years ago when I visited a refugee intake center in Greece and a refugee resettlement center in Germany. I met with refugees who had risked their lives on long and dangerous journeys from many different countries.

European countries have struggled to deal with this surge. Thousands of refugees remain stuck in camps and detention centers. This is totally unsustainable.

Ambassador Burns, setting aside the obvious need to try to get to the root causes of the crisis, what steps beyond providing for humanitarian aid and supporting maritime search and rescue efforts

should the United States take to enhance Europe's efforts to absorb refugees and migrants?

Ambassador BURNS. That is a really difficult question, as you know, Senator. I mean, I think just the sheer magnitude of the humanitarian problem is going to require continued expenditure of resources and the resources of our European partners for some time to come, and that is where some of the foreign assistance cuts that appear in the administration's budget I think are really, really troublesome.

You are right. The core challenge is to move towards some kind of political transition in Syria because of the simple reality that unless the 70 percent of the population of Syria that is Sunni Arab feel a stake in their future, Sunni extremist groups, whether it is ISIS or some other acronym, are going to have fertile soil in which to destabilize Syria and create more human suffering.

Senator WARREN. So let me ask about that. Is it helpful or harmful if the United States dramatically reduces its admission of refugees and migrants?

Ambassador BURNS. I think it is undoubtedly harmful, and I am entirely aware of the importance of ensuring the security of American citizens in our own society. I am very familiar with the processes that are employed to deal with Syrian refugees. They are as strict and comprehensive as any that I have seen. But a lot of this has to do with the leadership we demonstrate in the world, and when we are moving in a different direction than a lot of our European allies and partners are, it does send a very complicated signal.

Senator WARREN. I appreciate your point on this because it seems to me that for our security, for Europe's security, and because we are a decent and compassionate people, that we need to help Europe manage the huge flow of refugees. But as you say, we also need to lead by example here. The United States has always been a beacon of hope for people around the world, refugees and other troubled groups, and the last thing we should be doing is continuing to push for illegal Muslim bans that betray our values and our Constitution and do nothing to keep us safe.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Cotton?

Senator COTTON. Thank you, gentlemen, for appearing today and for your many years of long service to our country. You have all been around the block once or twice in Europe and Russia.

I know someone else who has been around the block once or twice with them is Bob Gates. In his first memoir of his time at the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], he writes of the many specific policy questions that, in particular, President Carter and President Reagan faced in places like Central America and sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and pushing back against Soviet aggression. But he puts as much or more weight on what he refers to as the correlation of forces, long-term trends that set the relative power of the United States against then the Soviet Union and today Russia.

So he talks, for instance, about Jimmy Carter championing human rights within the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact which undermined the legitimacy of their regimes, his down payment on

a defense buildup after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and in particular, Ronald Reagan's efforts to rebuild our military to expand our nuclear forces to deploy INF forces to Europe to counteract the Soviet Union's deployment, then ultimately the strategic defense initiative, which he said kind of culminated all of the trends the Soviet leaders had feared for so long, you know, a growing Western economy, technological advantages, military strength. That, while not the cause of the ultimate downfall of the Soviet Union, it was kind of the ultimate symbol of what the Soviet Union had feared for so long.

I would just like to get your thoughts just going down the row on how important, on the one hand, those specific bilateral or policy questions are today—you might say Ukraine or Georgia or what have you—versus the broader correlation of forces between the United States and Russia. General Breedlove?

General BREEDLOVE. Senator, I will probably disappoint because I do not think you can discount either. I think they are both incredibly important. As we talked a little bit about earlier, I think that our Nation's power is not just its military. It is broader than that. It is our values, our diplomatic position in the world, the fact that we try to get the right message out in our information campaigns. We need a strong military, and of course, our economy is incredibly important.

On the strictly military side, I obviously wore the cloth of our Nation for 39 years, and I believe that we need to remain strong and credible and be seen as strong and credible in the world. I see that as a specific line of endeavor in our future.

