

Statement by

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Introduction

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Rogers, distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on policy matters related to the U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) area of responsibility. I would like to express my appreciation for the continued support from Congress, and this Committee, in shaping and resourcing the Department of Defense (DoD)'s efforts in this region. It is an honor to appear beside General Wolters, an outstanding partner.

This time last year, DoD spoke of strategic competition and how that was shaping our world. But today, what we see is no longer a mere theory of strategic competition, where countries like Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) attempt to shape the political, economic, and military decisions of their neighbors through coercion or other malign influence. Instead, Russia has engaged in an unconscionable and illegal use of force in its premeditated, unprovoked aggression against our partner Ukraine. The veil has been cast off and Russia's complete and total disregard for the principles and agreements that have enabled security, stability, and prosperity in Europe for decades is clear to see.

The unjustified and senseless war that Russia is carrying out in Ukraine violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a peaceful nation and its people. Russia's aggression threatens not only Ukraine, but also Europe's broader security architecture and the rules-based international order. We must continually assess our approach and posture in Europe to reflect the evolving strategic landscape, making adjustments as necessary, while maintaining the critical role of the NATO Alliance in securing shared interests and values in the region and not propelling the United States toward escalation with a nuclear-armed state.

The Department has three priorities in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. First, we aim to bolster Ukraine's ability to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, for which Congress' assistance is vital. Second, we seek to maintain unity with our NATO Allies and our partners. Finally, we continue to try to deter any Russian aggression against—and defend every inch of—Allied territory, without getting into a military conflict with Russia.

The Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's war of choice against Ukraine is the latest and largest manifestation of Russian willingness to break international norms and use military force to attempt to shape the world more favorably to its interests and consistent with its authoritarian model. President Putin's fallacious claims of ownership of Ukraine due to linguistic, cultural, historic, and religious ties are the pretext for Russia's unprovoked, premeditated and unlawful war against Ukraine. Russia's unjustified invasion represents a serious escalation beyond Russia's previous campaign of interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, including our own, often in the form of election interference and social media manipulation in attempts to sow disunion and mistrust. Russia also has used military force and other acts of coercion and intimidation to achieve its objectives, including use of chemical weapons, in violation of its own obligations under international law.

But this time, Russia based its actions on lies: claims of mistreatment of Russia by the West, allegations that the Soviet Union's dissolution was fabricated by the United States, and the assertion that Ukraine should not exist. Russia is using force and aggression in an attempt to rewrite history, and European security architecture, and in the process is bringing to light the stark contrast between our democratic values of freedom and Russia's autocratic, forceful vision. I am proud to say that, with a leading role from the United States, the global response to Russia's aggression has been remarkable --- with unprecedented sanctions, a wide range of global humanitarian and security assistance flowing to Ukraine, and commitments to increased defense investments by Allies. We have seen condemnation from all corners of the globe, including even those who have typically been either silent, complicit, or supportive of other egregious Russian acts.

In Europe, NATO Allies, non-NATO European partners, and the EU have stepped up to this crisis with historic transatlantic unity and responsibility sharing, by pledging or delivering assistance to Ukraine, ranging from non-lethal assistance, such as helmets and medical supplies, to defensive lethal equipment such as Stingers, Javelins, and ammunition. The speed of change has been impressive, illustrated by Germany's announcement to provide lethal assistance and meet NATO's benchmark of two percent defense spending, and the decisions of Norway, Sweden, and Finland to provide lethal assistance to Ukraine. It's clear that Russia's unwarranted, unprovoked, and unjustified war against Ukraine has changed the paradigm of transatlantic defense policy, and by extension, this will have profound implications for our future in the U.S European Command (USEUCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR).

U.S. Strategic Objectives and Posture in Europe

In Europe and around the world, the United States, its Allies, and partners are facing accelerating challenges, not only the tangible Russian threat I've just described, but also cross-cutting issues. As the Biden Administration's Interim National Security Strategic Guidance highlights, threats to our security and stability including the pandemic, climate crisis, and nuclear proliferation respect no borders and can only be met with collective action. Yet powerful authoritarian states including Russia and the PRC are attempting to weaken the U.S. alliance network and the international system of norms and rules that have maintained global peace and stability for more than 70 years. Indeed, Russia's premeditated, unprovoked war on Ukraine is the most violent act of aggression that Europe has seen since World War II.

As part of our commitment to upholding the principles of the rules-based international order and to the security of our NATO Allies, the United States maintains significant combat-capable forces in Europe. These forward-deployed forces help to deter aggression and if deterrence fails, stand shoulder to shoulder with our Allies to defend the Alliance. After Russia's invasion and purported annexation of Crimea in 2014, the United States, with the support of Congress, embarked on substantial changes to our posture in Europe. This involved infrastructure improvements, building partner capacity, increased rotational presence, more exercises and training with Allies, and enhanced prepositioned equipment and stocks. We also focused more time and energy expanding our access, basing, and overflight permissions in Europe, especially on the eastern flank of NATO. In addition, Congress has also met DoD requests for increased security assistance funding to our eastern flank partners. All of these

moves since 2014 came into play during this crisis, validating our shifts in real time.

