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U.S. Policy and Strategy in Europe

Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, One Hundred
Fifteenth Congress, First Session

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US Policy and Strategy in Europe

Prepared statement by

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Before the

United States Senate Committee on Armed Services

United States Senate

115th Congress

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 US Strategy and policy in Europe, and in particular I applaud your inquiry into US- Russian relations.

US-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 talk about a new start with the Kremlin, and given the right framework and circumstances I believe that has merit.

Our current vector in US – 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, the world’s largest country in terms of territory, and 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 has been hit hard by the low prices of oil and natural gas, it is still the 12th largest in dollar terms. 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 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 U.S. 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.

If Moscow really wants to improve relations, progress on these questions should not be too hard to achieve. And, 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 to launch that dialog would signal a commitment by Washington and Moscow, and would provide an important opportunity to address an issue important for over half a century: 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 (INF) agreement.

Iran is another important area for discussion. Moscow and Iran have worked together closely in Syria. Iran 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 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 Daesch, or the Islamic State of Iraq, and the Levant (ISIL), and other violent extremist organizations. If Moscow were a reliable partner against Daesch, 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 – a serious concession to Mr. Putin – can we depend on Moscow to be a real partner in Syria and beyond against Islamic extremists?

We can add other issues to this possible dialog. Cooperation in dealing with drug trafficking and space exploration should also 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.

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.

And 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. And 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 U.S. 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.

U.S. Security Strategy and Policy in Europe

Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 21, 2017

By Ambassador Alexander Vershbow

**Distinguished Fellow, The Atlantic Council of the United States,
Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security**

Former Deputy Secretary General of NATO (2012-16),

Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (2009-12),

U.S. Ambassador to NATO (1997-2001), Russia (2001-05) and South Korea (2005-08)

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.

And 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% 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 U.S. 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% 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. And 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% of GDP by 2024, as Secretary of Defense Mattis called for in February; they should accelerate these efforts if possible. And they should also speed up efforts to meet the even more important target of devoting 20% 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 U.S. 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 home-grown 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 U.S. 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 they 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 U.S. 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 illegal 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.

Stenographic Transcript
Before the

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

UNITED STATES SENATE

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
U.S. POLICY AND STRATEGY IN EUROPE

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

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HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
U.S. POLICY AND STRATEGY IN EUROPE

Tuesday, March 21, 2017

U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

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

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Wicker, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Sullivan, Cruz, Strange, Reed, Nelson, McCaskill, Shaheen, Gillibrand, Donnelly, Kaine, King, Warren, and Peters.

1 OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR
2 FROM ARIZONA

3 Chairman McCain: Good morning. The Senate Armed
4 Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony
5 on U.S. policy and strategy in Europe.

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

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

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

23 Since the end of the Cold War, American policy and
24 strategy in Europe have been guided by the idea that Russia
25 was, or at least might become, a reliable security partner.

1 To varying degrees, each of our last three Presidents
2 pursued a partnership with Russia on these terms. And each
3 time, high hopes ended in disappointment, not for lack of
4 good faith or effort on the American side, but because of
5 the simple fact that Vladimir Putin has no interest in such
6 a partnership. He believes achieving his goal of restoring
7 Russia as a great power means diminishing American power, as
8 well as the values and institutions it sustains and defends.

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

20 Until the end of the Cold War, there were a quarter of
21 a million U.S. forces stationed permanently in West Germany
22 alone. Today we have just a quarter of that number on the
23 entire European continent. This drastic reduction was not
24 merely the product of a post-Cold War peace dividend.
25 Indeed, as recently as the 2 years before Russia invaded

1 Ukraine, the United States withdrew two brigade combat teams
2 from Europe. As a result, while Russian tanks rolled into
3 Crimea in 2014, the United States had zero tanks permanently
4 stationed in Europe.

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

13 The bottom line is that 3 years after the invasion of
14 Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, the United States has yet
15 to heed the wakeup call. We still have not adjusted to the
16 scope, scale, and severity of the new strategic reality we
17 face in Europe. And we continue to lack coherent policy and
18 strategy to deter conflict and prevent aggression in Europe
19 while confronting a revisionist Russia that is hostile to
20 our interests and our values.

21 The good news is we have begun to fix the damage done
22 by years of false assumptions and misguided policy with the
23 European Deterrence Initiative. But that is just a first
24 step. The new administration has an opportunity to turn the
25 page and design a new policy and strategy in Europe backed

1 by all elements of American power and decisive political
2 will. Each of our witnesses has deep experience in the
3 formulation and execution of national security strategy, and
4 I hope they can begin to describe the basic pillars and
5 underlying principles of such a policy and strategy.

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

18 What is also clear is that no U.S. policy or strategy
19 in Europe can be successful without our NATO allies.

20 As Chancellor Merkel reminded us years ago, the Freedom
21 Bell hangs in Berlin. It was a gift from the American
22 people, modeled after our own Liberty Bell. It rang on the
23 day of German reunification. But it also rang after the
24 September 11th attacks. 16 German citizens died when the
25 towers fell that day. When our NATO allies invoked article

1 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty for the first time in history
2 in response to those attacks, German troops went to fight
3 side by side with American troops in Afghanistan. 54 of
4 them have given their lives, and nearly 1,000 are still
5 serving there today. We must never forget or diminish the
6 price our allies have paid in blood fighting alongside
7 America.

8 I thank our witnesses for their testimony this morning.
9 Senator Reed?

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1 STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE
2 ISLAND

3 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman,
4 for holding this important hearing on the security
5 environment in Europe.

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

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

21 This threat was brought especially close to home last
22 year with Russia's interference in our own presidential
23 elections. Countering Russia's malign activities is a
24 matter of national security, and we have a responsibility to
25 ensure that any examination of such activities by Congress,

1 the intelligence community, or the executive branch is not
2 politicized. Russia's attack on American democracy is just
3 one part of a broader Kremlin-directed assault on the
4 cohesion of the NATO alliance, the European Union, and other
5 Western institutions and a rejection of the post-Cold War
6 vision of an integrated and stable Europe. Our national
7 security depends on our better understanding Putin's world
8 view and Russia's strategic aims in its aggression toward
9 the West. I am interested hearing our witnesses' views on
10 these matters.

11 President Putin has proven willing to use a broad range
12 of military and non-military tools to advance what he sees
13 as Russia's strategic interests. Militarily, Putin has used
14 force and coercion to violate the sovereignty of Russia's
15 neighbors and undermine their further integration into
16 Europe. In the Republic of Georgia, the Russian military
17 has occupied two separatist regions since 2008 and Moscow
18 has recognized the regions' independence from Georgia,
19 contrary to the international community's determination that
20 these regions are sovereign Georgian territory.

