

**WITH AMERICAN LIVES ON THE LINE, LESSONS  
FOR MANAGING THE RUSSIA THREAT**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY,  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS  
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## **WITH AMERICAN LIVES ON THE LINE, LESSONS FOR MANAGING THE RUSSIA THREAT**

**Friday, July 10, 2020**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, EURASIA,  
ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:29 p.m., in via Webex, Hon. William R. Keating (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. KEATING. The House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any point. All members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous material, and questions for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules. To insert something in the record, please have your staff email the previously mentioned address or contact full committee staff.

Please keep your video function on at all times, even when you are not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves. Please remember to mute yourself after you have finished.

Consistent with House Resolution 965 and accompanying regulations, staff will only mute members and witnesses as appropriate, when they are not under recognition, to eliminate background noise.

I see that we have a quorum present. I really want to thank everyone on a Friday for doing this. It is an important issue.

I will now recognize myself for opening remarks.

Pursuant to the notice, we are holding a hearing to discuss “With American Lives on the Line, Lessons for Managing the Russia Threat.”

Two weeks ago, the startling revelations broke that Russia put bounties on American troops serving in Afghanistan. This week, in the Foreign Affairs Committee, we have been examining this egregious attack on Americans and the Trump administration’s failure to handle it appropriately.

I think it is important for the public to know this. I have personally been involved in four hearings this week alone that have dealt with this issue, and that does not include the actions of other committees working on their own.

So I just want to underscore to the people listening that they should know that we in Congress are taking oversight of this matter very seriously.

Party politics and everything aside, the one thing, if we do nothing else, one of the most basic and most fundamental duties is to do everything in our power to keep Americans safe. We owe it to the servicemembers whose lives were lost in Afghanistan. We owe it to their families. We owe it to every member of our military and every American serving abroad who puts their life on the line every day in service of our country.

On Tuesday the subcommittee heard from former U.S. officials and experts on the Kremlin's network for malign actors and systems of corruption that oppress the Russian people and sustain its criminal actions, and hybrid warfare. That, in your submitted testimony, Secretary Panetta, you note, may be even more dangerous than the threats we faced during the cold war.

While invited, it is regrettable that Secretary Pompeo declined to participate yesterday in our full committee hearing. This is part of a pattern of failure to recognize the importance of a united and unambiguous U.S. response to the escalating threats we face from the Kremlin.

The members of our committee have many questions about what happened, and with the questions of murdered servicemembers at hand, it would have been helpful, to say the least, to hear from the Secretary himself as we reckon with the gravity of this issue.

To his credit, Secretary of Defense Esper appeared before the House Armed Services Committee yesterday, and in response to my questioning he acknowledged that he had seen reports of payments in response to attacks on our troops.

Today we are honored to be joined by Secretary Leon Panetta, a dedicated public servant who shaped U.S. national security policy for decades and whose perspective and range of experience on these issues is, frankly, unparalleled.

Having himself served in the U.S. House of Representatives, Secretary Panetta is familiar with the important role the legislative branch plays in shaping our national security trajectory. Secretary Panetta later served in multiple executive functions under two Presidential administrations, including as Secretary of Defense, Director of the CIA, and White House Chief of Staff.

We are fortunate to have you joining us today because as we try to understand what transpired in the Kremlin's bounty scheme, and how much of the Trump administration knew about it or not, your experience is uniquely instructive. You are someone who has been responsible for American troops abroad, for managing a primary element of our intelligence apparatus, and for ensuring the President has access to the intelligence and resources he needs to carry out the duties of that office.

Furthermore, Secretary Panetta has overseen and shaped U.S. policy toward Russia throughout the course of his career.

Beyond the specific instance of Kremlin aggression against Americans abroad, the resounding takeaway from this week in all the hearings so far is we have no Russia policy.

In its place, we have a misguided, ill-defined, impulsive, and, frankly, dangerous series of actions prioritizing the interests of the Kremlin over the dedicated efforts of our intelligence community, diplomats, and career civil servants.

The sacrifices of our military and the American national security interests should, as always, remain paramount.

There has been no shortage of information available to President Trump about Russia's malign activities, and yet it has been one gift to Putin after another, whether it is pulling out of the European-supported INF and Open Skies treaties; withdrawing our forces from Syria without notice to our allies who had troops on the ground; Helsinki; his intent to reduce a quarter of our troops in Germany; inviting Russia back to a reconstituted G8; pulling funds from the European Deterrence Initiative, which was meant to deter Russian aggression; or casting blame toward Ukraine when our intelligence community had proved Russia was responsible for the attack on our 2016 election.

We have been hearing all week that Putin pays attention and responds to the actions taken by the United States in concert with our allies. Yet the message I hear loud and clear from President Trump is: You can do whatever you want because we will not hold you accountable.

That is unacceptable. How long do we have to wait for a policy toward Russia that prioritizes, above all else, keeping Americans safe?

That is why these hearings this week are so important, and why I was so pleased to have you joining us today, Secretary Panetta. We are looking forward to hearing from you about your perspective on where we must go here, as a country, in our policy and posture toward Russia.

You have seen successes and failures, and we are running out of time to get this right.

I now yield to Ranking Member Representative Kinzinger for his opening statement.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well, thank you, Chairman Keating, for calling this hearing.

And thank you, Mr. Secretary, for joining us today.

Since the 2008 invasion of Georgia, Russia has shown not only a willingness but an eagerness to develop, test, and deploy an advanced set of tools to undermine democracy and Western institutions around the world.

While Russia and its Soviet predecessors have used foreign forces to carry out proxy wars against the West, the reports that Russian military intelligence, often referred to as the GRU, set up a bounty program for American soldiers in Afghanistan shows an emboldened Vladimir Putin.

Let's remember that this is the same unit that is responsible for interfering in our elections, using chemical weapons against Russian defectors living under NATO protection, and invaded Ukraine, a NATO aspirational nation and an EU priority partner.

More recently we have seen the Russian mercenaries supporting genocide in Syria, fueling conflict in Libya, and propping up the corrupt Maduro regime.

The fact that Putin is trying to harass the United States and Afghanistan should not come as a big surprise. The question remains, though, what does Putin gain from this bounty program and why does he feel emboldened to carry it out? I believe that Putin wants

United States to fail in Afghanistan just like his country did nearly four decades ago.

While some of my colleagues will likely try to paint this administration as weak on Russia, I do not believe that is what is driving Putin's agenda. Lenin once said: You probe with bayonets. If you find mush, you proceed. If you find steel, you withdraw.

Over the past decade, Putin has found mostly mush when probing the United States. As Congress, we must come together and be the steel that forces Putin to think again.

The first step is recognizing the nature of warfare has changed. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain, many in the West believed that we would usher in an era of perpetual peace. Countries around the world, the U.S. included, gave up on cold war policies that made Western institutions the standard bearer in a post-Soviet world.

However, the Russians adapted, learned from their mistakes, and reinvigorated their tactics to fit the 21st century. They have been operating within a gray space that is neither war nor peace, and we must now change how we respond to these clear provocations.

Contrary to popular belief, this administration has pushed back against Putin. Take the incident in 2018, when Wagner mercenaries and forces loyal to Assad attacked U.S. troops in Syria. Within 4 hours, hundreds of Russians and Syrians were neutralized. The Wagner Group did not provoke U.S. forces ever again.

Not every provocation from Russia can be met with kinetic action. In fact, on the contrary, our greatest weapon is the alliance of like-minded nations that have defended freedom since 1949.

It is in our best interest to work with our allies, much like we did throughout the cold war, to develop and implement a strategy to counter Putin's malign activity. Much like Putin did over the past decade, we need to dust off the old cold war playbook to confront the Russian threat.

The good news is that despite all of Putin's foreign operations, he has not benefited domestically. Nearly 50 percent of Russians opposed waiving Presidential term limits for Putin, nearly 60 percent believe the President should not be as old as Putin is, and only 25 percent of the Russian people trust Putin's plan for their country. If this does not demonstrate that Putin's strategy failed, I do not know what does.

Again, I want to thank Secretary Panetta for joining us today. We will have plenty to talk about.

And with that, I will yield back to you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative Kinzinger.

I will now introduce our witness.

And, again, thank you for being here today again.

Secretary Leon E. Panetta is chairman of the Panetta Institute for Public Policy. His distinguished career in public service, as I mentioned before, includes serving as the 23rd United States Secretary of Defense, the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, White House Chief of Staff to President Bill Clinton, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and most importantly, as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from California.

I will now recognize the witness for 5 minutes.

And without objection, your prepared written statement will be made part of the record.