Senator COTTON. Ambassador Burns?

Ambassador BURNS. No. I absolutely agree. I mean, I think leverage is essential in diplomacy especially in dealing with adversarial relationships like the United States-Russia relationship. I think that is why it is especially important to invest in our alliance system as well because that is what sets us apart from Russia and China and other major powers. I think that continued focus on especially our transatlantic alliance is extremely important in that correlation of forces.

Senator COTTON. Ambassador Vershbow?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Just to echo my colleagues, I agree we need to look at American power in the broadest sense of the word, military, political, economic, and our moral power, the values that we represent.

As Bill Burns just said, having democratic allies who share those values and are prepared to share risks with us is a real asset for us in countering the Russian threat and other threats around the world. So we have to strictly think of the correlation of forces in a broad sense and try to use our allies as force multipliers in dealing with threats that we see, particularly the challenge from Russia with all its different dimensions.

So in that sense, lots of lessons can be drawn from the experience of the late Cold War that you described. Peace through strength may be a cliche but it still is valid in today's world.

Senator COTTON. To our two Ambassadors, Bob Gates described George Shultz and his role in the 1980s, someone who often came in for criticism from some of his fellow cabinet members of perhaps

being too soft or conciliatory towards Russia, even though he supported many of these issues that we have described as the correlation of forces like the deployment of INF forces to Europe but also encouraging Reagan and ultimately prevailing upon Reagan to proceed with various sets of talks or negotiations with Russia to maintain open lines of communications. Maybe most notably a few weeks after the KAL [Korean Air Lines] 007 shoot-down outside of Korea, George Shultz convinced the President that he should go forward with consultations in Europe with his Russian counterparts.

How important is it that we maintain such an open line of communication even while we resist and confront Russia and its aggression throughout Europe and the Middle East?

Ambassador BURNS. I think it is an essential part of a successful strategy. I mean, we need to be tough-minded on issues, just as you said, Senator. We need to be mindful of the importance of building our leverage, especially through our alliances. But we also ought not to be shy about engaging as well and being equally direct in those kinds of channels of communication as well so that we are managing a relationship that is inevitably going to be complicated. We are looking for those areas where we might be able coldbloodedly to cooperate, but we are able to push back in a lot of other areas as well.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Absolutely. As difficult as the Russians may be and as hostile as they may be in a lot of areas, we have to talk to them. We have to try to find ways to persuade them to change their policies or offer ways out of some of the impasses that we face.

I think that is why George Shultz was one of the most successful Secretaries of State—I had the honor of working with him for a few years—because he was very tough when we still needed to be tough with the Russians in the early 1980s, but when the changes began under Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, Shultz recognized there was an opportunity to begin to change the relationship to move away from Cold War confrontation, reduce nuclear weapons, and helped President Reagan seize those opportunities.

So we have to be alert to possible cracks in the facade that Putin projects. I personally am skeptical that there are that many opportunities out there, but if we can get past this current Ukraine crisis and use United States diplomatic leadership backed by real leverage, including the possibility of lethal assistance to Ukraine, if Putin does not play ball, we might be able to kind of get to a better place and then begin to rebuild step by step the kind of partnership that George Shultz was seeking in the late 1980s under President Reagan.

Senator COTTON. Thank you all.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Peters?

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you to each of our panelists for your leadership in this area over many years and for the discussion here today.

In my first question, I want to return back to an issue that has been discussed previously related to the cruise missile deployments in violation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Agreement, which I find very troubling, and from listening to the testimony of all

three of you, I think all of you agree with that. I think it is interesting and would like to have your comment that while the Russians are moving forward in violation of that treaty, on the one hand; on the other hand, when it comes to the START [Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty] treaty, they seem to be in compliance there. There is a disconnect between compliance with one treaty and another. I am wondering what is behind that. What do you think may account for that?

Actually, General Breedlove, you mentioned the Russian strategy to escalate to deescalate, which is a very troubling strategy. Is it perhaps related to that as to why they are deploying these cruise missiles?

