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**“The Growing Russian Military Threat in Europe:
Assessing and Addressing the Challenge”**

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Chairman Wicker, Co-Chairman Smith, and members of the Commission, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you today about the growing Russian military threat to European security.

There is no question that the Putin regime today poses the greatest threat to the security of Europe, and to the United States as well. Over the last decade, the Kremlin has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to use military force to violate international norms and commitments. Russia's invasions of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 broke with the foundational principles of the postwar international order: sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the inviolability of borders. These principles were not only enshrined in the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act, which Moscow signed during the Soviet period, but they were also reaffirmed by Russia in the post-Cold War period in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the NATO-Russia Founding Act.

In addition to its brazen violations of international norms, the Kremlin is today in breach of several important arms control treaties that affect European security. In 2007, Russia unilaterally "suspended" its participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, allowing Moscow to indirectly receive data provided by NATO countries (via its allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization) without being required to reciprocate. Moreover, Moscow is covertly violating the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty by developing and likely soon deploying a prohibited ground-launched cruise missile. Finally, Russia is violating the Open Skies Treaty by restricting other states' ability to fly over Kaliningrad, a strategically important and heavily militarized outpost that borders on two NATO Allies.

When it comes to the Vienna Document and other transparency and confidence-building measures, Russia regularly undermines the spirit, if not the letter, of these arrangements. For example, the Russian General Staff often splits an exercise into several parts and/or creates artificial time-gaps between different parts of the exercise to bypass Vienna Document thresholds for notification and observation. Russia has also significantly increased the number of snap exercises – four in

2013, 8 in 2014, 20 in 2015, and 11 in 2016 – that fall outside the scope of the Vienna Document’s notification procedures. Finally, Russia continues to unilaterally block proposed updates to the Vienna Document that would lower the thresholds for inspections and evaluations, a step all other OSCE participating States strongly support.

Beyond the field of arms control, Russia has undermined a number of important political agreements affecting European security. These include the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, under which Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in return for a guarantee of its territorial integrity; the 2008 Medvedev-Sarkozy ceasefire agreement, under which Russia pledged to pull back its troops in Georgia to pre-conflict positions; and the September 2014 and February 2015 Minsk agreements, whose ceasefire provisions are regularly violated, as demonstrated by the more than 80 Ukrainians killed and over 450 wounded this year alone (in total, almost 10,000 people have been killed in this conflict).

From its rampant abuse of Interpol “red warrants” to its disrespect for the fair competition standards of the International Olympic Committee, the Russian government has repeatedly demonstrated that its international commitments have almost no bearing on its behavior. Now is not the time to seek new commitments, but it is past time to take action so that Russia changes its behavior.

Russia’s Collision Course with the West

To best understand how to address Russia’s failure to honor its international commitments, we first need to understand what is motivating the Kremlin’s behavior.

Put simply, the Putin regime believes the West poses the greatest threat to its survival and therefore seeks to push back against Western influence, including the spread of Western norms of transparency, accountability, and rule of law, which the Kremlin fears will undermine its kleptocratic and authoritarian system of rule. For much of the post-Cold War period this pushback was confined to the post-Soviet region, which Russian leaders referred to as their “sphere of privileged interests.” In the last few years, however, the Kremlin has taken the fight directly

to the West. On an increasing number of levels, the Kremlin is actively seeking to subvert the foundations of Western liberal democracies and to undermine NATO on its own turf, as we clearly saw through Russia's cyber-attack and subversive operation during our presidential election campaign. Indeed, Russia's foreign policy has undergone a significant paradigm shift in the last five years: from the previous model of cooperating where possible and competing where necessary, to the current model of competing short of conflict across all domains, all the time.

Recognizing that NATO possesses superior conventional military capabilities, Russia's "grey zone" conflict with the West relies primarily on unconventional tactics, unlike its conventional military interventions in Georgia and Ukraine. That is because Russia's leadership likely learned an important lesson from its wars in Georgia and Ukraine: namely, that while these conflicts set back both countries' Euro-Atlantic integration processes, neither of these interventions reversed the pro-Western orientations of their populations. As a result, the Kremlin now appears to be placing more emphasis on political subversion and covert influence operations, from Moldova to Montenegro and from Ukraine to the United States.

Investing in Full-Spectrum Capabilities

While Moscow has recognized that its competition with the West requires a greater emphasis on unconventional tactics, Russian military strategists continue to invest in the full range of conventional and nuclear capabilities to deter adversaries and prevail in active conflicts. The Russian General Staff has spent the last decade and a half implementing serious military reforms that have produced a far more ready and capable fighting force.