21 In Ukraine, Russia uses hybrid warfare operations by
22 combining influence operations with clandestine military and
23 financial support to separatists to seize Crimea, changing
24 the boundary of a European nation by force for the first
25 time since the end of the Cold War. Since then, Russia has

1 sought to consolidate its control by providing direction and
2 equipment, including heavy weapons, to separatist forces in
3 eastern Ukraine, while failing to fulfill its commitments
4 under the Minsk ceasefire agreements.

5 We have also seen Putin draw upon similar tools to prop
6 up the Assad regime in Syria, while seeking to mislead the
7 international community by stating the purpose of its
8 military involvement there is to counter ISIS.

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

19 At the same time, the Kremlin's playbook also includes
20 a wide range of non-military tools at Putin's disposal to
21 influence the West. Russia employs an array of covert and
22 overt asymmetric weapons short of military conflict,
23 including cyber hacking, disinformation, propaganda,
24 economic leverage, corruption, and even political
25 assassination. General Breedlove, I would be interested in

1 your recommendations from your time as EUCOM Commander and
2 SACEUR on how to detect and respond to the appearance of
3 "little green men" in Ukraine and Russian disinformation
4 operations intended to conceal Russian aggression on the
5 ground.

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

17 Moreover, Russia appears to be growing bolder in its
18 use of influence operations to coerce its neighbors and
19 undermine Western opposition. The January 2017 Intelligence
20 Community Assessment of Russian Activities and Intentions in
21 Recent U.S. Elections found that Russia's influence efforts
22 in the 2016 U.S. presidential election reflects a
23 significant escalation compared to Russia's previous
24 information operations. The report also warned that these
25 cyber-enabled multifaceted influence operations that the

1 Kremlin used to target the U.S. democratic process likely
2 represent a new normal in Russian conduct toward the United
3 States and our European allies and partners. This pattern
4 of Russian interference will only continue and intensify
5 over time if it goes unchallenged.

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

17 Finally, what is clear is that we need a comprehensive
18 strategy for countering the anti-Western aggression from the
19 Kremlin. Such a strategy will need to be based on a clear-
20 eyed understanding of Russia's strategic aims and how it is
21 using the full range of influence operations to achieve
22 these goals. I intend to work with Chairman McCain to
23 undertake the necessary effort within this committee to
24 examine this question in depth. I believe we can work in a
25 bipartisan fashion to address this national security threat.

1 I look forward to this morning's hearing to begin to shed
2 light on this critical issue for our country and for
3 European security.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Chairman McCain: I welcome the witnesses. General
6 Breedlove?

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

4 Mr. Breedlove: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed,
5 thank you for this invitation to testify before you again.
6 And it is an honor to be here to talk about U.S. strategy
7 and policy in Europe, and in particular, I applaud your
8 inquiry into U.S.-Russia issues.

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

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

20 Russia is a great power with a proud history, and they
21 have the world's largest country in terms of territory, and
22 they are a player on the world stage. Russia possesses the
23 world's second most powerful military: a nuclear arsenal
24 comparable to ours and conventional forces that are easily
25 the most powerful in Europe. While its economy is stagnant

1 and it has been hit hard by the low prices of oil and
2 natural gas, it is still the 12th largest in terms of
3 dollars. We cannot simply dismiss Russia as a declining and
4 regional power.

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

19 If -- if -- Moscow really wants to improve relations,
20 progress on these questions should not be hard to achieve.
21 And with an incremental approach and incremental successes,
22 we can start to look for more substantial meetings to take
23 on more difficult questions. Once we make progress in
24 deconfliction, we can address more global issues of mutual
25 interest. Holding a summit possibly in the future to launch

1 that dialogue would signal a commitment by Washington and
2 Moscow and would provide an important opportunity to address
3 an issue important for over half a century, that of nuclear
4 disarmament. This area has been dormant for some time now.
5 Of course, before we can move to new agreements on nuclear
6 issues, it is important that Moscow moves quickly to cease
7 its violation of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces
8 agreement.

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

19 A third area to discuss is working with the Russians to
20 counter Daesh or the Islamic State of Iraq and in the Levant
21 and other violent extremist organizations. If Moscow were a
22 reliable partner against Daesh, the advantages are obvious.
23 The complication, though, is that Moscow's military
24 operation in Syria has devoted little attention to these
25 extremists. It has instead been directed against our

1 moderate allies and lately as it works with Ankara against
2 the Kurds.

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

12 We can add other issues to this possible dialogue.
13 Cooperation in dealing with drug trafficking and space
14 exploration should be on the table. There is ample
15 opportunity that the Kremlin and the White House can achieve
16 a great deal when our interests are similar and we work
17 together.

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

1 European Union, and the transatlantic relationship.

2 Clearly there are two sides to every story. However,
3 over the past 9 years, as both of you have mentioned, the
4 Kremlin has committed multiple acts of aggression in Georgia
5 in 2008, in Crimea in 2014, and since then, an ongoing, not-
6 so-covert war in Ukraine's east. It has agreed to two
7 ceasefires and violated each repeatedly.

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

17 We have a vital interest in stopping Moscow's
18 revanchist policies before they move to other countries,
19 especially our NATO allies in the Baltics. Yes, we can
20 conduct negotiations with Moscow on global issues, but we
21 also need to continue to strengthen NATO's presence along
22 its eastern flank. The Warsaw NATO summit last summer took
23 decisions to do that. The administration should endorse
24 those decisions and reaffirm our Article 5 commitment to
25 defend each NATO member under threat, and it should take the

1 lead in enhancing NATO capacities to deal with hybrid war,
2 as you both mentioned, the appearance of disguised Russian
3 agents or "little green men" in allied countries as an
4 example. To underscore our commitment to the Alliance, I
5 agree with the President's plan to meet first with his NATO
6 colleagues before seeing Mr. Putin.

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

15 Part of this is maintaining the economic pressure on
16 Moscow. Our and Europe's economic sanctions, which cost the
17 Russian economy 1 to 1.5 percent of its GDP in 2015, were
18 imposed as an incentive for Moscow to meet its Minsk
19 commitments and withdraw from Ukraine's east and as a
20 deterrence against any additional aggression. It would be a
21 sign of weakness to ease those sanctions for anything less
22 than Moscow's full compliance with Minsk, which means a full
23 restoration of the internationally recognized border between
24 Russia and Ukraine. The more trouble the Kremlin has in
25 conducting its war in Ukraine, the less likely it is to

1 cause trouble for us with our eastern NATO partners.