You are now recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE LEON PANETTA, CHAIRMAN,  
THE PANETTA INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY (FORMER  
UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, FORMER DIREC-  
TOR OF THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, AND  
FORMER WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF)**

Mr. PANETTA. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I would like to submit my testimony for the record, and if I could, try to summarize it for your benefit.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be able to testify about the significant threat that all of you recognize from Russia and the threat that Russia poses to our troops and our democracy and our Nation.

I had the honor to serve in the House for 16 years, from 1977 through 1993. It was the height of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union, through the end of the Vietnam era, the Reagan buildup, the fall of the Berlin Wall. And I have to tell you, during that time Congress played an enormously important role in conducting oversight, whether it was a Republican administration or Democratic administration, to ensure that our national security interests were protected during that cold war.

I want to commend all of you, Mr. Chairman, and all of your members, for your continuing critical oversight to make sure that we protect our country.

Let me begin by making clear that there is little question that we are in a new chapter of the cold war with Russia. But this new chapter, with Vladimir Putin's Russian Federation, is in some ways more dangerous than what we faced with the old Soviet Union.

With the Soviet Union, we were in rough parity with our nuclear capabilities. They knew our strength, we knew their strength, and in some ways that gave us leverage to be able to deal with them from a position of strength.

To deal with Vladimir Putin, you have to deal with him from a position of strength. If he senses weakness on the part of the United States then, make no mistake, he will take advantage of it, because he knows he does not have to pay a price. And thus we have seen him take advantage of it through his aggression in Crimea, in the Ukraine, in Syria, in the U.S. election process, in Libya, in Afghanistan, and other places.

The point is very clear, and I think it is clear to all of you, that if we fail to draw lines on Putin, if we do not make clear where those lines are and make clear that he will not be allowed to cross those lines, then he will continue to be encouraged to be aggressive.

The principal point is this. In this new cold war chapter what is required is a resolute, clear-eyed, strong, unambiguous leadership from the President and the rest of our government that is informed by our diplomatic, military, and intelligence professionals and guided by the need to protect our national security interests. That has got to be the message that Putin hears.

Some of you may remember President Bush once said that he looked into Putin's eyes and saw somebody that he thought he would be able to deal with. My friend and former colleague, Bob Gates, said that he too looked into Putin's eyes and saw KGB, KGB, KGB.

Putin believes that the glory of the former Soviet State must be restored. He believes the fall of the Iron Curtain brought with it an era of weakness in Russia, and he is determined to return Russia to the status of a global superpower. And the key to that strategy is to undermine the United States and to weaken our country and weaken our foreign policy.

But Putin has his own problems. The Russian population is aging, it is shrinking. By the economy, Russia is struggling. There is a mix of an overburdened socialist State with a very corrupt core of oligarchs who have literally stolen billions of dollars from the Russian people. They have serious social and economic issues.

No democracy would tolerate the kind of mismanagement and corruption that we have seen there, and that is why Putin has done away with any semblance of democracy. He has pushed through constitutional referendums, as we know, just recently, that allows him to be a virtual dictator through 2036.

Russia's strategy to restoring its superpower status is dependent on the following elements.

First, they clearly want to undermine NATO and its key missions. NATO has been a barrier to the ability of Russia to expand back to the Soviet State.

Second, they want to undermine U.S. military presence in Europe. By that presence, our forces in Europe have been a check on Russian ambitions.

Third, he wants to reinsert the Russian regime back into the G7 to be able to regain the status that they lost when they were kicked out because of their invasion of the Crimea.

Fourth, they believe that interfering in United States and other Western elections has sown chaos and discord, and they are seeking an election result in all areas that are favorable to Russia.

And last, they have developed and in some ways perfected hybrid warfare. Russia cannot match the U.S. in a force-on-force conflict, but they have developed asymmetric power, hybrid power. They have used a mix of civilian-military capabilities to undertake deniable, lethal, covert operations, they have engaged, obviously, in election interference, the recruitment of spies and agents, the theft of technology, they have taken prisoners, all to gain geostrategic leverage without triggering conventional conflict with the West.

What we saw with the latest intelligence of the possibility that Russians were using bounties in many ways comes right out of Putin's playbook. I have not read the intelligence assessment, but I think we all need to take these reports very seriously, because, as I said, it fits Putin's playbook, the playbook that he has used as a result of his concerns in Afghanistan and other areas.

He still resents what the United States did in Charlie Wilson's War, when we kicked the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan in the 1980's. He believes we have used the Afghan war as a pretext to position U.S. military and intelligence assets on the doorstep of Russia.

And he resents the fact that the Afghan war has been a NATO mission. His goal is to fracture NATO, and their sense is, the best way to fracture NATO is to bring them down in Afghanistan, which is the graveyard of empire.

He pays mercenary forces to come after us, and that is very consistent with Putin's methods. They developed the Wagner Group to attack our forces in Syria, take over oil facilities in Libya. They have conducted assassination attempts in the U.K. against former spies. And, obviously, they have conducted this bold attack in our own democracy in the 2016 election.

The assessment is very clear: There is no question here that Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in the 2016 election aimed at trying to influence what happened in the U.S. Presidential election.

And they further assessed—and this is something we have just got to continue to remind ourselves—that Putin is going to apply the same lessons in the current election in this country, as well as in elections that are taking place with our U.S. allies.

This is not a hoax, it is a real threat, it works, and you can look at the consequences. It has strained relations between the United States and NATO allies. There was even the possibility at one point that we might pull out of NATO. And, very frankly, the entire military structure we have used to contain Russia could fall apart if we did that.

They have paid no price for annexing Crimea, and, obviously, they believe that the President has, in many ways, given Russia and Putin a pass on Crimea and the Ukraine. They have seen a United States that is slow to enforce sanctions—sanctions passed by the Congress, by you.

And although the President invited Russia back into the G7, the reality is that that invitation contained no concession on the part of the Russians.

The U.S. also is set to redeploy 9,500 U.S. forces from Germany, forces that are critical to signaling U.S. resolve with our allies.

What are the steps required to counter this Russian threat? Let me end by summarizing them.

One, I do believe we have to make clear where the lines are that cannot be crossed, make very clear that he will not get away with attacks on our forces, and that we will respond, through diplomatic isolation, through sanctions, and through military force if necessary.

We have to recommit to the NATO alliance. Look, Russia and China are our primary adversaries at this point in time, and what is the one thing that they cannot do? They cannot form alliances. They fear alliances. And so our ability to develop and maintain alliances is one of our best weapons against those adversaries.

Third, we have to make sure that we do protect free and fair elections in this country, free from Russian interference.

And fourth, we do have to read and listen to intelligence assessments about Russia. This is information that is gathered at great risk. Our intelligence professionals—and you have heard from many of them—have spent their careers analyzing the Russian Federation and Putin. They understand what Putin is up to, and

they can be very helpful in providing a heads-up to the President and to this country about what Putin is trying to do.

Look, no leader—no leader—can act responsibly for this country without good intelligence. That is the bottom line.

Fifth, I think it is important to suspend the actions to redeploy forces from Europe. This is the wrong time to be moving forces out of Europe. And again, it sends, I believe, a message of weakness to Russia.

We have to finally rededicate ourselves to the values that make America strong and free. At the end of the day, what Putin fears the most, very frankly, is our values. They threaten the power he is trying to consolidate. Freedom of the press, freedom of speech, equality of all citizens, all of that undermines the strength that he is trying to assert in Russia. The greatest threat to Putin is the values that are our greatest strength in this country.

So let me conclude by saying, the United States has to be clear with Putin. We cannot afford to send mixed messages to an adversary. We must make clear that there are lines that we will not allow Russia to cross.

One of those lines has to be that we will not tolerate any involvement by Russia in killing U.S. men and women who are putting their lives on the line for this country.

Look, as Secretary of Defense and CIA Director, I was involved in deploying our young men and women into harm's way. I had to go to Dover to receive our fallen heroes and give condolences to their families on behalf of a grateful Nation. This is about life and death. Life and death.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I think all of us owe it to our troops and to their families to answer a very simple question: What did our government do to protect our troops? And if Russia did put a price on the heads of our men and women in combat, what price will Russia pay for doing this? Americans are entitled to know that we did everything necessary to protect our troops, our national security, and our democracy.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Panetta follows:]

**Testimony of Secretary Leon E. Panetta**

Hearing on:

*“With American Lives on the Line, Lessons for Managing the Russia Threat”*

Before the Subcommittee: Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment

Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives

July 10, 2020

Via Cisco Webex

Chairman (Bill) Keating, Ranking Member (Adam) Kinzinger, distinguished members. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the significant threat that Russia poses to our troops, our democracy, and our nation.