General BREEDLOVE. I am going to defer, Senator, on the piece about the START to my more learned colleagues.

What I would like to do is maybe address your latter question and leave the other for them.

Senator PETERS. Right. Thank you.

General BREEDLOVE. I think there are multiple reasons why the Russians are fairly blatantly violating the INF. I think they have expressed for a long time displeasure with our deployment of missile defense into Europe. There are two sides to every story. While I do not agree with their position, I can understand that they believe they have told us and told us and told us, and now they are bringing some tougher tools to the table to try to address some of those issues.

Secondarily, I think that they know that this is a very divisive discussion inside of NATO, and I agree with my colleagues, who have both, I think, said that one of Mr. Putin's greatest desires is to bust up these Western organizations so that he can deal with Western nations individually vice with large organizations. So I do believe that they have several reasons that they are proceeding on the INF, and again, maybe I do not agree with those reasons, but we have to understand what they are thinking along those lines.

Senator PETERS. Ambassadors?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I think it is partly about missile defense that the Russians are violating the INF Treaty, but I think it more reflects a longstanding grievance that they have had that other countries in the world such as China, Pakistan have intermediate-range missiles which could reach Russia, and they have no missile of the same capability to deter and respond. It is sort of not a very convincing argument because they have their intercontinental systems which can be used in nuclear scenarios against those countries.

But I think they may also believe they can get away with this violation because of the ambiguity of some of the technologies involved and assessing what is the maximum range of a cruise missile compared to its overall weight and payload. So they may think that they can get away with cheating, and we cannot let that happen. So I think in terms of responding, we need to kind of first look at what is the enhanced threat that we face and find ways to neutralize that threat. It does not mean it is tit for tat. We may not need to violate the INF Treaty ourselves. There may be alternative systems, both defensive and offensive such as air-launched cruise

missiles deployed forward in Europe that could neutralize any military gains that the Russians could perceive from this violation.

But it does not bode well for long-term stability if they are prepared to cheat. The New START agreement is still being complied with. Let us hope that they do not violate that one too.

Ambassador BURNS. Senator, the only thing I would add is on your second question about escalate to deescalate, I agree with you on the seriousness with which we ought to view that issue because if Russian doctrine changes to the point we are faced with a conventional inferiority, you know, they are willing to resort to early use of battlefield nuclear weapons, that creates a whole new area of potential tension and instability. It is another of the reasons why we ought to be engaging with them in what used to be called strategic stability talks, first to try to get to the bottom of what it is that they have in mind and then, second, working with our allies to be very, very clear and blunt about our concerns about that and about the dangers of it.

Senator PETERS. Given that response, is it reasonable to think this weapon actually is more effective in that strategy, which is certainly very frightening, to escalate/deescalate? You are more likely to use a weapon, this cruise missile, than you would a strategic missile. Is that another reason why they would want to deploy it?

General BREEDLOVE. Senator, I think that is what they write about. It is another step and rung in the ladder of tools that they can use. Where we think more in terms of a nuclear threshold, they see it as another logical step.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, gentlemen.

Senator REED [presiding]. On behalf of Chairman McCain, let me recognize Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you, gentlemen, for not only your testimony today but your decades of public service, which I have had the opportunity to witness for a number of years. So it really has been exceptional. So I just want to commend you for that and your families, by the way.

Would you agree that one of the most strategically important advantages we have right now as the United States and have had really for generations is that we are an ally-rich nation and our adversaries or potential adversaries, Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, are ally-poor? Would you agree that that is a key strategic advantage the United States has?

Ambassador BURNS. Absolutely. I think it is among our greatest advantages and has been for decades.

Senator SULLIVAN. So you look at, like I mentioned, the Russians, the Chinese, the North Koreans, Iranians. Nobody wants to be on their team. Nobody is clamoring to be part of the—as matter of fact, they all look to be alliances with themselves just because they have so few other countries that are interested in actually teaming up with them.

