MRT Opening Statement for Arms Control Hearing

[475 words, approx. 3.5 mins]

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am honored to be serving as the Ranking Member on this subcommittee. I have been committed to the work of this subcommittee since entering Congress and am proud to be back in a leadership position on the Strategic Forces subcommittee.

This is the first open public hearing that the Strategic Forces subcommittee is having in the 116th Congress and I am pleased that it is on “INF and the Future of Arms Control.” I believe that the future of arms control is bright as long as it is rooted in enhancing our national security interests, robust verification regimes, and produces treaties that are adhered to by all parties. For all these reasons I support the decision to suspend our obligations under the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty.

Too often arms control treaties are held up as sacrosanct idols of peace, when in fact arms control treaties are only a singular tool in statecraft to help enhance the national security interests of the participants and reduce the risk for miscalculation leading to armed conflict. They are not based on trust, but instead must be enforced with transparent robust verification regimes. Allowing any arms control treaty to continue existing while in contravention to these basic principles undermines the legitimacy of all other arms control regimes.

This administration was justified in walking away from INF. In 2013 the Obama Administration admitted that Russia was violating INF because of its 9M729 cruise missile. Over the next five years and across two administrations we attempted to incentivize Russia back into compliance. Those efforts failed. And so we were left in the position of self-imposed limitations, Russian INF-violating systems being developed, and the realization that China was fielding ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles at an alarming rate.

And we weren’t the only one’s seeing this disturbing trend. Our allies in NATO recognized all of these trends and laid the responsibility for the fate of INF at Russia’s feet in a very strongly worded statement issued by the North Atlantic Council on February 1, 2019.

People have speculated that U.S. suspension and withdrawal of INF implies that this administration will not extend New START, which is expires in 2021. To be clear, this administration has not yet made a decision on this issue, and has committed to remaining in compliance with New START.

I believe arms control can be an effective tool to help reduce the risk for miscalculation and enhance our national security. But only if it is adhered to and verified. If Russia is interested in arms control, then it is Russian behavior that must change. We have stood by our commitments and will continue to do so with the support of our partners and allies around the world.

I look forward to hearing the perspectives of our witness and look forward to a robust dialogue.