While some may question the need for forward deployed forces in Europe, as Russia's invasion of Ukraine unfolds, the significant combat power the United States stationed in or deployed to the USEUCOM AOR, puts the United States in position to assure our Allies and deter aggression against the Alliance. We swiftly repositioned forces already in Europe and deployed significant additional capabilities. In the last two months, these adjustments included placing the entire U.S. commitment to the NATO Response Force on heightened readiness; repositioning forces to multiple eastern flank Allies; extending or bolstering maritime forces already in the USEUCOM AOR; and deploying additional air, ground, space, and cyberspace capabilities. With these recent deployments and extensions, by the time Russia further invaded Ukraine, the United States now has approximately 100,000 military personnel either stationed in or deployed to Europe and its waters. This presence builds on our longstanding commitment to European security. As President Biden has made clear, no U.S. forces deployed in Europe are going to fight in Ukraine. We are continuing to adjust our posture as conditions evolve, and we will consult closely with NATO Allies to ensure an appropriate collective posture of deterrence and defense.

2021 also saw another major crisis that required in depth integration with our European Allies, the evacuation of Afghanistan. It is worth noting the critical and important role that U.S. basing in Germany, Italy, Spain, Kosovo, and other locations across Europe played in rescuing tens of thousands of American, ally, and Afghan partners. The amazing support of our host-nation communities, which provided an out-pouring of support for the evacuees and travelers was a sight to behold.

The Importance of NATO and European Partners

As current events demonstrate, NATO is vital to U.S. strategy in Europe, our ability to defend and deter against Russia's aggression, and addressing new and emerging challenges from a position of strength. NATO guarantees the security of the Alliance's territory and its one billion citizens. The Alliance safeguards fundamental values of individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The greatest responsibility of the Alliance is to protect and defend our territories and our populations against attack. President Biden and Secretary Austin have made clear that our commitment to NATO's Article 5 collective defense obligation is ironclad.

In the face of Russia's terrible aggression, we are gratified to see the unifying steps being taken at NATO, including the commitments of Allies to bolster NATO's Eastern Flank. NATO is stronger than ever before and unified to the highest degree. We will take measures and decisions required to ensure the security and defense of all Allies. As the Alliance adapts its defense and deterrence posture, we will continue to ask Allies to provide additional contributions to address the implications of Russia's aggression.

We are engaging with NATO Allies, through NATO and bilaterally, to ensure that NATO is prepared for modern challenges and is able to deter aggression from any adversary. All NATO Allies share in the responsibility to procure, prepare, and provide the ready and

interoperable forces and capabilities necessary to present a credible deterrence and defense. Allies have made considerable progress on the “Three C’s” of responsibility sharing: Cash, Contributions, and Capabilities. This progress is producing results as we respond to Russia’s war of choice against Ukraine. Allies have deployed defensive land and air forces in the eastern part of the Alliance, and maritime assets across the NATO area. We have activated NATO’s defense plans to prepare ourselves to respond to a range of contingencies and secure Alliance territory, including by drawing on the NATO Response Force. In summary, NATO has proven that it is willing and ready to make all deployments necessary to ensure strong and credible deterrence and defense across the Alliance, now and into the future.

We are encouraged that 2021 was the seventh year of steady defense spending increases by our allies, and we expect this trend to continue. Still, we continue to strongly encourage our NATO Allies to increase their defense budgets, increase their procurement of needed capabilities, and increase their contributions to NATO operations. As Secretary Austin has told our allies, the Wales pledge to spend 2% of GDP on Defense is a floor, not a ceiling. Despite the economic impacts of COVID-19, Allies are answering the call for greater investment – the public health crisis we all faced did not become a security crisis as countries maintained spending on defense. The Department will continue to press this issue at NATO as the European security environment evolves. We will continue to work with NATO Allies to share responsibilities equitably and invest in our comparative advantages to ensure NATO’s deterrence and defense posture is fit to meet the security challenges facing the Alliance today and into the future.

The upcoming NATO Summit in June 2022 will be an important gathering to ensure that the Alliance can fully deliver on its 2030 Agenda. This includes, as one major line of effort, a commitment from last year’s Summit to increase NATO’s common-funded budgets, for deterrence and defense and other functions, and the recommended requirements for this are now being developed in detail by Alliance staffs. Another central line of effort for this June’s Summit will be to finalize and endorse the Alliance’s new Strategic Concept – the first since 2010. The Department is working, with interagency counterparts, to ensure that the updated Strategic Concept addresses immediate threats from Russia; systemic challenges from the PRC; the priority of deterrence and defense capabilities; continued threats from terrorism and other external sources; and various emerging challenges, including climate change, cyber, space activities, the security of critical infrastructure, resurgent authoritarianism and other components of resilience.

In addition to regular engagement with our NATO Allies, the Department continues to pursue and emphasize close coordination between NATO and the European Union (EU). One area of particular importance in this cooperation is military mobility. The ability to move forces seamlessly across Europe is a flagship project of NATO-EU cooperation. In a strong display of transatlantic unity, NATO and the EU are working together, drawing from their distinctive sets of tools, to defend the foundational principles underpinning European security. We remain supportive of EU efforts to develop its own defense initiatives, but the EU efforts must not duplicate, and should complement, NATO’s intended efforts. We are also pleased that the EU has listened to the U.S. and other allies in making its programs more transparent and open to non-EU NATO Allies to maximize our ability to deter common adversaries effectively. DoD

was pleased to join an EU Permanently Structured Cooperation – or PESCO – project for the first time in May 2021. And we are similarly pleased that the EU granted the European Defense Agency a negotiating mandate so that it could conclude an Administrative Arrangement with DoD, a precursor for additional cooperative steps in the years to come.