I had the honor to serve in the House of Representatives from 1977 until 1993 ... from the end of Vietnam era ... through the Reagan buildup ... through the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. And Congress played an enormously important role in conducting oversight ... to ensure that our national security interests were protected. And so, I commend you for this hearing and for your oversight.

Let me start off by being clear. We are in a new chapter of the Cold War.

But the challenge of this new chapter with Vladimir Putin’s Russian Federation is different – and in some ways more dangerous – than the challenge we

faced from the USSR. The only way to deal with Putin is from a position of strength. If he reads weakness on the part of the United States, make no mistake, he will take advantage of that weakness – as he has done in Russia’s aggression in the Ukraine, Syria, U.S. elections and now in Afghanistan. This new chapter will require resolute, clear-eyed leadership from the President and the rest of our government, informed by our diplomatic, military, and intelligence professionals, and guided by America’s national interests.

Let me start with Putin’s ambition and his strategic outlook.

Putin is a former KGB officer who believes that the glory of the former Soviet State must be restored. He believes that the fall of the Iron Curtain ushered in an era of weakness, and he is determined to return Russia to the status of a global Superpower. Key to this strategy is finding ways to undermine the United States and to influence our foreign policy.

Realistically, this has been a difficult project for Russia. The Russian population is aging and shrinking. Its economy has struggled – serving up a mix of an overburdened socialist state with a corrupt core of Oligarchs who have stolen untold billions from the Russian people. No democracy would tolerate such

mismanagement and corruption, and so Putin has done away with any semblance of democracy.

As this Committee is well aware, Putin recently pushed through a constitutional referendum that could allow him to remain in power through 2036.

Restoring Russia's Superpower status is a pillar of Putin's narrative for his domestic audiences. When you translate this narrative into Russian foreign and defense policy, it means the following four things:

**First**, undermining NATO and its key missions;

**Second**, undermining the U.S. military presence in Europe, or what Russia calls its "near abroad;"

**Third**, re-inserting itself into International Organizations like the G-7, which it was kicked out of after invading Ukraine; and

**Fourth**, interfering in US and other Western elections, to sew chaos and discord, and if they are very successful, to achieve an electoral outcome that is more favorable to Russian interests.

Since Russia cannot match the United States in a force-on-force conflict, it has developed a form of asymmetric power – or, “hybrid warfare” – using a mix of civilian and military capabilities to undertake deniable, lethal covert operations ... influence operations ... election interference ... recruitment of spies and agents of influence ... theft of technology ... taking of prisoners ... and other methods designed to gain geostrategic leverage *without* triggering an all-out conventional armed conflict with the West.

**The reported intelligence on Russia’s payment of bounties to the Taliban in Afghanistan to kill U.S. troops is right out of Putin’s playbook.** And although I have not read the intelligence assessment, I know enough about Russia to know that we need to take these reports extraordinarily seriously ... and at the least, we need to **read** and consider them as we fashion our policy toward Russia.

The reason I say this is right out Putin’s playbook is because Russia has always viewed with deep concern our presence in Afghanistan. First, there are

obvious echoes of when we kicked the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan in the 80s. Second, they believe that we have used the Afghan war as a pretext to position U.S. military and intelligence assets on the doorstep of Russia. Third, Afghanistan has been a NATO mission. Russia's principal goal is to fracture NATO, and no better place to do this than in Afghanistan, which is known as the "graveyard of empires."

These covert actions – which the Russians call, "active measures" -- are consistent with other methods that Putin has employed. He has employed a paid mercenary force, known as the "Wagner Group," to attack our forces in Syria and to take over oil facilities in Libya. He ordered an assassination attempt in the streets of the UK against Sergei Skripal (*Scrip-pal*), a former Russian intelligence officer – who the U.S. helped free from Russian prisons when I was at the CIA. He used deadly poisons to attack the former KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko (*Lit-vin-yen-ko*).

But by far the most successful "active measure" was the attack on our democracy during the 2016 election. As the U.S. intelligence community concluded in its declassified 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment: "Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US

presidential election.” The IC further assessed that “Moscow will apply lessons learned from its Putin-ordered campaign aimed at the US presidential election to future influence efforts worldwide, including against US allies and their election processes.”

In other words, this is not a hoax. This is a very real threat. And it means the Russians are coming again in the 2020 election. And why shouldn't they? Look at the return they got on their small investment:

- First, they deeply strained relations between the U.S. and its NATO allies. According to published accounts, the Administration came dangerously close to withdrawing from NATO altogether, which is Putin's ultimate fantasy. *As Secretary, I met regularly with our NATO partners, and I saw the importance of the U.S. to that alliance. You pull the U.S. out of NATO, and the entire military structure that we have used to contain Russia falls apart overnight.*
- Second, they have paid no price for annexing Crimea. Military aid that Congress approved got held up while the President sought to shake down the President of Ukraine for help in the 2020 election. We know how

that went. And although the aid was restored, it made clear to Putin what the President's real priorities are all about.

- Third, the Administration has been slow to enforce sanctions against Russia – sanctions that were enacted by this Congress.
  
- Fourth, the President has invited Russia back into the G-7, a move opposed by our allies and that will reward Putin without obtaining any concession in return.
  
- And Fifth, the Administration announced earlier this month that it will redeploy 9,500 U.S. military forces from Germany. Reducing the U.S. military presence in Europe is precisely what will embolden Putin to think he can achieve his aims with no consequences. Those forces play a critical role in signaling U.S. resolve on the continent.

As for what we can do as a country to counter this threat from Russia, let me list them here, and we can discuss them further in the Q and A.

First, I believe we must make clear to Putin through public and private diplomacy where the lines are that cannot be crossed – that he will not get away with attacks against our forces and that we will respond with further diplomatic isolation, sanctions, and military force, if necessary, to defend our troops.

Second, we should recommit ourselves to the NATO alliance, stop undermining them, and make clear that NATO remains the most important military alliance in the world.

Third, we should redouble our efforts here in our country to ensure that we have a free and fair election, where everyone who is eligible to vote *can* vote and where the election is free from Russian interference.

Fourth, we should carefully read and listen to intelligence assessments about Russia. This information is collected at great risk, and our professionals who have spent their careers analyzing the Russian Federation can help inform our policies. No leader can act without good intelligence.

Fifth, we should suspend any actions to redeploy forces from Europe – and in fact, I believe we ought to be looking at higher numbers of troops in Europe given the threats we face there.

And finally, I think we need to rededicate ourselves to the values that make America strong and free – because at the end of the day, what Putin fears most is the spread of our values. We must return to being champions of freedom of the press, freedom of speech, equality for all of our citizens ... because this – not any weapons system or nuclear missile – is the true source of strength as a nation.

Which brings me back to the issue of bounties paid to kill our troops. Putin knows that in a democracy like ours, the images of U.S. servicemembers being returned in flag-draped transfer cases will be broadcast throughout our media ... it will spark outrage from families and also from Members of Congress ... and it will, over time, sap the will of the American people to stay committed to the mission. And in particular, if he knows that he will pay **zero price** from this Administration for such conduct – because he can deny it, and his denials will be believed over our own intelligence professionals -- than the benefits for Putin far outweigh the costs.

As Secretary of Defense and as CIA Director, I signed orders sending young men and women into harm's way. I went to Dover Air Force Base to receive home our fallen heroes, and I met with the loved ones of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice. I went to Arlington, to present a folded flag to the next of kin and to thank them "on behalf of a grateful nation."

This is not an academic exercise for me ... this is life and death. *And so Mr. Chairman*, there are families in our nation today that deserve an answer to the simple questions of *what did our government do to protect our troops ... and what price will Russia pay for doing this?* I am confident that this Committee will help those families and all Americans get the answers we deserve if we are to be confident that we are doing everything necessary to protect our troops, our national security and our democracy.

- End -

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your testimony, the comprehensive breadth that you gave to that.

I will now recognize members for 5 minutes each, pursuant to the House rules. All time yielded is for the purposes of questioning our witness.

Because of the virtual format of the hearing, I will be recognizing members by committee seniority, alternating between Democrats and Republicans. And if any of you miss your turn, please let your staff know, and we will circle back to you. If you seek recognition, you must unmute your microphone and address the chair verbally. And I will start this by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Secretary, I would like to start where you ended your opening remarks. In my life, in my younger years, the most sensitive conversations I had with my father and my grandmother were when they were talking about the circumstances around which my uncle was killed in action. It left an indelible imprint in my mind and my values.

So I agree with you, this is about being responsible and respecting our servicemen and—women and families who lost loved ones.

And so I just want to underscore your point, honoring our fallen heroes and their loved ones would mean taking action—taking action—creating consequences, to hold Putin and the Kremlin accountable, correct.