So is it also true that Russia—I know is the focus of this hearing—but also China see as one of their goals to undermine these alliances, split us apart from our key long-term allies?

Ambassador BURNS. Absolutely.

Senator SULLIVAN. So I know it is early days in the Trump administration. I think we have a lot of cabinet members who understand this, but what do you think the Trump administration is doing right to strengthen alliances and push back on Russian attempts to undermine them, and where can they improve? I will open it up for all three of you gentlemen.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Well, Senator, first I would agree that we are very much advantaged by having networks of alliances in Europe and other parts of the world. The Russians, in particular, seem to alienate their neighbors. The only way they feel they can keep their neighbors under control is by keeping them weak and unstable. So that means in the long term that is a very unsustainable way to build relationships. So I think we have a natural advantage and we should not psych ourselves out.

But it is a little early to make——

Senator SULLIVAN. No. It is very early.

Ambassador VERSHBOW.—broad judgments about the new administration, but after some question marks that were raised about whether NATO is obsolete in the mind of President Trump, they have, I think, reassured allies that they still value NATO, value the transatlantic relationship, recognize that allies are contributing in Afghanistan and other operations.

But I think the jury is still out as to what kind of agenda will the Trump administration lay out for NATO. Where does it want NATO to evolve and take on new missions, new roles? I think there is more we could ask our allies to do through NATO, not just spending more money but doing more things to deal with the root causes of terrorism, of migration. So I look forward to what that agenda is.

I think sending messages to our east Asian allies. The Mattis trip, now the Tillerson trip I think have been very clear that those alliances with Korea and Japan will remain high priorities.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Ambassador.

Any other? General Breedlove, Ambassador Burns, what they can be doing better, what they are doing well now? It is a really important issue. Right? It is the key strategic issue. We have this great advantage. We need to double down on it not undermine it ourselves.

Ambassador BURNS. We do, and I think the honest answer is there is a lot of uncertainty right now on the part of our allies, notwithstanding the efforts of a number of the new cabinet principals to emphasize the commitment, but there is uncertainty, given things that were said during the campaign by President Trump and some of the signals coming out of the White House since then. It is really important I think to reassure our allies and partners. There are some good opportunities in the next few months with meetings in Europe.

Senator SULLIVAN. We can do that as well here. Right? At the U.S. Senate.

Ambassador BURNS. Absolutely, and I think the more that can be done like at the Munich security conference and other places, the better.

Senator SULLIVAN. Let me ask another question, just switching gears here, on the Arctic. You know, General Breedlove, you were

very aware and watched as the Russians engage in this massive military buildup in the Arctic. Many of us I think in a bipartisan way on this committee certainly were concerned that we did not have a strategy. We put in a provision in the NDAA two years ago to actually have a strategy. It is a little better than the lack of one that we previously had. We really did not have one.

General Mattis, in his confirmation hearing, has talked about the Arctic being key, strategic terrain, sea lanes, resources, and that Russia is aggressively taking action. In the new strategy, it talks about the importance of protecting sea lanes, resources through freedom of navigation operations, kind of like we have done in the South China Sea although not nearly enough.

General Breedlove, can you comment on this? More specifically, if Russia decided to deny access to vital United States resources in the region or international sea lanes, shipping lanes in the Arctic, do we have any capability whatsoever to conduct a surface FONOP [Freedom of Navigation Exercises] to challenge that? What should we be doing about that?

General BREEDLOVE. Senator, thank you. I understand the question. Let me just reframe a minute.

We ought to try to make the Arctic an opportunity. We are early in this conversation. We ought to make it an opportunity and not a place of competition. But we need to, with a very wary eye, look at the actions that you have mentioned that Russia is taking in the north. Our abilities as are other nations' and, frankly, Russia's abilities to operate in the north are still challenging. This is a tough place to be. But what we do see as a Russia moving out to establish capability there—that could be used appropriately or nefariously. I believe this and I have spoken before that we need to look at our capabilities. Are they deep? Do we have the right ones? I think there is work to be done there.

