**Opening Statement - Chairman Jim Cooper**

**Strategic Forces Subcommittee**

**Hearing on “INF Withdrawal and the Future of Arms Control: Implications for the Security of the United States”**

**February 26, 2019**

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Good afternoon. The purpose of this hearing is to discuss the Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, as well as how the Administration should approach the upcoming extension of the New START Treaty. These two issues are not only vitally important for the security of United States, but also of our Allies and indeed the world.

Here today to testify are former Senator Richard Lugar, former Ambassador Alexander Vershbow, and former Assistant Secretary of State Paula DeSutter. Thank each of you very much for testifying at this, the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Strategic Forces.

It is primarily the Russian government’s fault that we are facing INF withdrawal. The Russians have been violating the INF Treaty for years but, instead of focusing world opinion against the Russians, the Trump Administration decided to withdraw from the Treaty. Instead of punishing the Russians, the Administration has announced it would sink to the level of the Russians.

I think that Ronald Reagan would be terribly disappointed with the Trump Administration’s abrogation of the INF Treaty that Reagan himself negotiated. The INF Treaty has long been a cornerstone of security and stability in Europe, particularly for our NATO allies. Russia’s decision to violate INF by deploying battalions of intermediate-range missiles threatens our NATO allies, as well as U.S. troops deployed in Europe. The last thing NATO wanted was for the Trump Administration to give up on the Reagan policy of protecting Europe from Russian threats.

In less than two years, New START will expire unless it is renewed. Unlike the INF Treaty, the Russians are complying with New START. New START provides effective arms control that also gives the United States significant insight into the Russian strategic nuclear forces. I look forward to hearing your views on extending the New START Treaty, an extension that would give the United States five more years of predictability and transparency—as well as keeping a lid on Russia’s nuclear forces capable of reaching the United States.

Now, let’s hear from the Ranking Member, and then our witnesses.