Ukraine

Russia's unprovoked, premeditated, full scale-invasion of Ukraine pose the gravest threat to Euro-Atlantic security in decades. The United States condemns Russia's war against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms and deplors the tragic loss of life, enormous human suffering, and destruction caused by Russia's actions. Russia's attempt to re-draw international borders by force directly undermines the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that upholds the international order and helps ensure peace in Europe.

Russia's persistent campaign to destabilize Ukraine's defense, economic, and political sectors has included not only military offensive operations, but also means including hybrid war tactics such as disinformation operations, denying freedom of navigation in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov, and cyber-attacks. Russia's premeditated and wholly unjustified full-scale invasion of Ukraine is an unacceptable escalation and the world is holding Russia accountable for its actions.

The United States does not seek conflict with Russia and calls on Moscow to immediately stop the war, remove its troops from Ukraine, and engage in good faith diplomatic efforts. Russia hopes its efforts will bolster its goal to dominate the region and pre-judge Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations. We will not accept such an outcome. NATO accession is a matter between NATO and an aspirant country; no other country has a veto.

We will continue to provide defensive security assistance to help the Ukrainian people as they defend their country. The United States in coordination with allies and partners will maintain economic sanctions until the Russian Government respects the sovereignty of Ukraine and fully withdraws its forces in accordance with its international obligations and commitments.

The United States has committed more than \$4 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since 2014, more than \$2 billion committed since 2021 alone, and the United States will continue to support Ukraine's front-line defenders and bolster Ukraine's ability to defend its territorial, and repel Russia's invading forces.

Russia

As witnessed by its recent full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia will be a primary, enduring security challenge for the United States and Europe, regardless of the outcomes of its long-planned and unprovoked war against Ukraine. Its core security interests remain inimical to those of the United States and our Allies, and Russia is likely to challenge U.S. and Allied interests and act as a destabilizing actor for the foreseeable future.

Russia continues to invest in its conventional and nuclear forces to offset NATO and U.S.

conventional military advantages. This includes fielding nuclear-armed hypersonic weapons and a variety of non-strategic nuclear weapons, including land-, sea-, and air-based systems, many of which are dual capable. Its nuclear arsenal backs a military doctrine that emphasizes the coercive military value of nuclear weapons, including limited nuclear first-use in conventional regional conflict, at multiple levels of the conflict spectrum. As we have seen even recently, Russia routinely threatens nuclear use irresponsibly and often casually, causing alarm with its nuclear saber-rattling, including in conjunction with its renewed invasion of Ukraine. We are also likely to face Russian systems and methods of warfare as Russia proliferates military capabilities to others, including the potential basing of nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Russia is also working to integrate space and cyberspace capabilities into its arsenal, as it looks to asymmetric options to undermine U.S. and NATO's conventional advantages. Russia has already demonstrated its potent cyber capabilities against U.S., allied, and partner targets. Although the Russian Government publicly claims it does not intend to weaponize space, it continues to modernize its space-based and ground-based counter-space capabilities intended to disrupt satellite command and control, communications, and intelligence capabilities. These capabilities can affect more than just U.S. and NATO military forces, and could potentially disrupt or deny the free access to, and peaceful use of space for all space operators. Last year, Russia demonstrated the willingness to use these capabilities when it conducted an irresponsible destructive test of an anti-satellite missile to destroy a satellite. The test created long-lasting orbital debris that continues to threaten the safety of all space operators in low Earth orbit, including the international astronauts aboard the International Space Station.

Belarus continues to devolve into an appendage of the Russian state. The United States has been clear, that by enabling Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, Belarus is complicit in this current war. Following the Lukashenka regime's undemocratic, unconstitutional referendum on February 27, 2022, Belarus has removed neutrality and its non-nuclear status from its constitution. Should a permanent Russian military presence remain in Belarus, the United States and NATO will be forced to reassess our force along NATO's Eastern Flank.

Europe's Eastern Flank

NATO's Eastern Flank remains a focus of U.S. force posture in response to an increasingly aggressive Russia in the Baltic and Black Sea regions. Following Russia's purported annexation of Crimea in 2014, the United States began rotating forces through and along the Eastern Flank in 2015 as part of Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE to reassure our allies and deter Russia. With Russia's unprovoked war against Ukraine, the Eastern Flank has become the frontline in defending Europe and the post-World War II rules-based international order.

Poland and Slovakia

Poland is a hub for these European deterrence efforts. Since 2017, the Department has increased its rotational presence in Poland, including through the deployment of a rotational Armored Brigade Combat Team, a combat aviation detachment, a U.S. battalion leading the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group, the newly established V Corps Forward

Command Post, and a planned AEGIS-Ashore facility. Prior to the current crisis, the United States maintained on average 4,500 rotational personnel in Poland, though the numbers fluctuate depending on exercise and deployment schedules. In the weeks leading up to the current crisis, the United States swiftly deployed an entire Infantry Brigade Combat Team and enablers, approximately 5,000 personnel, from the United States to Poland, making use of prepositioned equipment in Germany to hasten their deployment. Since Russia's further attack on Ukraine, the United States repositioned additional air, land, space, and cyberspace capabilities to Poland, raising the number of U.S. personnel to approximately 10,000.