2 The last 6 months have demonstrated that we must
3 greatly improve our cyber defense to block and deter
4 operations that the Kremlin has been conducting against us
5 and others. The latest dump of documents via Wiki is
6 another reminder of the need to raise our cyber defense. We
7 also need to consider how we can respond to future cyber
8 attacks in ways -- perhaps not public -- that would deter
9 future cyber aggression. This is another subject for
10 discussion with Moscow once we strengthen our position.

11 Finally, sir, the world and the United States have
12 enjoyed extraordinary peace, stability, and prosperity since
13 the end of World War II and the Cold War. As just one
14 measure, in 1970 over 2 billion of the world's 3 billion
15 people lived in extreme poverty. In 2015, less than 1
16 billion of the globe's nearly 7 billion people are in
17 extreme poverty. An important reason for this is the peace
18 and stability created by the great institutions that the
19 U.S., with its European partners, put together at the end of
20 World War II, and that, sir, includes NATO.

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

23 A dialogue with Moscow is possible. So too is
24 cooperation. If the Kremlin is ready to work with us
25 against Daesh or to improve the Iranian nuclear deal, we

1 should be ready. But we should not be shy or hesitant about
2 defending our interests when we are under challenge from the
3 Kremlin. A policy of strength requires nothing less.

4 [The prepared statement of Mr. Breedlove follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Ambassador Burns, welcome back.
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1 STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR WILLIAM J. BURNS, PRESIDENT,
2 CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

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

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

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

1 Russia to a subordinate role.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 realistic strategy.

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

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

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

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

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

23 Mr. Chairman, I have no illusions about the challenge
24 before us. It really pays to neglect or underestimate
25 Russia or display gratuitous disrespect, but I am also

1 convinced that firmness and vigilance and a healthy grasp of
2 the limits of the possible are the best way to deal with the
3 combustible combination of grievance and insecurity that
4 Vladimir Putin embodies. We have a better hand to play than
5 he does. We should play it methodically, confident in our
6 enduring strengths, and unapologetic about our values.

7 Thank you very much.

8 [The prepared statement of Ambassador Burns follows:]

9 [COMMITTEE INSERT]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you.
2 Ambassador Vershbow?
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1 STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR ALEXANDER R. VERSHBOW,
2 DISTINGUISHED FELLOW, BRENT SCOWCROFT CENTER ON
3 INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, ATLANTIC COUNCIL

4 Ambassador Vershbow: Thank you. Chairman McCain,
5 Ranking Member Reed, other members of the committee, it is
6 an honor for me to be able to speak before you today on U.S.
7 security strategy and policy in Europe and, in particular,
8 how to meet the challenge posed by an aggressive revisionist
9 Russia.

10 I submitted a longer prepared statement in which I
11 describe the many dimensions of the Russian challenge. Of
12 course, the watershed event occurred exactly 3 years ago
13 with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the launching of
14 the ongoing campaign to destabilize other parts of Ukraine.
15 President Putin tore up the international rulebook, and he
16 ended a period, as you said, Mr. Chairman, of more than 20
17 years when we looked to Russia as a potential partner.

18 And 3 years later, the Russian challenge has become
19 even more serious. Not only have they continued the
20 aggression against Ukraine, they have engaged in political
21 aggression against our societies using cyber attacks,
22 disinformation, and influence operations to affect the
23 outcome of elections and undermine confidence in our
24 democratic institutions.

25 In essence, Russia is trying to undo decades of

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

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

22 So while we should always seek constructive relations
23 with Russia, we must approach that relationship without any
24 illusions. Since it is Russia's actions which have
25 fundamentally changed our relationship, any change for the

1 better depends on changes in Russian behavior. To get
2 there, we need a comprehensive strategy that builds upon the
3 combined material and moral strength of our close allies and
4 partners in Europe and around the world. As in the Cold
5 War, we must engage with Russia but from a position of
6 strength.

7 Now, what would be the elements of a comprehensive
8 strategy? As you know, I spent the last 5 years as Deputy
9 Secretary-General of NATO, and I am pleased to say that the
10 Alliance is in a much stronger position than it was 3 years
11 ago militarily and politically to meet the Russian
12 challenge. And General Breedlove deserves a lot of the
13 credit for that.

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

22 At Warsaw last July, allies decided that credible
23 deterrence also required additional forces on the ground.
24 So they agreed to deploy multinational battalions in Poland,
25 Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, and also to increase NATO's

1 presence in Southeastern Europe as well. So now if Russian
2 troops or "little green men" cross the borders, they will
3 immediately face troops from across the Alliance from both
4 sides of the Atlantic rather than just national forces.

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

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

18 Nevertheless, there is a lot more that our allies need
19 to do in the coming years, which I spell out in my written
20 statement. They have to contribute more follow-on forces,
21 more investments in air and missile defense, precision
22 strike, anti-submarine warfare capabilities to counter
23 Russian A2/AD capabilities. And that all requires
24 resources, and I hope that by the time of the mini-summit in
25 late May, that all allies will have concrete plans to

1 accelerate the increasing of their defense spending to meet
2 the 2 percent of GDP goal.

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

12 Bilaterally, the U.S. nonlethal defensive weapons
13 assistance and training has helped Ukraine's armed forces
14 prevent further Russian incursions in the Donbas, but we
15 should consider expanding the support quantitatively and
16 qualitatively to include lethal systems such as anti-tank
17 weapons, UAVs, and air defenses if Russia continues its
18 aggression in eastern Ukraine.

19 And of course, while it is not our focus today, NATO
20 needs to look south as well as east when it comes to
21 strengthening its neighbors. A bigger effort in defense
22 capacity building for partners in the Middle East and North
23 Africa could address the root causes of terrorism and
24 migration.

25 Now, Russian interference in our presidential election

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

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

21 Now, just a few words on how to engage with Russia.
22 First of all, I would agree that we need a unified approach
23 with our democratic allies, one consistent with our shared
24 values and principles. This means, first of all, that
25 engagement should address head on the fundamental reason why

1 relations have deteriorated in the first place: Russia's
2 aggression against Ukraine and its violation of the rules
3 that have kept the peace in Europe since the end of World
4 War II.

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

15 So I would urge the Trump administration to make
16 solving of the conflict in eastern Ukraine the litmus test
17 and the essential first step in any reengagement effort with
18 Moscow, and as a first step, we should consult with our
19 allies to develop a common strategy. Yes. There may be
20 things to talk about with Russia on Iran, ISIS, North Korea,
21 but the core issue that we need to tackle head on is the
22 aggression in Ukraine. Any bargain with Moscow and any
23 easing of sanctions should be contingent on fully
24 implementing the Minsk agreements and restoring Ukrainian
25 sovereignty over the Donbas, including control over its

1 international borders. Anything less would reward Russian
2 aggression and only embolden Mr. Putin further.

