



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)**

**Hearing on
“The Growing Russian Military Threat in Europe:
Assessing and Addressing the Challenge”
Wednesday, May 17, 2017, 9:30 a.m.
Senate Visitors Center Room 208/209**

Opening Statement of Senator Ben Cardin, Ranking Member

Chairman Wicker, thank you for convening this hearing and for your leadership of the Helsinki Commission. This hearing could not be more timely.

I have said before that Russia is violating every single one of the Helsinki Final Act’s ten Guiding Principles between states. Many of us have drawn attention to Russia’s violation of principles on sovereign equality, on territorial integrity and on the inviolability of borders. If I may, Mr. Chairman, today I’d like to put a little bit of a spotlight on Principle VI – “non-intervention in internal affairs.”

Russia has long sought to counter discussion of human rights by claiming that raising human rights concerns is “interference” or “intervention” in internal affairs. This, of course, is not true. In fact, the OSCE participating States explicitly agreed in 1991 that raising human rights issues is *not* interference in the internal affairs of other states.

What does “non-intervention in the internal affairs” of other countries mean then? Well, when the participating States adopted Principle VI in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, they were rejecting the Brezhnev Doctrine and the Soviet invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Principle VI expressly prohibits “armed intervention or threat of such intervention against another participating State.” That agreement was an important basis for building many of the subsequent agreements we were able to achieve in the OSCE, including many in the area of military security.

But under President Putin, Russia has systematically undermined all of the security arrangements that peacefully ended the Cold War. When Russia invaded Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, they not only violated this principle of the Helsinki Accords, they turned back the clock to the days of the Brezhnev era. In the Helsinki Final Act, the participating States pledged to refrain from making each other’s territory the object of military occupation in contravention of international law. Today, Russia is manifestly violating that commitment.

And the costs of Russia’s aggression continue to mount. Some 10,000 people have been killed in Ukraine and hundreds of thousands displaced. 298 people were killed when Russian-backed separatists shot down the civilian flight MH17. A week ago, Joseph Stone, an American member of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine was killed and two others, a Czech and a

German national, were injured by a land mine in Russian-backed separatist controlled territory. I join you, Mr. Chairman, in expressing grief at this senseless loss of life and anger at those who are responsible.

Russia is the greatest threat to the security of Europe and the United States. Accordingly, I welcome this hearing's examination of the Russian military threat, particularly in the context of the OSCE framework for confidence- and security-building, and I look forward to working with you and other members of the Commission to protect the security of the United States and our allies. I regret that there continue to be so many positions that the administration has yet to fill at a time when our country faces such acute threats and hope that the administration will move quickly to fill key senior positions in the State Department and Department of Defense.

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