In August 2020, the United States and the Government of Poland signed an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), which, along with providing important legal protections for U.S. personnel operating in Poland, created an innovative cost-sharing framework that will be used for the deployment of new assets and capabilities to Poland. The EDCA sets out how Poland will fund logistical and infrastructure support for U.S. operating locations in Poland, except for those pertaining to ballistic missile defense and enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). It is flexible and scalable to match the evolving deterrence and posture needs of the United States, Poland, and NATO.

The United States also recently concluded a Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with Slovakia in February 2022. The agreement facilitates bilateral United States and Slovakia coordination on common defense efforts, like conducting joint training exercises, and paves the way for the United States to support upgrades to Slovakia's defense capabilities and infrastructure. Since Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, Slovakia is also considering hosting NATO forces, similar to eFP in the Baltic states, as a deterrent measure.

The Baltics

Our Baltic Allies are gravely concerned by Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the potential for a permanent Russian military presence in Belarus. NATO enhances deterrence and defense in the Baltics through its Baltic Air Policing mission based in Estonia and Lithuania, and through rotational eFP battlegroups in all three Baltic nations. NATO Allies have demonstrated collective resolve in the current crisis by reinforcing both the Baltic Air Policing and eFP missions.

The Department has also maintained a rotational rotary wing aviation detachment in Latvia since 2017 and a rotational armor battalion in Lithuania since 2019. The Department further bolstered deterrence and defense in the Baltic states in February 2022 by deploying four F-35s, a battalion of 20 Apache helicopters, and an infantry battalion to the region. A robust exercise schedule with periodic deployment of U.S. forces to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania increases Allied interoperability and also serves as a visible deterrent to aggression. The Department continues to evaluate force posture requirements for the Baltic region, and Secretary Austin visited Lithuania in February to personally assess the security environment and meet his Baltic counterparts.

Thanks to continued strong congressional support for the Baltic Security Initiative, the Department is dedicating \$150 million per year to increase Baltic defense capabilities. Our

primary focus areas have been integrated air and missile defense, maritime domain awareness, and ground forces capabilities. The Baltic nations are full contributors to these efforts, with each dedicating 2 percent or more of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) towards defense and now committed to increasing to 2.5 percent. We greatly appreciate congressional support to these capacity building efforts.

Romania and Bulgaria

Southeastern Europe, specifically the Black Sea region, is also a focus of U.S. force posture and deterrence and defense efforts along the Eastern Flank. With Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, premeditated invasion of Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria are even more central to this effort. Romania has been a forward-leaning NATO Ally in implementing tailored Forward Presence (tFP) measures and providing full support for a U.S. presence in Romania. Our force posture in Romania, and especially our Army presence there, has grown in the past seven years with the rotation of a battalion from an Armored Brigade Combat Team at Mihail Kogalniceanu (MK) Air Base, a combat aviation detachment at MK Air Base, and an MQ-9 site at Campia Turzii Air Base. In addition, U.S. sailors operate the only Aegis Ashore missile defense site in Deveselu, and U.S. personnel staff NATO's Multinational Division Southeast in Bucharest. Following Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, U.S. force presence in Romania more than doubled from approximately 900 to 2,000 personnel to bolster deterrence and defense along NATO's eastern flank. The United States repositioned a battalion-sized Stryker squadron from Germany to MK Air Base and fighter interceptor aircraft to augment NATO enhanced Air Policing.

Bulgaria has turned a corner confronting aggressive Russian actions in the Black Sea region and has taken bold steps to modernize its Soviet-era military equipment. Bulgaria purchased eight F-16 Block 70s for \$1.3 billion to begin replacing its MiG 29 fleet, plans to purchase eight more aircraft, and entered into a formal strategic partnership with the United States. Bulgaria provides U.S. forces access to three joint facilities, where the United States maintains a force presence of approximately 250 personnel at any given period for training and exercises, including an additional company-size Stryker troop repositioned from Romania to train with Bulgarian forces.

Both Romania and Bulgaria are committed to defense modernization by replacing their legacy military equipment with NATO interoperable systems and reforming their defense institutions. In October 2020, both countries signed roadmaps for Defense Cooperation with the United States, which build upon existing efforts to advance their military readiness and capabilities through 2030, consistent with U.S. defense priorities, NATO commitments, and their respective national defense priorities. Russia's premeditated war of choice in nearby Ukraine, and the resulting activation of the NATO Response Force and Allied defense plans, has only clarified the imperative to accelerate this process.

Georgia

Russian aggression is also the primary security concern for Georgia. Russia occupies 20 percent of Georgia's territory in contravention of its obligation under the EU-mediated ceasefire

agreement that ended the 2008 war between the two countries. Russia leverages its security forces presence in Georgia's occupied territories, as well as other tools of influence and coercion such as cyberattacks and disinformation operations, in an ongoing attempt to prevent Georgia from realizing its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The United States fully supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and continues to call on Russia to fulfill its obligation under the 2008 EU-mediated ceasefire agreement.

As a key strategic partner committed to pursuing closer integration with the West, including NATO membership, Georgia provides crucial support to Department of Defense efforts to advance U.S. interests in the geo-strategically important South Caucasus and Black Sea regions.

In addition to promoting regional security and stability, Georgia has over the years made major contributions to NATO and U.S.-led coalition operations aimed at bringing peace and stability to other parts of the world, including Afghanistan and Iraq. Georgia's participation in these operations serves as a strong testament to the strength of the bilateral strategic partnership.