3 Last but not least, successful pursuit of the kind of
4 strategy I have outlined depends on Western unity and
5 resolve. That unity and resolve is being tested not just by
6 external challengers like Putin and ISIS, it is also
7 threatened from within: Brexit, public dissatisfaction with
8 illegal migration, and slow economic growth, a Turkey that
9 seems to be drifting away from Western values, to name just
10 a few. As in the past, U.S. leadership will be essential in
11 holding NATO together and in ensuring that decision-making
12 by consensus continues to be effective. And at the same
13 time, the U.S. needs to demonstrate in word and deed that it
14 supports a strong, united Europe as an indispensable partner
15 in dealing with Russia and other challenges even as we work
16 to overcome differences on trade or refugee policy.

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

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 [The prepared statement of Ambassador Vershbow
23 follows:]

24

25

1 Chairman McCain: Thank you, Ambassador.

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

6 Ambassador Burns: If Russia continues its aggression
7 in eastern Ukraine or stimulates another significant
8 escalation of fighting, I do.

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

16 Chairman McCain: Would you not agree that from a
17 morale purposes alone, much less capability, that it would
18 be helpful to give lethal defensive weapons to Ukrainians?

19 Ambassador Burns: I think it would, again especially
20 in the face of an escalation of Russian-inspired fighting in
21 eastern Ukraine.

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

1 NATO and EU allies. That is all.

2 Chairman McCain: Good point.

3 General Breedlove?

4 Mr. Breedlove: Sir, I believe that every nation has a
5 right to defend itself, and my recommendation on this has
6 not changed since when I was in my previous capacity and I
7 do support that.

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

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

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

25 I think it also is a contribution to stability in the

1 western Balkans, which is still unfinished business. We
2 still see internal divisions in Bosnia. We still see
3 problems now in Macedonia. So I think setting an example
4 that countries that do do their homework, meet the criteria,
5 contribute to stability in their neighborhood can become
6 members of NATO, even if they do not bring a huge amount of
7 defense capability to the Alliance.

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

15 Chairman McCain: Even to the point where they tried to
16 orchestrate a coup to overthrow the democratically elected
17 government.

18 Ambassador Vershbow: Indeed. And even Serbia, which
19 is ambivalent about NATO, I think was quite alarmed that
20 their territory was used to hatch a plot against a
21 neighboring state that they consider a friend and not an
22 enemy.

23 Chairman McCain: Ambassador Burns?

24 Ambassador Burns: No. I agree absolutely. I think it
25 is important for the United States to follow through and

1 join our other NATO allies in approving Montenegro's
2 accession.

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

8 Mr. Breedlove: Chairman, thank you.

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

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

20 Chairman McCain: Senator Reed?

21 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

22 And gentlemen, thank you for your outstanding
23 testimony. Very insightful and extremely timely.

24 One issue I think we all agree upon is that a military
25 response is necessary, strengthening NATO -- and I joined

1 the chairman with his leadership in advocating for providing
2 defensive weapons to Ukraine several years ago. That is
3 necessary but not sufficient. What we also require is an
4 economic and geopolitical strategy.

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

18 And also, the point again that the Ambassador made
19 about the weaknesses or the perception in Europe of
20 disarray, EU under pressure, Brexit. And it is alarming
21 when we have American voices sort of cheering on Brexit,
22 cheering on sort of some elements that would encourage the
23 dismemberment of the EU rather than its strengthening.

24 So I would ask all of you just to comment in general
25 about this notion of necessary military support, but we have

1 to go the extra step across our entire government. General
2 Breedlove?

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

11 And then also, as you mentioned, considering how we can
12 help nations like Ukraine who are under pressure in that
13 more broad front, I completely agree that the answer does
14 not only lie in the military.

15 Senator Reed: Ambassador Burns?

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

20 The strategic point is that I think now more than ever,
21 it is important for the United States to invest in our
22 transatlantic relationships at a moment when our partners
23 and our allies in Europe are under pressure almost any place
24 you look on the geographic compass from the west, the issue
25 of Brexit; from the south, whether it is terrorism or

1 migration flows; and from the east, a resurgent Russia. And
2 so it is very important for us to invest in that
3 relationship and recognize its significance to almost
4 anything the United States wants to achieve in the world.

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

21 Senator Reed: Ambassador Vershbow?

22 Ambassador Vershbow: Thank you.

23 I would agree with my colleagues that supporting
24 Ukraine and all of Russia's neighbors that are targeted by
25 Putin for his sphere of influence deserve our support, and

1 that is a comprehensive effort, military, political,
2 economic, helping them fight corruption. And, of course,
3 Ukraine in the last 3 years, despite having to fight an
4 undeclared war in its eastern provinces, has made more
5 progress on reform than in the previous 20-plus years since
6 independence in 1991. And a lot of the support they are
7 getting for that effort is coming from our European
8 partners. So it is not just the U.S. that is trying to help
9 them shore up their security, their resilience, their
10 economy and to fight corruption, which is the real big
11 challenge that they face.

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

23 Senator Reed: Thank you.

24 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

25 Chairman McCain: Senator Wicker?

1 Senator Wicker: Well, I appreciate the excellent
2 testimony, and I agree that the more Ukraine succeeds, the
3 better off it is for us in the United States and the West,
4 and I think it is one of the most profoundly important
5 issues that we face in the next year or 2.

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

14 So would you restate that and be more specific? And
15 then I will ask General Breedlove and the Ambassador to
16 respond to this idea that you have.

17 Ambassador Burns: Sure, I would be glad to, Senator.
18 My only point is that I think cold-bloodedly from the point
19 of view of not only American interests but Russian interests
20 as well and wider international interests, it is important
21 for us to continue to engage with Russia on issues like the
22 safety and security of nuclear materials, the danger of
23 nuclear terrorism, the danger of nuclear and radiological
24 materials getting in the wrong hands. Those are issues
25 where I think the United States and Russia, precisely

1 because of our history and our nuclear arsenals and our
2 capability, really do have unique responsibilities.

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

11 Senator Wicker: General Breedlove, are you on the same
12 page there?

13 Mr. Breedlove: Yes, Senator. There is no air between
14 us and those conversations. I would add things like
15 transparency and exercises. Just yesterday, another major
16 SNAP exercise in Crimea aimed at destabilizing Kyiv. Loose
17 nuclear materials. Senator Nunn is working on that hard.
18 It is a place where we can absolutely find, I think, some
19 common ground. And believe in CT in many ways. They are as
20 worried about what is coming out of Afghanistan and the
21 Balkans as we are. So I do believe, again, reestablishing
22 trust in an incremental way, we need to sit down and work on
23 these things.