Also, I just want to start with your background in terms of your intelligence background. I would like to turn next to the intelligence aspect of this.

Would it have been plausible in the administrations that you served in for this type of intelligence not to have been briefed to the President? Not just the initial briefing, but briefings before there were six calls, six personal calls from March thereafter between the President and Putin; before slashing funds for the European Deterrence Initiative, which was set up to curb Russian aggression; before inviting Russia and Putin to the newly constructed G8, after they were thrown out for their aggressive actions in Ukraine that resulted in 13,000-plus Ukraine deaths; and before ordering a quarter of our troops out of Germany. Is it plausible that there would not be a briefing in the administrations you served with in any of those instances?

Mr. PANETTA. The role of Commander in Chief is to be able to support and defend our men and women in uniform who do put their lives on the line in order to protect our country. And if we received intelligence—frankly, as you have heard, intelligence that is presented as part of the PDB varies in terms of its credibility. And it can be low credibility, it can be moderate, it can be high credibility.

But if there is intelligence that indicates that there is a possibility that the Russians were putting a bounty or putting a price on the heads of men and women in uniform, that intelligence would be brought to the attention of the President immediately, because that does involve the lives of our men and women in uniform, that does involve the responsibility that the President and our military leaders have to be able to protect those that are out there in combat.

So I find it very surprising that that kind of information was not brought directly to the President of the United States. I think that the National Security Advisor, I think those who provide the intelligence briefings to the President, have an obligation—an obligation—to bring that kind of sensitive intelligence to the attention of the President of the United States.

Mr. KEATING. Well, quickly, Mr. Secretary, if I could, there has been a lot of discussion about the levels of certainty. And again, given your background, would it be something—maybe you can give us some—shed some light on these things.

It would not be random or noncorroborated at all, in your experience, if something was brought to the Presidential Daily Briefing, if it was information, it was shared—very high intelligence information—shared with an ally like the U.K., and that has been reported in this instance, so they could protect their troops? Or maybe you could tell us about the CIA WIR, the World Intelligence Review, and these are significant benchmarks of intelligence.

I am almost out of time, but if you can just shed some light, because this seems to be the discussion of the week.

Mr. PANETTA. Well, again, there is no question that, certainly when I was Director of the CIA, if we had information that that was taking place and it involved our NATO allies, that we would immediately share that with our allies so that they would be aware of it as well, because it involves their lives.

And so, first of all, it would be shared with our allies. But most importantly, it is the kind of intelligence that I think it is the duty of those in the White House and in the intelligence community to bring that information to the President. Even though they may think it is not fully corroborated, even though they may think it is not fully backed up, that does not make any difference. That is very sensitive intelligence information that the President of the United States should know and should act upon.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. That is right on point, and thank you for answering it so directly.

I now call on Representative Kinzinger, who can have the additional time that I took if he so desires, to go over the 5 minutes.

Representative KINZINGER.

Mr. KINZINGER. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here.

I think the question of was the President briefed, I mean, I believe he was not. I believe that we can debate, and I think it is probably a good debate within the administration, of whether he should have been, because as the Secretary mentioned, it is a pretty serious accusation. I am not sure if the intel was to the point yet of actionable, and so I think a decision was made there.

You know, one of my concerns about this is Russia and, quite honestly, foreign policy should be a bipartisan issue. And I think—and it is nobody on this committee, and I mean that—but some people quickly jump to accusations of “the President loves Russia” and this kind of stuff, and I think what that does is it makes it more likely that this becomes partisan and that both sides get defensive.

But that said, I think we need to get to the bottom of it, and I think it is a very, very serious accusation that we should find out if true.

Mr. Secretary, do the Russians want to accelerate the U.S. withdrawal in Afghanistan? Do they want to bog us down in the country for the next decade? Or does the outcome not matter for them?

Mr. PANETTA. I think the answer is “yes” to all of the above, because I think their interest is to try to undermine the position of the United States there. And they are going to take advantage of every opportunity.

I mean, if they think—and I think this is probably the more likely scenario—if they think that the President is going to be trying to remove our forces from Afghanistan, they are going to try to do everything possible to try to encourage that result.

And I think part of what was involved in this possible intelligence was that they were trying to, obviously, get Americans killed, have those bodies returned to Dover, and have those families basically say that enough is enough, and urge the President to bring those troops home. I think that was part of the game here.

But in my experience the Russians were involved in a number of ways with the Taliban and with our enemies, either providing support or providing weapons, to try to assist those that were going after American men and women.

Mr. KINZINGER. So let me ask you two questions then—and I think the point you make is extremely important—two specific questions.

If this intel is proven correct and we get whatever, high confidence, we find out it is correct, what do you think we should do in response?

And then also, if you could piggyback on that, what do you think we should do with regards to the, quote/unquote, peace deal?

I disagree with a lot of what the administration is doing on Afghanistan, to be very clear. I think it is a relatively minor investment for what the alternative would be if we left. But if you could answer those, that would be great.

Mr. PANETTA. Look, I think it is very important that if this information is further corroborated, that the President of the United States has to make very clear—and the President has to do this—the President has to make very clear to Russia and to Putin that we will not tolerate this kind of behavior and that we are going to take all necessary action to protect and defend our forces.

He needs to get that message. We do not have to go into particulars. But I think that larger message needs to be sent, that this is not to be tolerated.

With regards to the situation in Afghanistan, I think we have got to be very careful not to make the same mistake we made in Iraq.

And I was concerned about that because I thought if we withdrew all of our forces there and did not continue to have a presence in Iraq, in trying to work with their security forces, with their intelligence forces, to be able to deal with al-Qaeda and try to make sure that they did not restore any kind of power in Iraq, that what would happen is exactly what did happen, which is the creation of ISIS, and then the invasion, and then the necessity for the United States to go back in and try to defend that.

Now, if we just suddenly pull out all of our forces out of Afghanistan and do not have some kind of rational basis on which to maintain a presence, to make sure that the Taliban does not take control of that country and that al-Qaeda and ISIS do not take control of that country, then I think we are making a big mistake.

So it is not so much whether or not we ought to look at the possibility of withdrawing some of our forces there. The bigger question for me is, are you taking steps to make sure that you are not handing Afghanistan back to those who attacked us on 9/11?

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you. And, Mr. Secretary, a great deal of respect for you. Thank you for being here.

The last thing I will say is, in Afghanistan the difference between the Russians and us is the Afghan people want us there. It is 80 or 90 percent agreement.

So with that, thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary. I yield back.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. [Inaudible] Is Mr. Meeks of New York.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your testimony. Thank you for being here. And thank you for being the great patriot that you are and all that you have done.

You have talked, and listening to your testimony today, you observed that the administration has been slow to enforce the sanctions against Russia.

So now, in light of the credible allegations that the Russian Government put bounties on our U.S. armed services in Afghanistan, my question is, can you talk to the effectiveness of the United States' current sanctions regime?

And are the sanctions that we have in place now an effective instrument to counter what I call Putinism? That is President Putin's brand of authoritarianism and economic kleptocracy.

And how would you counter those who say, because some say Putin's approval ratings may be on the decline, but sanctions have done little to deter Russian aggression worldwide.

So what would you say about that and about what we need to do and what kind of sanctions we should put in place?

Mr. PANETTA. Yes, thank you for that question.

Look, I would urge the administration to look at their approach to sanctions against Iran and apply those same sanctions, same processes, that they have applied there. And they have applied very strong sanctions against Iran in every area. We have gone after their banking capability. We have gone after their ability to sell oil. We have gone after the very heart of their economic ability to stay alive. We have done that.

And the argument by the administration is that continuing to press on those sanctions is, in their minds, what will bring Iran ultimately to the table to negotiate.

Now, I am not sure that is going to be the ultimate approach here. But what I am saying to the administration, I think what should be said to the administration, take the same approach that you are using against one adversary, Iran, and apply exactly the same kind of pressures with regards to Russia. Because if we did, mark my words, it would send a clear signal to Putin that we are

serious about making sure that they stop the aggression that they have been involved with.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you for that. I think that that gives us more work that we could do in Congress as far as passing those similar-type sanctions that you just indicated that we have on Iran, on Russia, and see what the President does with that.

Because as I said in yesterday's hearing, for his silence, not even saying that he is going to go after and check out everything, and if there is anything that is possible to be found he is going to go after them, we have not heard that. We have not heard anything from the administration. And silence, in my viewpoint, is complicit to a large degree.

And when it comes to our men and women who are putting their lives on the line, we have got to stand up for them in that regard.