The United States is committed to helping Georgia build its resilience and military capabilities in the face of Russia's malign efforts to undermine its sovereignty and disrupt its Euro-Atlantic integration. Together with our Georgian partners, DoD is executing the Georgia Defense and Deterrence Enhancement Initiative, a new bilateral security cooperation initiative designed to enable the further modernization and development of Georgian Ministry of Defense and Georgian Defense Forces in support of shared security interests. This initiative builds on the Georgia Defense Readiness Program, which ended last year and helped strengthen Georgia's capability to independently generate and maintain ready forces for territorial defense and other national missions.

Europe's Southern Flank

Italy, Spain, and Portugal

Italy hosts roughly 13,500 U.S. military, civilian, and contractor personnel for operations and training on five major bases and other smaller installations. U.S. forces in Italy support USEUCOM, USAFRICOM, and USCENTCOM missions. In fact, 800 personnel from the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) in Vicenza, and U.S. F-16s from Aviano Air Base are currently deployed to conduct deterrence and air policing missions on the Eastern Flank. Meanwhile, Naval Air Station Sigonella, in particular, has become an important hub for logistics; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; maritime situational awareness; crisis response; and theater cooperation missions focused toward the south, including North Africa, with the basing of U.S. Air Force unmanned aerial vehicles, among other force posture assets.

Additionally, for nearly 70 years, the United States has maintained a military presence in Spain, highlighted by the longstanding U.S.-Spain bilateral Agreement on Defense Cooperation. Spain hosts more than 3,000 U.S. military, civilian and contract personnel in Rota and Moron, and these strategic bases support operational deployments throughout Africa and the Middle East. Spain actively promotes security in North and West Africa, and is a significant contributor

to NATO, EU, and UN peacekeeping missions. Spain allowed U.S. usage of Naval Station Rota to support the evacuation of thousands of U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, Special Immigration Visa applicants and other vulnerable populations from Afghanistan in Operation Allies Refuge.

Portugal remains a staunch transatlantic ally with linguistic ties in West and South Africa and remains a strong U.S. partner and reliable NATO Ally whose forces deploy in small but meaningful capacities in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Mediterranean, the Baltics, and Africa. We also deeply appreciate our presence on the Azores, which continues to host forces at Lajes Field. We also recognize Portugal's launch last year of its Atlantic Centre at Lajes Field to promote defense capacity-building, research, and dialogue on security issues among Allies and partners across the Atlantic Basin from Europe, North and South America, and Africa.

Greece

Greece is strategically located for enabling USEUCOM, USAFRICOM, USSOCOM, USCENTCOM, and USTRANSCOM operations. In October 2019, the United States and Greece signed a historic update of our Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement (MDCA), formalizing the expansion of our basing relationship with Greece, which has grown steadily over the past six years with rotational training and deployments to Stefanovikio Army base and Larissa Air Base. The MDCA was further updated in October 2021, extending the duration of the agreement to an enduring term.

Our presence at U.S. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Souda Bay, Crete, with approximately 650 U.S. personnel, is the cornerstone of our basing relationship with Greece. Souda Bay is critical for strategic access and support to regional operations, and serves as an air and sea logistics hub and Ballistic Missile Defense trans-loading point for U.S. forces assigned to USEUCOM. It is the largest deep-water port in the Mediterranean capable of supporting NIMITZ class aircraft carriers. In 2021, Souda Bay supported 2,800 takeoffs and landing, and hosted 19 different classes of U.S. Navy ships totaling 623 days pier side. Last year, Souda Bay also homeported the USS Hershel "Woody" Williams, an expeditionary mobile base.

The updates to the MDCA also granted the United States priority access to the Port of Alexandroupoli, which is a key transportation node into southern Europe and the Black Sea. We use this strategic port to facilitate the movement of U.S. personnel and equipment in and out of the European theater for exercises like DEFENDER, Atlantic Resolve, and other operations and contingencies, such as Russia's war against Ukraine. The Government of Greece has also been flexible with permissions to deploy USAFRICOM assets from Souda Bay for crisis response.

Turkey

Turkey has demonstrated its geostrategic significance as an important NATO Ally and strategic partner throughout the crisis with Ukraine and in Afghanistan. Within the NATO context, Turkey directly contributes forces to NATO missions in Iraq, Kosovo, and to assurance and deterrence missions across Europe, as well as to the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2 in the Mediterranean Sea. It has scrutinized passage of Russian warships through the Turkish

Straits, maintaining its strict adherence to the Montreux Convention, publicly called the conflict in Ukraine a war, supported Ukraine's territorial integrity, and has worked to mediate a peaceful solution to the crisis. Turkey plans to increase defense spending through 2024, and already dedicates well over 20-percent of its defense budget to research and development, exceeding NATO targets. Bilaterally, Turkey hosts more than 2,000 U.S. service members, supports exercises and operations, and provided significant support and cooperation in our evacuation of Afghanistan. We will look to Turkey to support the rebuilding of the security architecture with fellow Black Sea Countries and the United States to address Russian threats that continue to increase throughout this current crisis.

We continue to discourage Turkey's continued possession of the S-400 and held our first bilateral F-35 dispute resolution discussion late last year – following its removal from the F-35 program. While we continue to press Turkey not to retain the S-400, Turkey has significant modernization and acquisition requirements for its air force, which would maintain NATO interoperability and support NATO and U.S. security objectives.