24 Senator Wicker: Ambassador Vershbow, you are on the
25 same page there?

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

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

20 Senator Wicker: Okay. Thank you very much.

21 Will one of you comment or all of you comment on the
22 value of OSCE in all of this? OSCE is a 57-nation group.
23 The United States and Canada are members. It is consensus-
24 based, and it has been challenged in recent years by a far
25 more aggressive Russia. The organization's highest profile

1 engagement remains the fielding of an 1,100-person special
2 monitoring mission to Ukraine, an unarmed civilian mission
3 that serves as the international community's eyes and ears
4 in the conflict zone. Of course, there are many other
5 duties of OSCE. But what value should we place on OSCE's
6 continuing role in the European security architecture?
7 Ambassador Burns?

8 Ambassador Burns: Yes, I am glad to start, Senator.

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

15 Senator Wicker: Those Helsinki principles.

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

24 Senator Wicker: General?

25 Mr. Breedlove: Senator, if I could just add a much

1 more tactical -- and I am sorry for that -- observation.
2 There are limits and I could not agree with that more. But
3 occasionally with some of the fake news that was created in
4 the Donbas and other places as Russia invaded, even though
5 OSCE was challenged in it, often it was the source of the
6 real news of what was actually going on on the ground. And
7 so, again, it has challenges but it also provides some
8 pretty good input for us occasionally.

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

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

19 The special monitoring mission in Ukraine I think has
20 been very courageous in trying to make the disengagement
21 work even half well. But even as the Russians authorize
22 missions like that, they shoot down the UAVs that have been
23 purchased by that mission. They threaten some of the
24 monitors. They have denied them access to sensitive areas
25 when they are bringing lots of weaponry. So OSCE is

1 challenged, but I do not see any alternative right now in
2 trying to manage a conflict like in eastern Ukraine.

3 Senator Wicker: Thank you.

4 Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen?

5 Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 And thank you all for being here this morning.

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

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

1 Russians. So hopefully there will be other ways that he can
2 do that.

3 Senator Shaheen: Thank you.

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

9 What kind of message does it send as we are trying to
10 think about how we reduce the nuclear threat when we have
11 the President of the United States talking about an arms
12 race and saying -- I quote -- let it be an arms race, so
13 committing to an arms race against Russia?

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

21 I think the appropriate response from us and our NATO
22 allies is to remain creditable and ready and to have the
23 policy in order to present a clear affront to those thoughts
24 from Russia. And so what I thought we should do and what we
25 have done I think well in the past in NATO is to try to

1 completely convince that we are ready to respond if
2 required. And I think that is the policy into the future.

3 Senator Shaheen: And so what should we be thinking
4 about in terms of Russia's violations of the INF Treaty?

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

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

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

19 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I share that view.

20 Last December, we had folks testifying in response to
21 what we then learned was an emerging story about the Russian
22 cyber attack on our elections. And one of the points that
23 was made was that Russia is looking at not just a military
24 buildup, not just pushing the envelope in eastern Europe in
25 terms of its invasion of Ukraine, but it is also looking at

1 a huge propaganda buildup in terms of support for RT and its
2 other channels of communication. And it is also looking at
3 disrupting Western elections as part of a deliberate
4 strategy to undermine the West.

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

10 Ambassador Burns: I will be very brief.

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

22 Senator Shaheen: Thank you. Thank you all.

23 Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst.

24 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

25 Gentlemen, thank you very much for being with us today

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

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

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

1 or whether we need to have a more permanent presence.

2 Mr. Breedlove: Thank you, Senator. I could talk a
3 long time. I will try to be as brief as I can but get to
4 your questions.

5 The \$3.4 billion -- and first of all, may I thank this
6 committee and others who have worked on these ERI
7 initiatives across the last 2 years. They are vital. 20
8 years as the chairman called of hugging the bear. We
9 changed our orientation in Europe, and I believe it is now
10 absolutely vital that we reevaluate since we do not have
11 that strategic partner that we looked to have in the past.

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

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

1 I have also not changed my mind that I believe actual
2 presence, permanent presence --

3 Senator Ernst: Permanent presence.

4 Mr. Breedlove: -- is the best answer. But I believe
5 we are realistic in that that may not be a future that we
6 can see. And so we need to have the appropriate balance of
7 permanent forward forces, rotational forces, and
8 prepositioned materials so that we can rapidly reinforce,
9 prepositioned materials that our great Guard and Reserve
10 forces can rotate on, et cetera, et cetera. So I believe it
11 is a balance as the way to get to best solution that we can
12 afford and move forward with in the future.

13 Senator Ernst: Very good. I appreciate that.

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

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

24 Ambassador Burns: I am sure Ambassador Vershbow can
25 add to this as well. But as you well know, there are a

1 number of NATO programs already that we work with partner
2 countries, and I think it is important to sustain those.

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

12 Senator Ernst: Ambassador, did you have any further
13 comment?

14 Ambassador Vershbow: I agree with that. I think much
15 more vigorous diplomatic engagement by the U.S. is needed
16 because things are unraveling internally in some of the
17 countries, Macedonia, Bosnia in particular. The situation
18 between Kosovo and Serbia is also deteriorating, and all of
19 this is because the Russians are throwing a lot of salt in
20 the wounds and trying to exploit historic tensions and
21 grievances.

22 The European Union spends a lot, and they are actively
23 engaged diplomatically, but I think the countries in the
24 region still look to the U.S. because of our role in ending
25 the wars in the 1990s. And I think strong U.S. leadership,

1 working with the Europeans, is essential to hold off the
2 Russian meddling and help countries like Macedonia finally
3 get back on the path of European integration, NATO
4 membership, which they have been struggling with for more
5 than a decade and a half.

6 Senator Ernst: Thank you, gentlemen.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 Chairman McCain: Senator Warren?

9 Senator Warren: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

10 And thank you for being here today.

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

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

25 So, General Breedlove, I want to thank you for your

1 work strengthening the NATO alliance. But I want to focus
2 in this particular area. Do you think the Russians are
3 taking advantage of NATO's apparent reluctance to determine
4 when a cyber intrusion is an armed attack and to make it
5 clear when we will respond?

6 Mr. Breedlove: Senator, thank you for the question,
7 and the thrust of your question I think is spot on in that
8 we need to better understand and better articulate to the
9 world possibly where this all stands.