Senator SULLIVAN. Can we conduct a FONOP there? Is the answer not no? It is not even close.

General BREEDLOVE. If I understand, I think we can but realizing that we would have to be there at the right time of the year and the right time of conditions. We do not have some of the capabilities we need to operate up there when the ice is challenging.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAIN [presiding]. Senator King?

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Breedlove, in your testimony, you touched upon a question that I think is of surpassing importance in the situation that we are in now. This discussion today has been about high-level strategy and deployment and those kinds of things. You mentioned the danger of confusion, misunderstanding, and accidental war. I think one of the most profound books about foreign policy, which I recently reread, is "The Guns of August." We stumbled into World War I. I think every policymaker should read that book. It is eerily prescient of the situation we are in now.

Number one—and Senator Cotton mentioned this—it seems to me that given the danger of a Russian pilot inadvertently hitting a ship instead of buzzing it or a Chinese pilot in the South China Sea doing the same and the escalation from there, to me that cries out for better communication and open lines. My understanding is

that that has somewhat diminished both on the military-to-military level and at the highest level. Your thoughts? Any of you? General Breedlove?

General BREEDLOVE. May I modify the scenario and tell you what worries me? I really believe the pilots are good enough not to hit one of our aircraft. I am often asked about this scenario. What worries me and what worries others are in one of these flybys, if the Russian aircraft just simply has a mechanical malfunction and hits the water, what is going to happen? Are we going to be blamed? Will be used as a simple tool to create a catastrophe, et cetera, et cetera? Frankly, our Aegis cruisers and destroyers are very capable of defending themselves against Russian aircraft. I do not worry about that piece. But I worry about the accident that then escalates into something wholly unintended.

Senator KING. Exactly. Is it not critical in that piece to have open lines of communications?

General BREEDLOVE. Sir, we do have some but they are not adequate. We still have what we call INCSEA, incidents at sea, which actually have expanded to incidents at sea, land, and air in some of those conversations. We have mechanisms, but I believe we need to be more aggressive about those conversations so we do not stumble.

Senator KING. Let me turn it just slightly. One of the problems is that what we view as defensive, the other side can view as provocative, and how you hit the right point—in other words, stationing troops in Poland, moving equipment into preposition in Eastern Europe. We view that as defensive. Is it possible that that could lead to an escalation if the Russians view that as an aggressive act? I am trying to think through the scenarios here that could lead to a dangerous result.

Ambassador Burns, your thoughts.

Ambassador BURNS. I think your question is a very important one, Senator. I think there is a real risk in letting channels of communication atrophy. They are not a favor to the Russians to be able to communicate at all sorts of different levels, whether it is military-to-military, as General Breedlove described, or at diplomatic levels or at higher levels as well. I think there is a cold-blooded self-interest in trying to ensure that we understand one another clearly. It does not mean that we are going to overcome Russian concerns about what they might see to be the aggressive intent of some of our deployments. But at least I think we will have a little bit clearer understanding and we will be able to avoid some of what could be inadvertent collisions, whether physical or political.

Senator KING. Let me talk a bit about what I call the cheap war, the war that has been waged over the last several years, the last election here, now in France, now in Germany. I did a quick calculation. For the price of one F–35, the Russians can deploy 4,000 hackers and trolls, and they have been remarkably successful at a very low price.

Ambassador Vershbow, your thoughts about what I consider really a new form of warfare that is unfolding in front of our eyes.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I absolutely agree. I call it political aggression rather than military aggression against our societies, and it is a lot cheaper than waging war. They probably could buy more

than 4,000 hackers with the price of an F–35. So we cannot sort of count on the Russians depleting their resources through their aggressive behavior the way they did in the Cold War.