The Balkans

In the Western Balkans, Russia is executing a strategy designed to hinder the region's Euro-Atlantic integration through disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, political subversion, and economic manipulation. Russia discourages recognition of Kosovo, exerts pressure on Serbia to accept Russian military equipment, spreads anti-Western disinformation in Montenegro and North Macedonia, and seeks veto authority over Bosnia and Herzegovina's self-stated goals for Euro-Atlantic integration, without regard to the Dayton Peace Accords. We are closely watching to see if Russia intensifies its efforts in the Balkans, directly or indirectly, in the wake of its further invasion of Ukraine. Furthermore, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has increased its problematic activities in the region, pressuring NATO Allies and partners alike to accept infrastructure and telecommunications deals that could threaten their security.

Despite these challenges, there are positive signs in the region. The Balkans is home to our four newest NATO Allies: North Macedonia, Montenegro, Croatia, and Albania, with whom we have expanded bilateral defense relations to the benefit of European collective security on NATO's southern flank. Each is contributing to our collective response to Russia's further invasion of Ukraine, to include important deterrence activities in southeastern Europe. In addition to focusing on helping Allies develop their defense capabilities they have committed to NATO, we are expanding the quantity and quality of exercises in the region, to include with Allies and partners. These efforts contribute to capability development and improved readiness, as well as Alliance unity in the region.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, representatives of the three constituent peoples have made forward progress on cooperation with the EU and NATO, especially through their NATO Reform Program process. We maintain robust ties with the multiethnic Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, assisting its progress toward NATO-standard capabilities. The U.S. presence in NATO's Kosovo Force helps maintain a safe and secure environment in the Balkans. The Department continues important work assisting the Kosovo Security Force's 10-year transition to a territorial defense force. We have improved bilateral defense ties with Serbia in recent years,

with increasing cooperation in military exercises, training, and cooperation on international peacekeeping.

Our Allies and partners in the region share our commitment to enhancing global security and have consistently contributed to NATO-led and other international missions. We leverage the U.S.-Adriatic Charter, a regional security forum, to increase cooperation between Balkan nations. In addition, we rely on the National Guard's State Partnership Program (SPP) to develop long-term expertise in the region, improving our collective ability to train, collaborate, and defend against various threats.

Our defense cooperation on reforms and institutional capacity building to bolster shared priorities, such as cyber security, remain fundamental to the Department's approach in the region. We will continue to leverage our toolkit to eliminate regional militaries' dependence on Soviet legacy systems and support modernization and integration of NATO-interoperable equipment. The Department continues to support our Balkan allies and partners through education, training, and security cooperation initiatives, while also expanding into new areas of cooperation.

Western Europe

Germany

The largest U.S. force presence in Europe and second-largest globally is in Germany, where approximately 37,000 U.S. servicemembers are permanently stationed. Key facilities in Germany include two combatant commands (U.S. European Command and U.S. Africa Command in Stuttgart), multiple component command headquarters, and essential facilities like Ramstein Air Base and U.S. Army Hospital in Landstuhl. Germany remains a reliable strategic staging ground for projecting U.S. forces around the world and hosting forward-deployed assets to help address mounting security challenges.

In February 2021, President Biden revoked the previous administration's 25,000 personnel force cap on Germany, a decision that was validated in the Department's Global Posture Review completed last November. In the past year, as U.S. Armed Forces have supported a range of global crises and contingencies, our facilities and capabilities in Germany have afforded us tremendous flexibility to respond. In August 2021, Germany was a key node in evacuation operations from Kabul, during which tens of thousands of vulnerable Afghans transited through Ramstein Air Base and Rhine Ordnance Barracks enroute to the United States. More recently, as Russian adventurism increased requirements to bolster NATO's Eastern Flank, Germany has been a critical logistical hub to flow forces to and through Germany to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to collective defense. Moreover, our preparations made since Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea, including investments in infrastructure, training, and logistical arrangements are bearing fruit in the current crisis. We commend Germany for its support during this crisis, including its own reexamination of national policies to allow for provision of lethal assistance to Ukraine, in addition to the non-lethal support it has provided for a number of years. Additionally, Chancellor Scholz's announcement that Germany will meet NATO's two percent defense spending benchmark and establish a 100 billion Euro fund to recapitalize

German military readiness is tremendously welcome. We are grateful for our cooperation with our German Allies in all these ways.

United Kingdom

The UK hosts 16 U.S. military bases and some 24,000 U.S. military personnel and family members. The UK deploys alongside the United States globally and, as one of our most capable Allies, is a vital defense partner. The UK is closely aligned with the United States as it modernizes its defense forces – a key theme in the UK’s Integrated Review – and is playing a central role in responding to global security challenges, particularly those in and around Europe. The UK, as a leading security assistance provider to Ukraine, has taken an active leadership role in responding to Russia’s further aggression against Ukraine.

