**Statement of Ranking Member Adam Smith**

**House Armed Services Committee Hearing: Security Challenges in Europe and Posture for Inter-state Competition with Russia**

**March 15, 2018**

**~\*~**

Thank you Mr. Chairman. General Scaparrotti, welcome. I look forward to your insights on the security challenges in Europe and how we can confront the threat that Russian activities in the region present.

As I’ve expressed in our series of posture hearings, I’m particularly interested in how we can enhance cooperation with our partners and allies to best posture our forces to address security challenges. Per the Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, strengthening and expanding our relationships with our partners and allies in Europe is an essential component of our effort to achieve the strategy’s objectives.

The Russian Federation’s influence operations aimed at undermining Western democracies have not abated. In fact, Russia’s destabilizing actions are ever more apparent. As our senior intelligence officials have said, Russia interfered with the 2016 U.S. elections and has every intention of doing so again in our 2018 midterm elections, after its perceived success two years ago.

Russian interference is not limited to the United States. The Russian Federation is also actively operating to influence European politics. As part of his campaign to undermine democratic values and render the world safe for autocratic dictatorships, President Putin has intervened in a long list of countries’ political processes ranging from Britain, France, and Germany, to Bulgaria and Montenegro.

To confront this challenge, it is absolutely essential that we work hand-in-glove with our European partners and allies, particularly as Russia seeks to undermine our shared democratic values and the rules-based international order. To succeed against our common security challenges in Europe, we must be committed to maintaining close cooperation with, and support to, organizations like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), and respond collectively to Russian aggression. This is a commitment that must be reinforced at all levels of our government.

Further, Russia continues its illegal occupation of Crimea, exacerbating conflict between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, and stymying progress toward full implementation of the Minsk agreements. I was very pleased to see the announcement that the State Department has approved a $47 million Foreign Military Sale of Javelin Missiles and Javelin Command Launch Units to Ukraine. I have been a strong proponent of lethal defensive assistance to Ukraine for years and have pushed for the inclusion and renewal of the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative in the annual NDAA from the start.

In addition, it’s important to note that transatlantic security is a shared commitment. It is very positive to see the increasing number of NATO member states that have taken on additional budgetary commitments to align their spending with the agreed target of two percent of GDP for defense. Calls for NATO members to meet this goal are not new, and were incorporated as a pledge in the 2014 Wales Summit Declaration. Forward-looking defense investments will enhance each NATO country’s security as well as our ability to provide a strong collective defense.

It is also imperative that the United States continues to make necessary investments to deter Russian aggression and, together with its allies and partners, works to align the defensive posture accordingly. NATO deterrence measures include several multinational enhanced forward presence (eFP) battalions in the Baltic countries and a U.S.-led eFP battalion in Poland.

Further, in the FY2018 NDAA, Congress authorized $4.6 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), and the administration has requested $6.3 billion in ERI funding for FY 2019.

As we look to the future, it is important that we strike the proper balance regarding force presence, combined exercises, prepositioned hardware, infrastructure, and the building of partner capacity. In particular, it would be helpful to understand how we might optimize forward deployments of U.S. forces to deter Russia without undermining strategic stability. It seems clear that there is strategic value in maintaining a perpetually forward U.S. presence to bolster conventional deterrence, but do we have the balance right? While heel-to-toe rotational forces may satisfy EUCOM’s requirements, would permanent forces provide greater deterrent value, facilitate closer cooperation with partner countries, or yield commanders additional time and space for rapid response needs?

Russia’s apparent doctrine of “escalate-to-deescalate” and continuing violation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty demand a strong, credible U.S. presence in, and commitment to, Europe and ensuring unity within the NATO alliance. Further, implementing effective sanctions targeted at Russian arms control violation represent an additional tool to help press Russia back into compliance. Maintaining strategic stability also means reducing the risk of miscalculation that could precipitate a nuclear war. Engaging in military-to-military dialogue and senior-level political dialogue with Russia on key measures to avoid an unintentional escalation in a crisis, and finding common ground on reducing the risk of nuclear terrorism, benefit both U.S. and Russian security. The Cold War taught us that security cooperation is possible and even necessary in the midst of confrontation.

The security challenges in Europe remain complex. Our allies and partners continue to face homegrown terrorist threats and threats from the potential return of foreign fighters. Those threats are often closely linked to instability in North Africa and the Middle East, and it is important that we continue to work with our allies and partners to combat ISIL on those fronts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  I look forward to receiving the General’s testimony.