10 I think this is good new/bad news, and I will try to be
11 short. The good news is that 3 days before I started my --
12 or 3 days after I started my term as the SACEUR was the
13 first doctrine signed by NATO. So literally in the last 3
14 and a half years, we have come a long way. And now NATO
15 does have some policy and doctrine and a wonderful center at
16 Talinn, Estonia, if you have not been there, to fight this,
17 one of the real capabilities of NATO. And so that is the
18 good news. We have come a long way.

19 Senator Warren: Right. And the bad news?

20 Mr. Breedlove: The bad news is there still is, as you
21 have correctly pointed out, some definitive things that need
22 to be laid out and we are slow getting to those.

23 Senator Warren: Do you want to say a word about what
24 those are?

25 Mr. Breedlove: Well, ma'am, I have been critical that

1 we do not have an offensive policy in NATO. It is
2 completely defensive. As a fighter pilot, I think the best
3 offense is a missile in the air headed in the other
4 direction.

5 Senator Warren: All right. Thank you very much. I
6 appreciate it.

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

13 I have one other question I want to ask about, and that
14 is the Syrian civil war started 6 years ago this month. And
15 the humanitarian crisis there has pushed massive numbers of
16 refugees to Europe. I saw some of this up close a couple of
17 years ago when I visited a refugee intake center in Greece
18 and a refugee resettlement center in Germany. And I met
19 with refugees who had risked their lives on long and
20 dangerous journeys from many different countries.

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

24 Ambassador Burns, setting aside the obvious need to try
25 to get to the root causes of the crisis, what steps beyond

1 providing for humanitarian aid and supporting maritime
2 search and rescue efforts should the United States take to
3 enhance Europe's efforts to absorb refugees and migrants?

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

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

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

22 Ambassador Burns: I think it is undoubtedly harmful.
23 And I am entirely aware of the importance of ensuring the
24 security of American citizens in our own society. I am very
25 familiar with the processes that are employed to deal with

1 Syrian refugees. And they are as strict and comprehensive
2 as any that I have seen. But a lot of this has to do with
3 the leadership we demonstrate in the world, and when we are
4 moving in a different direction than a lot of our European
5 allies and partners are, it does send a very complicated
6 signal.

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

17 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

18 Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton?

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

23 I know someone else who has been around the block once
24 or twice with them is Bob Gates. In his first memoir of his
25 time at the CIA, he writes of the many specific policy

1 questions that, in particular, President Carter and
2 President Reagan faced in places like Central America and
3 sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and pushing back
4 against Soviet aggression. But he puts as much or more
5 weight on what he refers to as the correlation of forces,
6 long-term trends that set the relative power of the United
7 States against then the Soviet Union and today Russia.

8 So he talks, for instance, about Jimmy Carter
9 championing human rights within the Soviet Union and the
10 Warsaw Pact which undermined the legitimacy of their
11 regimes, his down payment on a defense buildup after the
12 Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and in particular, Ronald
13 Reagan's efforts to rebuild our military to expand our
14 nuclear forces to deploy INF forces to Europe to counteract
15 the Soviet Union's deployment, then ultimately the strategic
16 defense initiative, which he said kind of culminated all of
17 the trends the Soviet leaders had feared for so long, you
18 know, a growing Western economy, technological advantages,
19 military strength. And that, while not the cause of the
20 ultimate downfall of the Soviet Union, it was kind of the
21 ultimate symbol of what the Soviet Union had feared for so
22 long.

23 I would just like to get your thoughts just going down
24 the row on how important, on the one hand, those specific
25 bilateral or policy questions are today -- you might say

1 Ukraine or Georgia or what have you -- versus the broader
2 correlation of forces between the United States and Russia.
3 General Breedlove?

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

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

18 Senator Cotton: Ambassador Burns?

19 Ambassador Burns: No. I absolutely agree. I mean, I
20 think leverage is essential in diplomacy especially in
21 dealing with adversarial relationships like the U.S.-Russia
22 relationship. And I think that is why it is especially
23 important to invest in our alliance system as well because
24 that is what sets us apart from Russia and China and other
25 major powers. And so I think that continued focus on

1 especially our transatlantic alliance is extremely important
2 in that correlation of forces.

3 Senator Cotton: Ambassador Vershbow?

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

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

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

20 Senator Cotton: To our two Ambassadors, Bob Gates
21 described George Shultz and his role in the 1980s, someone
22 who often came in for criticism from some of his fellow
23 cabinet members of perhaps being too soft or conciliatory
24 towards Russia, even though he supported many of these
25 issues that we have described as the correlation of forces

1 like the deployment of INF forces to Europe but also
2 encouraging Reagan and ultimately prevailing upon Reagan to
3 proceed with various sets of talks or negotiations with
4 Russia to maintain open lines of communications. Maybe most
5 notably a few weeks after the KLA 007 shoot-down outside of
6 Korea, George Shultz convinced the President that he should
7 go forward with consultations in Europe with his Russian
8 counterparts.

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

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

23 Ambassador Vershbow: Absolutely. As difficult as the
24 Russians may be and as hostile as they may be in a lot of
25 areas, we have to talk to them. We have to try to find ways

1 to persuade them to change their policies or offer ways out
2 of some of the impasses that we face.

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

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

23 Senator Cotton: Thank you all.

24 Chairman McCain: Senator Peters?

25 Senator Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 And thank you to each of our panelists for your
2 leadership in this area over many years and for the
3 discussion here today.

4 In my first question, I want to return back to an issue
5 that has been discussed previously related to the cruise
6 missile deployments in violation of the Intermediate Nuclear
7 Forces Agreement, which I find very troubling, and from
8 listening to the testimony of all three of you, I think all
9 of you agree with that. And I think it is interesting and
10 would like to have your comment that while the Russians are
11 moving forward in violation of that treaty, on the one hand;
12 on the other hand, when it comes to the START treaty, they
13 seem to be in compliance there. And there is a disconnect
14 between compliance with one treaty and another. I am
15 wondering what is behind that. What do you think may
16 account for that?

17 And actually, General Breedlove, you mentioned the
18 Russian strategy to escalate to deescalate, which is a very
19 troubling strategy. And is it perhaps related to that as to
20 why they are deploying these cruise missiles?

21 Mr. Breedlove: I am going to defer, Senator, on the
22 piece about the START to my more learned colleagues.

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

25 Senator Peters: Right. Thank you.

1 Mr. Breedlove: I think there are multiple reasons why
2 the Russians are fairly blatantly violating the INF. I
3 think they have expressed for a long time displeasure with
4 our deployment of missile defense into Europe. And there
5 are two sides to every story. While I do not agree with
6 their position, I can understand that they believe they have
7 told us and told us and told us, and now they are bringing
8 some tougher tools to the table to try to address some of
9 those issues.