And in my last few minutes, you also testified about the strong support and the need for us to make sure that NATO—in our Transatlantic Economic Relations Subcommittee, of which I am the co-chair, of the NATO PA, we have had this conversation going back and forth, and I make the case that a strong NATO is beneficial to the United States and our transatlantic relations, just as you have.

So you have explained to a large degree why the U.S. support for the Euro-Atlantic security institutions, like NATO, serve as the bulkhead against Russian aggression and that we do not need to withdraw our troops from Germany. So can you better say how we should send that message to the American people, so that they know that we need to make this stronger case about how important NATO is to us and our national security interests?

Mr. PANETTA. Well, I am a strong believer in the importance of our NATO relationship. As both Director of the CIA and also as Secretary of Defense, I cannot tell you how important it was to be able to work with our allies, not only in sharing intelligence, but in doing security work together and in taking steps to be able to protect the security of Europe and of the United States.

I mean, we could not have done that without NATO. This goes back to what Harry Truman did, for God's sakes, in establishing not only NATO, but the Marshall Plan and the other steps that were taken, in order to contain Russia. And they have been successful, I think in some measure were responsible for bringing down the Berlin Wall.

So I am a big believer that we need to maintain our NATO alliance and to maintain our presence there.

I think the President ought to do two things.

No. 1, make clear to Russia that we will not tolerate the Russians doing anything to target our men and women in uniform.

Two, that we are going to maintain our force strength in Germany and elsewhere as part of our NATO commitment to ensure that Russia will not take any steps of aggression against other former Soviet States.

And third, I think, diplomatically, strengthening those sanctions you talked about should be part of the package, so that Putin gets a clear message that we are not going to tolerate his behavior. That message of strength will take us a long way toward making clear

that Putin is going to pay a price for behaving the way he does. And right now, that message is not there.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

The chair recognizes Representative Brian Fitzpatrick from Pennsylvania.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for calling such an amazing and highly respected witness.

And, Mr. Secretary, I always say this when I talk to you, the apple does not fall far from the tree with your son, the finest man I know.

And thank you for being you, thank you for always putting your country ahead of your party. Because of that, you have more respect than you realize across the political spectrum, including from every Republican that I know. And I wish we could clone and replicate you, sir.

So I just wanted to say that at the outset.

Two things. And I had to jump off, so I do not know if this question was asked before. No. 1, with regard to—because in your role as Director of the CIA—if you could just help me and the panel and my colleagues understand how the Presidential Daily Briefing works, as far as inclusion, exclusion, what gets orally briefed versus what does not, and to what extent different people should be held responsible regarding omissions.

And my second question is, with regard to Vladimir Putin, who you probably understand better than any of us, what do you believe his ultimate goals are, and what do you believe his greatest fear is? Because it is always helpful to know what these people fear. What do you think he fears?

Mr. PANETTA. Okay. Thank you for that question.

You have had some testimony to this respect, but basically what we do with the Presidential Daily Brief is to summarize all of the intelligence that has come in during that evening that involves threats to the United States. I mean, it can contain other information, but it is largely dealing with threats that are out there.

And there is a lot of work done to scrub the information that comes in. There is a great deal of information that comes in from all of our sources around the world, and so there is a process of trying to scrub down what is the key intelligence that we are receiving and that the President should be informed of. That is contained then in the PDB.

For those of you that have not seen a PDB, it can be a number of pages, depending on the intelligence that has come across, but it is not—you know, I understand the President's reluctance to look at some of that stuff. I have to tell you, it is not a very comforting read when you look at the PDB, because you are reading about all the threats that are possible against the United States, and it can start your day off on the wrong foot by virtue of that.

But nevertheless, it is important information that the President needs to have and that other policymakers need to have.

And so when it is presented to the President in the briefings, I mean, do not forget, this PDB is circulated not just to the President, it is circulated to other key individuals in the administration—the National Security Advisor, to the Chief of Staff, to the

Cabinet, key Cabinet members, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State—so that all of them are briefed.

I mean, normally a briefer is assigned to all of those key people. And the briefer will go through the PDB. I mean, your first responsibility is to read the PDB, and it is, as I said, it is a lengthy read. So it is important to have a good briefer.

The briefer will sit down and go through the key elements of the briefing and highlight key information and respond to your questions. That is usually what is done, and I am sure it is done with the President and with these other individuals.

So in some ways, even though the briefer may not have touched on everything, it is the responsibility of the person who gets the PDB to read the damn thing. And as I said, I know it is tough. I know it can be time consuming. But there is a lot of important information there.

So I am a little concerned that other people who, if this was, in fact, contained in the PDB, why others did not raise this as well as a result of it. It is not just up to the briefer. It is also up to the individual who has to read the PDB.

With regards to Putin, I do not think there is any question, as I mentioned—and I think Bob Gates got it right—this guy is a KGB officer. He thinks like a KGB officer. He is immersed in all of the tactics and the methods of spies. That is what he cares about.

I will tell you just quickly one incidence. When we were dealing with ten Russian agents who had been planted here in the United States, and we were able to discover that they were there, we arrested them and we tried to work out—and we did—work out a trade with Russia.

At the time I talked to my Russian counterpart, with the intelligence there, and I said: Will you agree to this trade? And he said at that time—and Putin was not even President—he said: We have to talk to Putin about whether or not we can make this trade. So Putin had his hands on all of that, the intelligence, in trade, that goes on.

His goals are to really restore the former Soviet Union. He thinks that that was a great tragedy, that they were weakened. And I think his goal is to gradually do what he did in Crimea with regards to others, other countries that were former members of the Soviet State.

His greatest fear—his greatest fear—is that if the United States remains strong and remains true to our values, that ultimately, if we can work with our allies, that we can weaken Russia and bring them down the same way that the former Soviet Union went down. That is what he fears. And that is why his primary goal is to undermine our strength and undermine our values.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Very helpful for that perspective, Mr. Secretary. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

The chair recognizes Mr. David Cicilline from Rhode Island.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for convening this hearing.

Mr. Panetta, Mr. Secretary, just to let you know, the admiration of your son is bipartisan. So we all feel a tremendous honor to serve with him.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you for your extraordinary service to our country.

As you said, we have no more sacred responsibility than to honor the lives lost in defense of our country. And sharing words of appreciation is not sufficient. We must act consistent with that obligation, and our most basic response has to be to condemn this action, punish it, and deter it from ever happening again.

And, of course, the President has to understand that his responsibility as Commander in Chief to support and defend our men and women in uniform goes beyond trying to plan a military parade, but actually is fundamentally his most important responsibility.

And when the briefing was provided to the senior members of our caucus at the White House, Mr. Hoyer came out of that briefing and said, "Nothing in this briefing that we have just received led me to believe it is a hoax," which is what the President claimed. And Mr. Engel, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, said the American people deserve to know why the President did not condemn Vladimir Putin: "For God's sake, these are our soldiers, and if we are not going to protect them, what are we going to do?"

And so my question is, the National Security Advisor, Mr. O'Brien, began to prepare options for the President to consider in response to this intelligence. And so my first question is, is it the normal case that there has to be some level of intelligence before the difficult process of developing a set of options to respond occurs?

And second, in order to be included in the Presidential Daily Brief there has to be some intelligence to support it, whether it is moderate, high, or low confidence. But the Presidential Daily Brief does include rumors or innuendos or unsupported allegations, is that fair to say?

Mr. PANETTA. Absolutely. The intelligence that is there ranges across a vast spectrum of credibility. But let me just give you an example.

If there were intelligence there that a nuclear weapon had been planted someplace in Washington, DC, and let's assume that there just was not a lot of credibility assigned to it, but just the mere fact that there may be a nuclear weapon in Washington, DC, is significant enough that you better damn well alert the President of the United States to that possibility.

Mr. CICILLINE. Yes. And I think the challenge and the question that I had, Mr. Secretary, is sort of the elephant in the room, and that is, you have spokayen a lot about strong condemnations, about not moving troops out of Europe, a number of steps, working more closely with our allies.

But these are suggestions you made in the context of a President who from the day he took office has expressed admiration for Vladimir Putin, has described Russian interference in our Presidential campaign as a hoax, stood at Helsinki and sided with Vladimir Putin against the U.S. intelligence community.

And so my question is two-part, is, what can we do in that context where the President of the United States refuses to do all the things you described? Can Congress substitute in a meaningful way?

And the second part of that question is, what damage does it do and what does Vladimir Putin think when he hears the President say those things and behave that way in terms of future aggression?

Mr. PANETTA. Well, as all of you know, you know, the Members of Congress, obviously, you can play a very important role in terms of oversight. You can play a very important role in terms of trying to move legislation that will send a message. You can play a very important role in terms of what you do to educate your constituencies about these issues. But, in the end, it is the President of the United States who is Commander in Chief and who has the power to be able to speak on behalf of the United States to our foreign adversaries.