The PRC

Aside from today’s immediate Russian crisis, we are working with European allies and partners, both bilaterally and through NATO, to understand and address the challenges posed by the PRC. As Secretary Austin often asserts, the PRC is the Department’s pacing challenge. The PRC seeks to improve its warfighting capabilities through insights drawn from advanced militaries in Europe and elsewhere, and we encourage Allies and partners to think carefully through the types of engagements they conduct with the People’s Liberation Army. We have also cautioned increased scrutiny over PRC investments in Europe’s critical infrastructure and technology, including telecommunications, ports, railways, and cutting-edge technologies with military application, to ensure they do not pose risks to NATO’s security. The Department encourages counterpart governments to consider stronger processes and laws requiring foreign investment reviews, supply chain protections, and export controls to help blunt these PRC activities and to ensure that critical infrastructure and technologies are protected in the interest of national security. We agree with the European Union, which in 2019 labelled China a systemic rival.

Regarding the immediate crisis at hand, we are mindful that the PRC and Russia do collaborate across a variety of arenas, including their joint military exercises. The February 4 joint statement illustrated the breadth and depth of their strategic alignment. At the same time, there are potential areas of competition between the two despite their recent efforts to showcase high-level bilateral engagement. We continue to monitor this cooperation alongside our Allies and partners, as well as the PRC’s and Russia’s respective efforts to undermine the international rules-based order. Although the threats have increased, we are revitalizing and strengthening our alliances and partnerships to be able to meet these threats.

The Arctic

The Department’s approach to the Arctic is described in the 2019 Arctic Strategy, which focuses on strategic competition as the principal challenge to long-term U.S. security and prosperity.

In consultation with allies and partners, DoD is examining its strategy, posture, and

equipment to protect the U.S. homeland, to ensure a stable and open Arctic, to deter aggression, and to preserve our economic interests in the region as conditions there continue to evolve. Defending the U.S. homeland requires DoD to closely monitor the evolving situation in the Arctic region, and be prepared to adapt strategy, posture, and equipment as required to deter aggression, support allies and partners, ensure stability, and preserve U.S. interests.

The immediate prospect of conflict in the Arctic is low, but the Department maintains a watchful approach. Russia's continued development of its Northern Sea Route and military investments in the Arctic may have strategic implications for future access to the region. The PRC continues to seek a role in Arctic governance, despite having no territorial claims in the region, and seeks to secure economic footholds among Arctic nations and increase access to expand its Polar Silk Road initiative. There is a risk that the PRC may repeat predatory economic behaviors exhibited in other regions to further its strategic ambitions.

The Department is taking deliberate steps to enhance the Joint Force's ability to operate in the Arctic, both independently and in cooperation with Allies and partners. Examples of cooperation include enhancing domain awareness, advancing capabilities through regular exercises and training, improving interoperability, including supporting infrastructure, and increasing extreme cold weather resilience. The changing environment in the Arctic highlights the need to maintain the full range of navigation and overflight rights guaranteed by international law to both military forces and lawful commerce. We are also looking to leverage DoD Regional Centers for Security Studies that work with our European allies and partners. The Marshall Center for European Security Studies will partner closely with the newly established Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security Studies regarding the changing Arctic environment.

Finally, our network of Allies and partners is a key strategic advantage for the United States in the Arctic. Six of the seven other Arctic nations are either NATO Allies or NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners. Our Allies and partners share the United States' interest in maintaining the international rules-based order – including in the Arctic region. Collaborating with our European defense counterparts, we work to enhance interoperability and proficiency, while demonstrating collective resolve to counter malign behavior.

DoD will align the 2019 Arctic Strategy with the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the National Strategy for the Arctic Region as soon as those latter documents are available, and use this guidance to inform our strategic approach to the dynamic Arctic region as we defend the homeland and support our Allies and partners.

Nuclear Deterrence and CBRN Threats

Nuclear forces serve as a core component of NATO's deterrence and defense capabilities. The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capabilities is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression. The United States continues to make available its strategic nuclear forces for the defense of NATO, and they are the supreme guarantee of the security of NATO Allies. The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own and contribute significantly to the overall security of the Alliance. In addition to strategic forces, the United States continues to forward-deploy nuclear weapons to Europe.

These weapons, which remain under U.S. control and are not transferred, combined with U.S. and Allied dual-capable aircraft and supporting infrastructure, demonstrate Alliance cohesion and resolve through an equitable and sustainable distribution of roles, responsibilities, and burdens. For decades, NATO nuclear burden-sharing arrangements have been a vital component of NATO's deterrence posture, and they continue to provide an essential political and military link between Europe and North America. As Secretary Austin has stated, nuclear weapons should remain in NATO countries for as long as nuclear weapons remain a threat. The importance of these capabilities to the Alliance's posture has been underscored by recent events, and Russia's irresponsible and provocative nuclear rhetoric. The United States and NATO are sober and responsible stewards of nuclear deterrence and defense capabilities and they remain solely for the deterrence and defense of the Alliance.

Russia has also eroded international norms against chemical weapons use. The Russian Government has used military-grade nerve agents on at least two occasions in failed assassination attempts against Sergei Skripal (2018 in the United Kingdom) and Aleksey Navalny (2020 in Russia). The Department works every day to develop the capability of the Joint Force, Allies, and partners to operate in a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear (CBRN)-contaminated environment.

This is important not only for responding to CBRN crises, but also for deterrence: signaling to adversaries that using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against U.S. and/or Allied forces will not help them achieve their objectives. We are focused on building capability within USEUCOM to develop better training and exercises and prepositioning more equipment in Europe so EUCOM is better able to operate in a potential CBRN-contaminated environment.