Senator KING. The arms race economics does not work in this situation.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. No. We need, first of all, to make sure that we can deny them the ability to do it as effectively as they did during our election in terms of hardening our systems, being more vigilant about fake news, taking down the false stories quickly before they go viral.

Senator KING. But all of those are defensive. I am running out of time, but we need a cyber doctrine in connection with our Western allies that involves an offensive capability as well, do we not?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. Well, we may not want to do an exact tit for tat in this field, but it would be more aggressive than pushing our values, pushing our narrative because Putin is worried about a democratic alternative gaining ground again in Russia. I do not think we should give up on our support for civil society, for independent media, supporting emigre media sites that try to push objective information into Russia, this new current time channel that the Broadcasting Board of Governors is launching to affect the opinions of Russian speakers both in Russia and on the borderlands. All these things are very important to show that we are not going to fail to compete in this political battle.

Senator KING. Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAIN. Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to all the witnesses for your testimony.

Beginning in 2015, General Dunford, as the head of the Joint Chiefs, in appearances before this committee started to say and he said on multiple occasions now that among nation-states in the world, Russia is our biggest—he has used the phrase "adversary," "headache," "what keeps him up at night," "threat" in terms of its military, both capacity and intent to use its power.

Did any of you disagree with that conclusion?

General BREEDLOVE. I certainly do not, and it has been my testimony in front of this committee before.

Ambassador BURNS. No. I think Russia has demonstrated since 2015 it is a pretty big headache. I mean, we have got no shortage of other headaches in the world, but it has lived up to that form.

Senator KAINE. Ambassador?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I agree as well. Its ability to kind of overturn the whole international order puts it in a class by itself in terms of the nature of the threat.

Senator KAINE. Are any of you aware in the world right now of a nation-state that is doing more to destabilize and interfere with other nations' internal political affairs than Russia? No?

Given Russian physical presence in Georgia and the Ukraine, are you aware of any other nation in the world right now that has been more willing to incur into the physical sovereignty of another nation? Is there a bigger violator of incursions into physical sovereignty in the world right now than Russia? No.

With respect to the election issue, I was in Europe recently and was asked a series of kind of challenging questions along this line, and I would like your thoughts on it. If the U.S. will not act to defend itself from an election cyber attack, we know you will not act to defend us. There was a great deal of skepticism about what the U.S. would do to help any other nation under a similar threat because of a perception that we did not act in real time to stop a cyber attack of our election. As of yet, there has been no particular consequence of it. Do you think that would be a reasonable concern that others would have if they do not see us acting to protect ourselves, that they would be deeply skeptical that we would act to protect them?

Ambassador BURNS. I do, Senator. I mean, in the face of what has been a truly serious assault on our democratic system, I think it is absolutely essential that we not only recognize the severity of the problem but respond to it with the fullest possible investigation and then work with our allies, having demonstrated our own realization of the concern, to help them strengthen their defenses as well.

Senator KAINE. Finally, here is a question that I want to ask you that is really about sort of the psychology of dealing with Russia because I have a much higher confidence in my own opinions about our actions in other parts of the world, the Middle East and Arab North Africa, Latin America, and not so much about Russia.

There are currently some discussions about possibly engaging in greater oil diplomacy with Russia. So the sanctions after Ukraine, for example, have limited joint ventures between American companies and Russia on oil issues. But there are some questions about whether we should potentially do that in the Arctic or elsewhere, should we not allow joint ventures and cooperation with Russia that we are not currently doing.

If we were to do that, tell me what your opinion would be. Would that make Russia like the United States better, or would they simply use any additional assets that they get from that to continue on the path they are on, including the common path of companies that are resource-rich? Those resources often deepen corruption, deepen oligarchy rather than really help domestic economic satisfaction.

Ambassador BURNS. I will start, Senator. No. I think in my experience, the Russians unsentimental about issues like this. So it is not necessarily going to make the current Russia regime like the United States more. I think it is really important, as Ambassador Vershbow said before, to sustain the sanctions which restrict a lot of those activities until we see full implementation of the Minsk Agreement because I do think movement on Ukraine is really crucial here.