I find it really difficult—and, you know, as a former Chief of Staff, having worked with the National Security Advisor—that they would not, when this issue came up, make very clear that the President needs to speak to this issue to Putin and to the country about this possibility. And, you know, they could have made references to the questions they have about the credibility of the intelligence, but the fact is that that intelligence is so critical because it does involve the lives of our men and women in uniform.

I mean, look, you know, as Secretary of Defense and, I am sure, as many of you have gone abroad, and you look into the eyes of our men and women in uniform, and these are brave young people who are willing to fight and die for this country. I mean, talk about getting a sense of confidence about what the strength of America is. Look into the eyes of our men and women in uniform and what they are willing to do. And, if you do that, then we owe them every step necessary to help protect their lives.

And so, when you get this kind of information, I think the National Security Advisor, I think the Chief of Staff, I think the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State should have gone immediately to the President of the United States and said, you need to issue a statement that makes clear to Russia that this should not happen.

I mean, rather than having the President say, “Well, I never saw it,” or, “Nobody ever told me,” and having the National Security Advisor say, “Well, you know, it just was not the right kind of intelligence to present to the President,” I mean, push all of that aside. The fundamental issue is, are you going to protect our forces? Are you going to protect our men and women in uniform? That is what they should have focused on, and that should have been the main message coming out of the White House.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, very much.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

The chair recognizes Mr. Tim Burchett from Tennessee.

Mr. BURCHETT. Right on. Can you hear me, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. KEATING. Loud and clear.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for putting together this important meeting.

Mr. Secretary, I could lay on all the accolades, but I think the best thing that you ever did is make a really cool son. I dig him. He is a good dude, man, and he is a good friend, as I told you earlier.

But, anyway, that is what we do here in the South; we say something nice for you and then we go for the jugular.

Mr. PANETTA. "With all due respect."

Mr. BURCHETT. Yes, "with all due respect," or, "I am putting you on my prayer list," you know. That is the way we gossip too, you know, in church. We say, "Oh, we need pray for old so-and-so. I think he is hitting the bottle a little bit much," you know, or whatever.

But, anyway, hey, all kidding aside, I had a question, and it is changing lanes just a little bit. It is well-documented, though, that the Russians—and for the record, I do not like Putin. I think he is a thug. You know, we try to be diplomats. And I know that is probably—here is Tim Burchett, thinks he is a thug. I know he probably quakes in his Gucci loafers because the 435th most powerful man in Congress is calling him out. But I do not like the guy, I do not care.

But I know it is well-documented that the Russians operated a spy ship called the Yantar. And the ship carries submersibles that can tap into and even sever our undersea fiberoptic cables, which would slow our communication with our allies considerably. Additionally, the Russian subs are known to operate close to these cables.

I was wondering if you could discuss the Russian submarine fleet and specifically the threat that it poses to our undersea cable network and what we can do to protect the flow of data.

Mr. PANETTA. Well, it is a very good point for you to look at, because, make no mistake about it, the Russians are engaged in whatever efforts they can engage in in order to try to either take our technology or interfere with our communication or, obviously, interfere with our election process. You know, that is what the Russians are all about.

Mr. BURCHETT. Right.

Mr. PANETTA. And they do it, obviously, through their intelligence forces and their spies, but they also use their military for that purpose as well.

A lot of what you are asking, you know, wanders into classified territory, so I am a little hesitant—

Mr. BURCHETT. I understand that.

Mr. PANETTA [continuing]. To go into the specific operations.

Mr. BURCHETT. I understand that.

Mr. PANETTA. But make no mistake about it, the Russians are trying to conduct efforts that interfere with the communications that go on between the United States and the rest of the world, and they have very sophisticated equipment to be able to accomplish that. That, I think, should be of concern not just to you but to all Americans.

Mr. BURCHETT. Do you think they would rather sever those cables or would they just tap into them and find out all of our secrets, I guess?

Mr. PANETTA. I think the more important effort for them is to tap in and get that information.

Mr. BURCHETT. Okay.

Well, why do you think they rely so much on techniques like information warfare and the covert special operations in cyber to confront the West? Because they are so effective, or is it just all they have?

Mr. PANETTA. No, you know, it is something we better get smart about, because that could very well be the kind of conflict we are going to have to face in the future.

I mean, I know we focus on conventional wars, I know we focus on potential nuclear wars, but the Russians have developed a hybrid capability that I think is going to become the weapon of the future. It combines cyber with the ability to conduct covert operations, with the ability to have even the military involved to assist others. But it is all done on a covert basis.

And it works very effectively. They have used it in the Ukraine. They have used it in Syria. They have used it elsewhere.

We need to develop that kind of hybrid capability. That is not to say that we do not have some of those same elements. Obviously, we have special forces; we have other technologies that are able to give us some capability. But I think the ability to put together an entire strategy, as they have done, using hybrid methods of warfare has proven very effective in their ability to produce chaos, to undermine stability, and to create the kind of situation that they can then take an advantage of.

So, in many ways, hybrid warfare for the Russians is an arm of their diplomacy so that they can then go in and undermine the strength of whatever country they are dealing with. That is how they operate.

Mr. BURCHETT. All right.

Hey, thank you. I am out of time, but I just want to tell you what an honor it is. And I wish my folks were alive. They probably would not agree much on your politics, but they would dig the results that you get. So I wish they were alive to see this. This is really cool.

Thank you, brother. And say "hey" to Jimmy tonight.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you very much. I will say "hi" for you.

Mr. BURCHETT. Yes, sir, brother. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, the South is the one place in the country where people do not speak with an accent. You know that, do not you?

Mr. KEATING. I am told we have some here in Massachusetts too.

Mr. BURCHETT. If you get pulled over in Tennessee, just say "y'all" and say, "Where can I get a moon pie?" and then—they will probably still throw you in the back of the squad car, so—anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Or a key lime pie.

Let's get serious here and recognize Mr. Costa from California.

Mr. COSTA. I want to thank the chairman of the subcommittee for this important hearing.

And I think we are all honored, on a bipartisan basis, to have Secretary Panetta testify before us. His wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise has obviously been well-stated and—documented.

And, Leon, it is an honor to have been your friend and have worked with you for over 30 years.

And for all my other colleagues who are giving you all the credit for Jimmy, I will not tell them that in the Panetta household there has always been a partnership with Sylvia and it has been a team sport, in terms of service to our Nation and public policy. And so we know that Jimmy not only derives that from you but from his mom as well.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you.

Mr. COSTA. Yes. Give her my regards.

I want to take off on the—first of all, in your summary, you really talked about what constituted a plan that we used during the cold war, on a bipartisan basis, to confront the Soviet Union. And that plan, regardless from administration to administration, in terms of the foundations of that plan, was very successful, because it had continuity and it had bipartisan support, from administration to administration as well as in Congress, where politics, in those days when you served, tended to stop at the water's edge. Not so much these days, unfortunately.

So I guess my question to you is, how would you suggest that we put, reinstitute, a bipartisan plan in place?

I think you talked about what the tenets of that plan could constitute. I think, in doing so, we also—you just noted by my last colleague, who talked about the hybrid implementation that Putin has implemented to undermine the West, us and our allies in Europe—and you have to give him credit. He has taken a limited hand, and he has played it very well.

So I am wondering—because I agree with you. I think the conventional weapons, for a lot of reasons, as we go forward are going to have less of an impact as our ability to deal with these hybrids efforts that involve high-tech and a lot of other things.

I think we have repair work that we need to do on NATO. And I think that

[inaudible] We both are active in the Transatlantic Legislative Dialogue. I would like to get your sense on how much repair work you think we need to do.

You know, people forget that the 71 years of NATO is the longest—longest peacetime period in Europe in over 1,000 years. And we helped that happen, with President Truman, as you noted, not just because we are good people, but that was in our own interest. And it still is in our own interest. And it is critical that we educate.

And, finally, when we talk about an overall strategy, I sometimes—and this is no reference to any sort of ethnic community in the country, but I think Putin and company are kind of the Russian version of the Sopranos. And, in fact, I mean, you know, when you look at the 50 top pals of his and how they have taken so much of Russia's wealth and how much of that is in European banks and

other places—and I have seen their yachts in the Caribbean and in the Mediterranean and the lifestyle they live.

We know where a lot of those bank accounts are, and I am wondering if that could be a part of a hybrid strategy, to grab them where it hurts.

Mr. PANETTA. Good question, Jim. Let me try to do my best to try to mention what I think are the important areas that we need to stress.