Missile Defense

Missile defense remains a critical capability in Europe and one that contributes broadly to the Department's integrated deterrence strategy by deterring potential missile threats, reassuring Allies and partners, and, if deterrence fails, providing decision space and damage limitation. Iran possesses the largest ballistic missile inventory in the Middle East which can range into the heart of Europe.

We welcome the steps NATO has taken to increase the readiness and responsiveness of its Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD) capability to defend against air and missile threats from a 360-degree perspective. These actions are contributing to NATO's deterrence and defense and are preserving indivisible security and freedom of action of the Alliance in peacetime, crisis, and times of conflict.

Distinct from NATO IAMD, NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) defends European NATO territory, populations, and forces from ballistic missiles originating from outside the Euro-Atlantic regions. These efforts include the U.S. voluntary national contribution, the European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA). EPAA includes an AN/TPY-2 radar in Turkey, one Aegis Ashore site in Romania, one Aegis Ashore site in Poland which is under construction, and Aegis BMD destroyers homeported in Spain.

We are fully committed to working closely with our NATO Allies and other European partners to improve our missile defense capabilities through improved readiness and preparedness, greater integration and coherence, multilateral and bilateral exercises, Foreign Military Sales, and international armaments cooperation initiatives where applicable.

Arms Control

Russia's repeated violations of its conventional arms control obligations caused a breakdown in this realm that resulted in our formal withdrawal from, respectively, the Intermediate- and Shorter-Range Forces Missile Treaty (INF) in August 2019 and from the Open Skies Treaty in November 2020. Prior to Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, we were engaging Russia in sessions of our bilateral Strategic Stability Dialogues to seek progress in the transparency and arms control realm. Despite the now-strained relationship with Russia, the United States recognizes that reducing the risks of a nuclear arms race is crucial to our national security. Russia's abominable behavior with respect to Ukraine are a testament, following intensive diplomatic efforts to engage Russia to avoid the war that is now underway, to Russia's lack of willingness to engage in good faith with the United States, but the United States will continue to support global stability. We should persist in pursuing arms control and risk reduction with Russia, as we did even in the darkest days of the Cold War, recognizing that arms control is not an end in itself, and its outcomes must benefit the security of the United States and our Allies and partners. We also recognize a second reality, backed by historical experience, that the United States has the best chance to achieve its goals in arms control negotiations when there is a visible and financial commitment to nuclear modernization in our budget. A modernized U.S. nuclear force incentivizes Russia, and eventually others, to participate productively in future negotiations.

Separately, Russia's long-standing and legally invalid "suspension" of its implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) has increased Russia's military posture advantage in direct contravention of its CFE obligations, especially in the Treaty's sensitive "flank zone," which includes Crimea and part of the Donbas. Russia's selective implementation of and outright refusal to engage in certain Vienna Document confidence and security building measures, similarly has served to undermine the security of Eastern Europe. Russia failed to provide any meaningful transparency under the Vienna Document on the intent of its military buildup along the borders of Ukraine and Ukraine's Crimea region, forces that were massing for the purposes of, and ultimately used to, launch its long-planned and renewed invasion of Ukraine.

The Department's Approach to National Security

Both within the European area of responsibility and beyond, transboundary challenges have created a series of complex and interconnected challenges the United States cannot address alone. These include arms control agreements, missiles, nuclear weapons, and rapid developments in technology, combined with acute and distinct threats emanating from state and non-state actors alike.

We will not sustain and strengthen deterrence by doing more of what we have done in the

past. The Department must instead think differently about the requirements for deterrence, including how to create advantages for ourselves, our Allies, and partners, and dilemmas for our competitors. The Department will advance its priorities through three interlocking ways: integrated deterrence, campaigning, and building enduring advantages.

- Integrated deterrence is how DoD will deter aggression by working seamlessly across domains, theaters, and the spectrum of conflict, in close coordination with other instruments of U.S. power, and with our Alliances and partnerships;
- Campaigning is the dynamic day-to-day interaction with competitors to reinforce deterrence and advance other NDS objectives while limiting, frustrating, and disrupting competitor activities that seriously affect U.S. interests; and
- Building enduring advantage is how the defense enterprise will undertake a series of urgently needed reforms to bolster the defense ecosystem and ensure enduring Joint Force advantages – including steps to mitigate long-standing barriers to enhanced cooperation with Allies and partners.

Mutually beneficial alliance and partnership architectures are the United States' greatest strategic advantage, and a center of gravity of the forthcoming NDS. Together, we must act urgently to strengthen and sustain deterrence and to protect the foundations of our shared prosperity and strength.

Conclusion

The Department is committed to supporting diplomatic efforts to end Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, to uphold Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, to ensure the NATO Alliance remains united, and to promote a safe and secure Europe. The United States will continue to take an active role in the region by maintaining a ready and capable force, investing in NATO, and promoting a network of like-minded Allies and partners.

This work is only possible with consistent congressional backing. Your support for our Allies and partners in Europe is invaluable. Congressional support for U.S. forces deployed in the USEUCOM AOR, as well as funding for defense initiatives across Europe, and Ukraine's security assistance have been, and will continue to be, critical to achieving U.S. national security objectives.

The Department of Defense, in conjunction with other U.S. Government departments and agencies, regional institutions, and regional Allies and partners, in close consultation with Congress, will continue to ensure that Europe remains whole, free, and at peace.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I appreciate your continued support to the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, guardians, and civilians in the Department of Defense who work every day in service of the American people.