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

20 Senator Peters: Ambassadors?

21 Ambassador Vershbow: I think it is partly about
22 missile defense that the Russians are violating the INF
23 Treaty, but I think it more reflects a longstanding
24 grievance that they have had that other countries in the
25 world such as China, Pakistan have intermediate-range

1 missiles which could reach Russia, and they have no missile
2 of the same capability to deter and respond. It is sort of
3 not a very convincing argument because they have their
4 intercontinental systems which can be used in nuclear
5 scenarios against those countries.

6 But I think they may also believe they can get away
7 with this violation because of the ambiguity of some of the
8 technologies involved and assessing what is the maximum
9 range of a cruise missile compared to its overall weight and
10 payload. So they may think that they can get away with
11 cheating. And we cannot let that happen. So I think in
12 terms of responding, we need to kind of first look at what
13 is the enhanced threat that we face and find ways to
14 neutralize that threat. It does not mean it is tit for tat.
15 We may not need to violate the INF Treaty ourselves. There
16 may be alternative systems, both defensive and offensive
17 such as air-launched cruise missiles deployed forward in
18 Europe that could neutralize any military gains that the
19 Russians could perceive from this violation.

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

24 Ambassador Burns: And, Senator, the only thing I would
25 add is on your second question about escalate to deescalate,

1 I agree with you on the seriousness with which we ought to
2 view that issue because if Russian doctrine changes to the
3 point we are faced with a conventional inferiority, you
4 know, they are willing to resort to early use of battlefield
5 nuclear weapons, that creates a whole new area of potential
6 tension and instability. And it is another of the reasons
7 why we ought to be engaging with them in what used to be
8 called strategic stability talks, first to try to get to the
9 bottom of what it is that they have in mind and then,
10 second, working with our allies to be very, very clear and
11 blunt about our concerns about that and about the dangers of
12 it.

13 Senator Peters: And given that response, is it
14 reasonable to think this weapon actually is more effective
15 in that strategy, which is certainly very frightening, to
16 escalate/deescalate? You are more likely to use a weapon,
17 this cruise missile, than you would a strategic missile. Is
18 that another reason why they would want to deploy it?

19 Mr. Breedlove: Senator, I think that is what they
20 write about. It is another step and rung in the ladder of
21 tools that they can use. Where we think more in terms of a
22 nuclear threshold, they see it as another logical step.

23 Senator Peters: Thank you, gentlemen.

24 Senator Reed [presiding]: On behalf of Chairman
25 McCain, let me recognize Senator Sullivan.

1 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

14 Ambassador Burns: Absolutely. I think it is among our
15 greatest advantages and has been for decades.

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

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

1 long-term allies?

2 Ambassador Burns: Absolutely.

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

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

19 But it is a little early to make --

20 Senator Sullivan: No. It is very early.

21 Ambassador Vershbow: -- broad judgments about the new
22 administration, but after some question marks that were
23 raised about whether NATO is obsolete in the mind of
24 President Trump, they have, I think, reassured allies that
25 they still value NATO, value the transatlantic relationship,

1 recognize that allies are contributing in Afghanistan and
2 other operations.

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

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

14 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Ambassador.

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

20 Ambassador Burns: We do, and I think the honest answer
21 is there is a lot of uncertainty right now on the part of
22 our allies, notwithstanding the efforts of a number of the
23 new cabinet principals to emphasize the commitment, but
24 there is uncertainty, given things that were said during the
25 campaign by President Trump and some of the signals coming

1 out of the White House since then. And it is really
2 important I think to reassure our allies and partners.
3 There are some good opportunities in the next few months
4 with meetings in Europe.

5 Senator Sullivan: And we can do that as well here.
6 Right? At the U.S. Senate.

7 Ambassador Burns: Absolutely. And I think the more
8 that can be done like at the Munich security conference and
9 other places, the better.

10 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask another question, just
11 switching gears here, on the Arctic. You know, General
12 Breedlove, you were very aware and watched as the Russians
13 engage in this massive military buildup in the Arctic. Many
14 of us I think in a bipartisan way on this committee
15 certainly were concerned that we did not have a strategy.
16 We put in a provision in the NDAA 2 years ago to actually
17 have a strategy. It is a little better than the lack of one
18 that we previously had. We really did not have one

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

1 General Breedlove, can you comment on this? And more
2 specifically, if Russia decided to deny access to vital U.S.
3 resources in the region or international sea lanes, shipping
4 lanes in the Arctic, do we have any capability whatsoever to
5 conduct a surface FONOP to challenge that? And what should
6 we be doing about that?

7 Mr. Breedlove: Senator, thank you. I understand the
8 question. Let me just reframe a minute.

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

22 Senator Sullivan: Can we conduct a FONOP there? Is
23 the answer not no? It is not even close.

24 Mr. Breedlove: If I understand, I think we can but
25 realizing that we would have to be there at the right time

1 of the year and the right time of conditions. We do not
2 have some of the capabilities we need to operate up there
3 when the ice is challenging.

4 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

5 Chairman McCain [presiding]: Senator King?

6 Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

17 Number one -- and Senator Cotton mentioned this -- it
18 seems to me that given the danger of a Russian pilot
19 inadvertently hitting a ship instead of buzzing it or a
20 Chinese pilot in the South China Sea doing the same and the
21 escalation from there, to me that cries out for better
22 communication and open lines. And my understanding is that
23 that has somewhat diminished both on the military-to-
24 military level and at the highest level. Your thoughts?
25 Any of you? General Breedlove?

1 Mr. Breedlove: May I modify the scenario and tell you
2 what worries me? I really believe the pilots are good
3 enough not to hit one of our aircraft. And I am often asked
4 about this scenario. What worries me and what worries
5 others are in one of these fly-bys, if the Russian aircraft
6 just simply has a mechanical malfunction and hits the water,
7 what is going to happen? Are we going to be blamed? Will
8 be used as a simple tool to create a catastrophe, et cetera,
9 et cetera? Frankly, our Aegis cruisers and destroyers are
10 very capable of defending themselves against Russian
11 aircraft. I do not worry about that piece. But I worry
12 about the accident that then escalates into something wholly
13 unintended.

14 Senator King: Exactly. Is it not critical in that
15 piece to have open lines of communications?

16 Mr. Breedlove: Sir, we do have some but they are not
17 adequate. We still have what we call INCSEA, incidents at
18 sea, which actually have expanded to incidents at sea, land,
19 and air in some of those conversations. We have mechanisms,
20 but I believe we need to be more aggressive about those
21 conversations so we do not stumble.