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I agree with that. The Russians will still pursue their interests very aggressively and using energy as a leverage. But those are among the most important sanctions imposed after the aggression against Ukraine. So they should be kept in place until we see real change on the ground. But then when conditions are met, we should lift them, but there is a long way to go before the Russians convince me that they are going to restore sovereignty in Ukraine.

Senator KAINE. General Breedlove?

General BREEDLOVE. Real change needs to be evident. Reestablishing trust—we have none now. I think those are key.

Senator KAINE. Thank you,

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Chairman MCCAIN. I thank the witnesses for their testimony today.

Oh, Senator Shaheen, I apologize.

Senator SHAHEEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one more question, and this is probably for all of you or whoever would like to answer.

Everyone I think has alluded to Russia's propaganda efforts, the amount of money they are spending on RT [Russia Today], on Sputnik, on other media outlets. It is something that I have been concerned about and actually filed legislation that would change the way FARA [Foreign Agents Registration Act] operates to look at whether they are trying to circumvent our legislation and not registering. I think probably I hit a nerve because there has been an interesting response in Russia to that legislation.

But can you talk about how much we should be concerned about this propaganda arm? I was interested, Ambassador Vershbow, in your suggestion that NATO ought to be looking at responding to some of the Russian propaganda in a different way. So how much of a piece of what Russia is trying to do is this, and what should we be doing in response to it?

General BREEDLOVE. I will start with just a short remark. I think it was surprising to me how little the Western world talked about what quietly happened here about ten days ago where Russia established an information warfare division of their military and beginning to funnel an even more military approach to how they do this. While it is a cheap war—we used those words earlier—they are putting a lot of money into this. Senator, I think this is something we need to be very attentive to.

I agree with something that was said earlier. We cannot go tit for tat. Right after the MH–17 shoot-down, they put four stories out on the street within two news cycle that it took us two years to debunk. We cannot respond tit for tat. What we need to do is get our troops, our values, and our lines out there in an aggressive way so that the world can see the other side of the story.

I am sorry for taking your time.

Senator SHAHEEN. No. Thank you.

Ambassador Burns, do you have anything to add to that?

Ambassador BURNS. No. I absolutely agree, and I think working with our NATO and EU partners is absolutely essential. We have a much stronger voice when we are part of a chorus on these issues than when we are doing it solo.

Senator SHAHEEN. Ambassador Vershbow?

Ambassador VERSHBOW. I agree with my colleagues. I think we should not overestimate the audience that RT really has, but I am more worried about the ability to manipulate social media with trolls, with bots, and getting these fake stories into millions of people's inboxes before we even know what is going on. At the same time, we have to stay consistent with our own values about free speech and diversity of opinion in the media, but call them out on

shoddy journalistic standards, manipulation of truth into fake news. If there are legal issues, I am not competent to evaluate whether they are skirting the Foreign Agent Registration Act, but we should look closely at that because it is, as we all know, an arm of the Russian Government de facto if not de jure.

But the allies and our European Union partners are in some ways more vulnerable to all this with Russian minorities in many countries, traditional sympathies towards Russia, inclining people to look to Russian media rather than to the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] or other sources. So it is a collective challenge, and I think working with our allies and partners, we can better meet that challenge.

Senator SHAHEEN. I certainly agree. It is something I have heard everywhere I have been in Eastern Europe, concern about that kind of propaganda. So thank you all very much.

Chairman MCCAIN. I thank the witnesses for their testimony today and for their years of outstanding service to our Nation.

Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Just a brief comment. We have talked about the doctrine of escalate to deescalate. It seems to me to be not only irrational but insane. You typically escalate in response to your opponent to defeat them, though escalate not to deescalate but escalate to defeat might be the real reality. I just wanted to make that point. I see heads nodding. I do not need a response, but I think there is agreement.

Chairman MCCAIN. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:25 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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