Look, first and foremost, obviously, we do have to maintain our military power. We have to be the strongest military power on the face of the Earth. That is critical. And it sends a very important message that the United States has the ability to respond to any threat, not only diplomatically but militarily if necessary. So maintaining a strong military. Developing, obviously, a hybrid capability I think is important as well.

Second, I am a believer, as I stated, in alliances, in the importance of alliances. I think developing alliances is the key to our ability to respond to a number of flashpoints in the world.

I think we are dealing with a lot of flashpoints right now, not just Russia. We are dealing with failed States in the Middle East, we are dealing with Syria, we are dealing with Iran, we are dealing with North Korea, we are dealing with Russia, we are dealing with China, we are dealing with cyber attacks, all of which are threatening our national security.

I think one of the keys to be able to respond to that many threats, first of all, is to have the United States be a world leader. I do not think we should withdraw from leadership in the world. I think we have to be a world leader.

And, as a world leader, I think we ought to be not only strengthening the NATO alliance, which is our primary alliance in dealing with Russia, but I also think we ought to be building new alliances. In Southeast Asia, we ought to be building an alliance with those countries to try to check China.

And I think there is that possibility, if we work with those countries—when I was Secretary of Defense, I was trying to build that kind of relationship on a security basis so that we were working together on security areas. I think we could build an alliance in the Middle East, made up of moderate Arab countries, made up of Israel, to try to deal with the threat from Iran, to try to deal with the threat from terrorism. I think we can build an alliance in South America, in Africa.

I mean, alliances are going to be the key to our ability to preserve peace and prosperity in the future. So I would stress that.

Third, diplomacy. I think it is really critical that we have a strong diplomatic arm available and that we have good diplomats in these areas who represent the United States and who keep their ear to the ground and can tell us what kind of threats are out there.

And I also believe very deeply in a strong intelligence capability. We just cannot do this unless we have information about what the hell our adversaries are up to. We cannot operate in the dark. No leader can operate in the dark. So getting that kind of intelligence is a good thing. It is not a bad thing, it is a good thing, to be able to have our spies and our sources and our capabilities out there

trying to gather information on where these threats are and providing that to our opinion-makers.

But, last, something that you mentioned that I think is really important is, somehow we have got to restore a sense of bipartisanship when it comes to our national security interests. During most of my career in the Congress, even when I was Secretary of Defense, I really worked to get bipartisan support with regards to what I was doing. And I did get bipartisan support, and it was very important.

I think somehow we have to get back to that spirit of bipartisanship. I mean, I know the politics of today, and I know what all of you are putting up with, one way or the other. But, at some point, we really have to be concerned about this country. And, right now, I think Putin looks at the United States and looks at the polarization and the partisanship and the divide that has taken place in our country and sees that as weakness on the part of the United States.

When we are together, when we are working together, there is no country stronger than the United States of America. So I hope at some point we can get back to a spirit of true bipartisanship when it comes to national security issues.

Mr. COSTA. Well, thank you. My time has expired, but I think your point is well-taken. I mean, he has exploited Western elections—been doing it in Europe for longer than he has been doing it in the United States—all with the intention to take our divisions and to undermine our strength of governing. And that is the limited hand that I think he has played pretty well so far.

But I know, Mr. Chairman, my time has expired, but on those three categories, diplomacy, our NATO alliance, are we stronger or weaker than we were 3 years ago or 4 years ago?

Mr. PANETTA. Well, I worry, you know, that we have sent a signal. I mean, when I have gone abroad, our NATO allies are very concerned about the commitment of the United States toward the NATO alliance. And that is not a good—that is not a good thing. So it really is important.

And I commend the Congress, because I think the Congress has spokayen pretty clearly about the importance of protecting NATO. I think it is important for the President of the United States to speak to that importance as much as possible so that our NATO allies know that the United States is going to be a partner and will be there if something should happen.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you.

You know, I want to thank all of our members for being so patient. And if you had to be patient and you had to be somewhere in the country to be patient, I would probably rather be in San Diego than many other places.

The chair would like to recognize Representative Juan Vargas from San Diego.

Mr. VARGAS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Can you hear me, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. KEATING. Loud and clear.

Mr. VARGAS. I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and the ranking member. I appreciate it very much.

And, especially, Mr. Secretary, thank you for being here. I do think that I would be remiss, as my colleagues have already said, if I did not tell you about my affection toward your son, Jimmy. We all like him very much.

Mr. PANETTA. Thank you.

Mr. VARGAS. He is a wonderful Member and a good friend to all of us.

You do have a unique perspective—and, obviously, it has come out in this hearing—because you were the Secretary of Defense, you were the Director of the CIA, and you were the White House Chief of Staff. So I thank you for your words and your perspective.

And, unfortunately, I think you are correct that we are in a new cold war, which I think is sad and too bad. I think a lot of us believed, or wanted to believe, that when the Iron Curtain came down that we were going to be able to work with Russia. You know, Russia does have a lot of Western thought in it. You know, a lot of the bookays that we love, that we read in college, you know, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, they are written by Russians. So a lot of us were hopeful, and, unfortunately, that hope turned to despair, I think, when they went hard-line, especially with Putin.

Now, I have to say that I agree with everything that you have said about the asymmetric deals that this Putin has put on, but this feels different. Putting a bounty on U.S. soldiers to kill them, to me, feels different. When I read about this, when I heard about it, it was, I think, different, almost a red-on-blue attack.

Could you comment about that? Because this, to me, does not feel the same as what he had been doing previously.

Mr. PANETTA. You know, in some ways, it is difficult to believe that an adversary would put bounties out there in order to kill U.S. men and women in combat. And it strikes me as Putin taking a very careless step. I mean, I think it is careless to think that—I mean, assuming that this is true. And, as I said, it sounds like something that might come out of his playbook. But I think it is an indication that Putin feels empowered to do things that he would not otherwise do.

And because he does not pay a price, because, you know, we are not taking steps to make clear to him that this will not be tolerated, I think what it does is it gives him a sense that, yes, you know, we can try to do something that, you know, we may not have done before, but if it is successful and if U.S. men and women are killed as a result of this and if the United States is so depressed by our presence in Afghanistan that we remove our forces from Afghanistan, then it could play to his benefit.

And I think that is the way he thinks. He does not think as a world leader; he really thinks as a former spy.

Mr. VARGAS. Yes.

Mr. PANETTA. And that is, I think, what led to this.

Mr. VARGAS. And, in many senses, it does not only seem careless but reckless too, I mean, incredibly reckless.

Now, assuming for a second that it is true, that, you know, the intelligence comes back and says that this is what they were attempting to do, and, in fact, let's even say that they were even successful, God forbid they were, but let's say that they were—I know one of the things that we have looked at previously and we have

not done is kicked Russia out of SWIFT, out of the banking system that we have that secures these transactions. We have always thought that he would act recklessly, and Medvedev and others have said, you know, you better not do that.

What do you think would happen if we did take a pretty dramatic step to kick them out? I mean, you took a look at Iran. That is what we did to Iran, obviously. What would happen? How would he react?

Mr. PANETTA. Well, you know, it is that old story about, you know, the jackass that would not move, and the guy finally hit the jackass across the head with a stick, and somebody said, "What the hell are you doing?" He says, "Well, I am trying to get its attention."

I think we may have to do something bold in order to get Putin's attention right now. Because I think, right now, Putin does not really believe that the United States is going to respond in a way that is going to really undermine, you know, Russia and undermine him.

So I think it may be necessary to send a bold signal to Russia that he has crossed the line. I think when you take steps to put a price on the heads of our men and women in uniform, that is crossing a line that is unacceptable.

Mr. VARGAS. Yes.

Mr. PANETTA. And I think we do need to send Russia a very clear signal that that is not to be tolerated.

Mr. VARGAS. Well, thank you again. My time has expired.

Mr. Chairman, maybe we need that 2-by-4 then to teach Russia what to do. Thank you again.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mr. KEATING. The chair recognizes Mr. Sherman from California.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Secretary, thanks for your service, and thanks for donating your son to our institution.

The loudest testimony on this we heard yesterday from Secretary Pompeo, whose decision not to come before the full committee speaks volumes about how the policymaking process in the White House and the policies they actually derive there are simply indefensible, cannot be defended.

Russia and the United States have a long history of arming each other's enemies. Thousands of our troops died in Vietnam at the hands of Soviet weapons. Thousands of Russians died in Afghanistan in part because we

[inaudible] The Mujahedeen. But that was at a time when the Soviet Union and the United States were enemies and treated each other as enemies.

For several years, Russia is known to have been providing weapons to the Taliban, and, while occasionally the Taliban strike against ISIS, for the most part those weapons are used to kill Americans. But now they have added this additional obscenity of putting a bounty on the head of American soldiers.