22 Senator King: Let me turn it just slightly. One of
23 the problems is that what we view as defensive, the other
24 side can view as provocative, and how you hit the right
25 point -- in other words, stationing troops in Poland, moving

1 equipment into preposition in Eastern Europe. We view that
2 as defensive. Is it possible that that could lead to an
3 escalation if the Russians view that as an aggressive act?
4 I am trying to think through the scenarios here that could
5 lead to a dangerous result.

6 Ambassador Burns, your thoughts.

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

22 Senator King: Let me talk a bit about what I call the
23 cheap war, the war that has been waged over the last several
24 years, the last election here, now in France, now in
25 Germany. I did a quick calculation. For the price of one

1 F-35, the Russians can deploy 4,000 hackers and trolls, and
2 they have been remarkably successful at a very low price.

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

6 Ambassador Vershbow: I absolutely agree. I call it
7 political aggression rather than military aggression against
8 our societies, and it is a lot cheaper than waging war.
9 They probably could buy more than 4,000 hackers with the
10 price of an F-35. So we cannot sort of count on the
11 Russians depleting their resources through their aggressive
12 behavior the way they did in the Cold War.

13 Senator King: The arms race economics does not work in
14 this situation.

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

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

24 Ambassador Vershbow: Well, we may not want to do an
25 exact tit for tat in this field, but it would be more

1 aggressive than pushing our values, pushing our narrative
2 because Putin is worried about a democratic alternative
3 gaining ground again in Russia. And so I do not think we
4 should give up on our support for civil society, for
5 independent media, supporting emigre media sites that try to
6 push objective information into Russia, this new current
7 time channel that the Broadcasting Board of Governors is
8 launching to affect the opinions of Russian speakers both in
9 Russia and on the borderlands. All these things are very
10 important to show that we are not going to fail to compete
11 in this political battle.

12 Senator King: Thank you. Thank you, gentlemen.

13 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Chairman McCain: Senator Kaine?

15 Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

16 And thanks to all the witnesses for your testimony.

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

24 Did any of you disagree with that conclusion?

25 Mr. Breedlove: I certainly do not, and it has been my

1 testimony in front of this committee before.

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

6 Senator Kaine: Ambassador?

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

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

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

20 With respect to the election issue, I was in Europe
21 recently and was asked a series of kind of challenging
22 questions along this line, and I would like your thoughts on
23 it. If the U.S. will not act to defend itself from an
24 election cyber attack, we know you will not act to defend
25 us. There was a great deal of skepticism about what the

1 U.S. would do to help any other nation under a similar
2 threat because of a perception that we did not act in real
3 time to stop a cyber attack of our election. And as of yet,
4 there has been no particular consequence of it. Do you
5 think that would be a reasonable concern that others would
6 have if they do not see us acting to protect ourselves, that
7 they would be deeply skeptical that we would act to protect
8 them?

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

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

22 There are currently some discussions about possibly
23 engaging in greater oil diplomacy with Russia. So the
24 sanctions after Ukraine, for example, have limited joint
25 ventures between American companies and Russia on oil

1 issues. But there are some questions about whether we
2 should potentially do that in the Arctic or elsewhere,
3 should we not allow joint ventures and cooperation with
4 Russia that we are not currently doing.

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

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

21 Ambassador Vershbow: I agree with that. The Russians
22 will still pursue their interests very aggressively and
23 using energy as a leverage. But those are among the most
24 important sanctions imposed after the aggression against
25 Ukraine. So they should be kept in place until we see real

1 change on the ground. But then when conditions are met, we
2 should lift them, but there is a long way to go before the
3 Russians convince me that they are going to restore
4 sovereignty in Ukraine.

5 Senator Kaine: General Breedlove?

6 Mr. Breedlove: Real change needs to be evident.
7 Reestablishing trust -- we have none now. I think those are
8 key.

9 Senator Kaine: Thank you,
10 Thanks, Mr. Chair.

11 Chairman McCain: I thank the witnesses for their
12 testimony today.

13 Oh, Senator Shaheen, I apologize.

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

17 Everyone I think has alluded to Russia's propaganda
18 efforts, the amount of money they are spending on RT, on
19 Sputnik, on other media outlets. It is something that I
20 have been concerned about and actually filed legislation
21 that would change the way FARA operates to look at whether
22 they are trying to circumvent our legislation and not
23 registering. I think probably I hit a nerve because there
24 has been an interesting response in Russia to that
25 legislation.

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

8 Mr. Breedlove: I will start with just a short remark.
9 And I think it was surprising to me how little the Western
10 world talked about what quietly happened here about 10 days
11 ago where Russia established an information warfare division
12 of their military and beginning to funnel an even more
13 military approach to how they do this. And while it is a
14 cheap war -- we used those words earlier -- they are putting
15 a lot of money into this. Senator, I think this is
16 something we need to be very attentive to.

17 And I agree with something that was said earlier. We
18 cannot go tit for tat. Right after the MH-17 shoot-down,
19 they put four stories out on the street within two news
20 cycle that it took us 2 years to debunk. We cannot respond
21 tit for tat. What we need to do is get our troops, our
22 values, and our lines out there in an aggressive way so that
23 the world can see the other side of the story.

24 I am sorry for taking your time.

25 Senator Shaheen: No. Thank you.

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

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

6 Senator Shaheen: Ambassador Vershbow?

7 Ambassador Vershbow: I agree with my colleagues. I
8 think we should not overestimate the audience that RT really
9 has, but I am more worried about the ability to manipulate
10 social media with trolls, with bots, and getting these fake
11 stories into millions of people's inboxes before we even
12 know what is going on. At the same time, we have to stay
13 consistent with our own values about free speech and
14 diversity of opinion in the media, but call them out on
15 shoddy journalistic standards, manipulation of truth into
16 fake news. And if there are legal issues, I am not
17 competent to evaluate whether they are skirting the Foreign
18 Agent Registration Act, but we should look closely at that
19 because it is, as we all know, an arm of the Russian
20 Government de facto if not de jure.

21 But the allies and our European Union partners are in
22 some ways more vulnerable to all this with Russian
23 minorities in many countries, traditional sympathies towards
24 Russia, inclining people to look to Russian media rather
25 than to the BBC or other sources. So it is a collective

1 challenge, and I think working with our allies and partners,
2 we can better meet that challenge.

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

6 Chairman McCain: I thank the witnesses for their
7 testimony today and for their years of outstanding service
8 to our Nation.

9 Senator Reed?

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

18 Chairman McCain: The hearing is adjourned.

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

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