And so they are acting like an enemy. And they have learned that they can act like an enemy and we treat them like a friend. The President bestows great honor and friendship; then he brings up the G8. We still allow our financial institutions to lend money to the Russian State. And we had a law requiring that sanctions

be imposed on the sovereign debt issue, and the Treasury imposed the lightest possible version of these that still allow for Americans to invest in Russian sovereign debt and American banks to lend [inaudible] To a Russian State enterprise.

Of course, those sanctions were [inaudible] Weapons. Indeed, one of those [inaudible] May have killed one of their dissidents in Britain using chemical weapons. And, of course, there is a pipeline being built that will make Germany dependent upon Russian natural gas.

We have limited sources and many flashpoints in the world; I do not think Russia is our only problem. We can have primary sanctions, where we take action ourselves, and secondary sanctions, where we try to convince our allies to do something that is

[inaudible]. We can have economic action. We can sell weapons or provide weapons to Russia's enemies. We can do troop deployments

[inaudible] Whole panoply

[inaudible].

We should at least make it clear that they should not be allowed in the G8 and that American financial institutions should not be lending money to the Russian State or its State-owned enterprises. Would that be a starting place?

Mr. PANETTA. You know, you have outlined the options that are available very well. And I do not think there is any question that any one of those options, whether it was to take away that invitation to the G7, G8, or whether it is to tighten up the sanctions in a way that really would have an impact in terms of Russia, I think doing that would send a message that the United States is not going to simply look in the other direction while the Russians do what they are doing. That signal needs to be sent.

Mr. SHERMAN. I will point out that the tough sanctions on Russian sovereign debt are thought to increase their borrowing costs by about half a percentage point, which in the financial world is very solid, and that we in the House passed my amendment that would accomplish that. It was taken out in the Senate. We will have a chance to do that again with the NDAA bill.

Mr. Secretary, would we also

[inaudible] Providing more weapons than we have to Ukraine and to Georgia?

Mr. PANETTA. Obviously, I think our ability to provide military aid to the Ukraine is extremely important in sending that signal to Russia that we are not going to allow the Ukraine to be taken over by Russia. And I do not think there is any question that we ought to be looking at what additional military aid could we provide that would assist the Ukrainian forces in their efforts to try to maintain their independence.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

And I thank the chair for letting me participate even though I am

[inaudible].

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Sherman.

I will ask the ranking member if he has any closing statements. Otherwise, I will have a few closing remarks thanking the members that participated and you, Mr. Secretary.

You know, there was talk about bipartisanship. You can see through this committee this collegiality, civility. We do not agree on everything, but you can see, I think, and the American public can see Members of Congress do work together and we do understand the importance of that.

I do want to just have a couple of closing remarks. Despite that collegiality, this is as serious as it gets as an issue. This has been, to me and I think most Members, just a heartbreaking and anxious time, with the information that bounties could have actually been placed on our military's head. But what we are suffering through is nothing compared to what our troops that are serving and the family members of the troops who are lost have been going through. And I just want to emphasize our hearts and our conviction. We are with them.

And this is not going to go away. So many issues go away. This issue is going to be like the coronavirus. This is not going away, I will tell you that. As Members of Congress, this will not be the news of the day until we get answers, and we will continue to do that.

There is one thing they should know too. At least in my view, the perception that somehow something came across the President's desk and he missed it just does not cut it with me.

I mean, just in the period between that briefing at the end of February that was on his desk and what transpired the same, that is one swing and miss. There were six calls in preparation, person to person, between our President and Putin—six.

Seventh thing, you know, before the G7 discussions and the invitation, there was another period where you had to sit down and say, "Hey, this is going on" before you give that invitation; before you do something like cut the European deterrence funding, which is one of those popular programs that deters Russia and brings our allies together; before we went to informing the British that this was a threat to them. Are we to believe that our intelligence reached out to the British and said, "By the way, this is a serious threat, we want you to know," and they never did it that to the President?

They had to have done it before they pulled out a quarter of our troops—before he wanted to pull out a quarter of our troops in Germany. He knew the impact of that and what it meant.

And it had to have occurred before or after his top security officials all gathered together, which we know now in a meeting in March, and planned options to react to this.

Those are 11 things off the top of my head. That is not one swing and miss. Those were 11 things. And that is just, I am sure, a partial list.

The other thing that has become clear from this hearing and the ones that preceded it that we should have great confidence in: We absolutely—and there is no doubt in my mind—have the ability to do things to counter this and counter it effectively. It is not a question of being able to do it; it is a question of doing it.

And I am quite optimistic that a whole array of options, many of them, Mr. Secretary, that you brought up today that are so important, can be done, and they will be effective.

And the last point is, we have to do it. We have to act now. Because, as we are discussing this, even with the best of our oversight, the Russians are still, as we speak, attacking and preparing to attack further our electoral process in this next election. That is a given. Our own intelligence is clear and consistent with that. And we have to understand that they will be emboldened by this and further endanger our safety and the safety of our allies and the safety of our troops. We cannot wait. So there is an urgency.

We will continue to do our best. Your presence here today with us helps a great deal. We hope to continue to work with you and get your advice, your counsel, because it is so important, and to move ahead. The people of the United States, the people that serve us, their families deserve nothing less.

So, with that, I adjourn and thank everyone for being here.

By the way, if I could, as I mentioned at the beginning, there will be 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions subject to the rules of this committee. So I repeat that as well. They just have to be done by email.

Mr. KEATING. With that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:05 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

**SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**  
**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment**

**William R. Keating (D-MA), Chairman**

July 10, 2020

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held by the Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment via Cisco Webex (and available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

**DATE:** Friday, July 10, 2020

**TIME:** 2:00 p.m., EDT

**SUBJECT:** With American Lives on the Line, Lessons for Managing the Russia Threat

**WITNESSES:** The Honorable Leon Panetta  
Chairman  
The Panetta Institute for Public Policy  
*(Former United States Secretary of Defense, Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Former White House Chief of Staff)*

**By Direction of the Chairman**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS**  
*EUROPE, EURASIA, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING*

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Note: Red boxes with red type will NOT print.

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Europe, Eurasia, Energy, and the Environment HEARING

Day Friday Date 7/10/2020 Room Cisco Webex

Starting Time 2:29 Ending Time 4:05

Recesses  (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_) (\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_)

Presiding Member(s)

*William R. Keating*

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session

Executive (closed) Session

Televised

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To select a box, mouse click it, or tab to it and use the enter key to select. Another click on the same box will deselect it.

TITLE OF HEARING:

*With American Lives on the Line, Lessons for Managing the Russia Threat*

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

*See Attached*

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an \* if they are not members of full committee.)

*Representative Juan Vargas, Representative Brad Sherman*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes  No

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*Secretary Leon Panetta's Testimony  
Representative Vicente Gonzalez's QFR for Secretary Leon Panetta*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE \_\_\_\_\_

or TIME ADJOURNED 4:05

Clear Form

Note: If listing additional witnesses not included on hearing notice, be sure to include title, agency, etc.

*[Signature]*  
Subcommittee Staff Associate

WHEN COMPLETED: Please print for subcommittee staff director's signature and make at least one copy of the signed form. A signed copy is to be included with the hearing/markup transcript when ready for printing along with a copy of the final meeting notice (both will go into the appendix). The signed original, with a copy of the final meeting notice attached, goes to full committee. An electronic copy of this PDF file may be saved to your hearing folder, if desired.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs  
Europe, Eurasia, Energy and Environment (E4) Subcommittee  
Question for the Record from Congressman Gonzalez for Secretary Panetta  
July 10, 2020**

**Question:**

Libya's Permanent Representative to the UN recently tweeted that the UN Security Council's failure to sanction the Wagner Group and Haftar merits action on the part of the US and the European Union to sanction these individuals for their involvement in the conflict. Are sanctions the right approach for targeting these entities and the individuals associated with them who carry out these attacks? What tools should Congress and the executive branch employ to deter this behavior?

**Answer:**

*Secretary Panetta did not submit a response in time for printing.*

**Question:**

What differences do you see today in the threat posed by Russia, compared to the threats we have faced in the past? Are there any trends in terms of which entities and proxies we see active in different countries or regions?

**Answer:**

*Secretary Panetta did not submit a response in time for printing.*

**Question:**

We have witnessed increased Russian activity and partnership-building around the world. We've also seen China ramp up investment and engagement efforts abroad. How would you differentiate the two countries' objectives and the threats they pose to the U.S.? How should our response to Russia differ from our response to China?

**Answer:**

*Secretary Panetta did not submit a response in time for printing.*