At the top end of the spectrum, Moscow is modernizing its nuclear triad: developing new ICBMs, advanced nuclear-powered submarines, and fifth-generation combat aircraft and new long-range bombers. In terms of conventional capabilities, Russia has fielded highly capable air and coastal defense systems for anti-access, area-denial (A2/AD) effects in Kaliningrad, Crimea, Japan's Northern Territories, and around large population centers like Moscow and St. Petersburg. It has developed and used sophisticated sea-launched cruise missiles. As we have seen in Ukraine, Russia has employed cutting-edge electronic warfare (EW)

capabilities to suppress enemy Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms while using its own EW-hardened ISR to target opposing forces with precision fire. Though using slightly older technology, Russia's conventional doctrine also calls for extensive and highly effective use of multiple rocket launch systems and artillery, which have together accounted for more than 90 percent of the casualties in Ukraine. Finally, on the covert end of the spectrum, Russia has honed a variety of unconventional capabilities that include cutting-edge cyber, proxy, and information warfare, as well as the weaponization of corruption for purposes of political subversion.

Cultivating Belligerence, Unpredictability, and Non-Transparency

Russia relies on its status as a nuclear power to deter and instill fear of escalation among its adversaries. Russia's "escalate to de-escalate" doctrine allows for first use of a nuclear weapon to compel adversaries to settle a conflict on Moscow's terms rather than to fight on or escalate the conflict. Under this doctrine Russia could, for example, use a tactical nuclear weapon for a first-use "demonstration effect." If used in a conflict with a NATO Ally, however, this could have the exact opposite of its intended effect and prove dangerously escalatory, with devastating consequences for all parties. The Trump administration would therefore do well to consider a new round of strategic stability talks with Russia to bring to Russia's attention such doctrinal miscalculations.

Another goal of Russia's evolving military doctrine is to use denial, deception, unpredictability, and lack of transparency to maximize Russia's asymmetric tactical advantages. The Kremlin's numerous violations of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) are therefore part of a very deliberate strategy, and one that takes full advantage of the clear asymmetry in the desire for transparency between Russia and Europe.

This deliberate erosion of transparency and trust on Russia's part is coupled with nuclear threats against NATO Allies and dangerous military behavior whose purpose is to intimidate. The threats to target Denmark or Romania with nuclear weapons and the highly unprofessional and unsafe intercepts of NATO aircraft and vessels over/on the Black and Baltic seas fall into this category. Earlier this

month, for example, a Russian fighter intercepted a U.S. P-8A aircraft flying over the Black Sea at a distance of only 20 feet, endangering the lives of both American and Russian aircrews. While these dangerous activities have led some European countries to recommend new crisis management measures such as an agreement to keep transponders on at all times, such proposals completely miss the point. Transponders or new navigational rules will do nothing to solve the problem because these incidents are not accidents resulting from the excessive bravado of individual pilots. They are deliberate policy choices and will continue so long as Moscow thinks it can intimidate NATO countries into scaling back their operations in certain theaters, such as the Black and Baltic seas.

Policies to Respond to an Aggressive Russia

The range of aggressive and subversive actions that Russia is pursuing across Europe demands a firm but proportionate response. Given Russia's ongoing violations of the fundamental principles of the NATO-Russia Founding Act, the United States should finally consider unilaterally declaring a "suspension" of its pledge not to deploy "substantial combat forces" to NATO Allies in Eastern and Central Europe. The current situation in which Russia violates almost every one of its Founding Act pledges while NATO meekly declares its continued compliance with the Act – and thereby creates a "second-class" status for our eastern Allies – creates an incentive for the additional buildup of Russian troops on its western border. To compensate for this imbalance, the United States should deploy an additional Brigade Combat Team to Eastern Europe as a deterrent force, while clearly messaging that this deployment could be reversed if and when Russia's aggressive posture in the region changes. At the same time, the United States should declare that for now it is reaffirming its commitment to the Founding Act's three "nuclear no's," namely the commitment that NATO has "no intention, no plan, and no reason" to deploy nuclear weapons to the eastern flank of the Alliance.

Second, the United States must signal that it will employ the legal principle of countermeasures to respond to Russia's violations of the Open Skies and INF treaties. Just as Russia denies access under the Open Skies Treaty to the exclave of Kaliningrad, the United States should immediately choose an analogous region

(e.g. Hawaii or Alaska) where it can mirror Russian restrictions until Moscow returns to compliance with the treaty. The Departments of State and Defense should also more forthrightly communicate to our Allies our concern with Russia's ability to use the Open Skies Treaty to collect information on NATO's critical infrastructure. Although many of our Allies greatly value the transparency the treaty provides, in many respects this transparency is of marginal benefit to the United States. Our Allies must therefore understand that the risks to U.S. national security inherent in the intrusive treaty procedures are beginning to outweigh its benefits.

Similarly, the United States has spent considerable time seeking unsuccessfully to convince Moscow to return to compliance with the INF treaty. It is now time for the United States to apply the doctrine of countermeasures to immediately begin research (which is not prohibited by the treaty) into the development of an intermediate-range missile that would match Russia's new capability. The Pentagon should also be tasked with implementing other defensive measures to deny Russia any advantage from its violation of the treaty. Finally, we must also accelerate our diplomatic efforts with Allies to underscore that the United States cannot continue to stand by indefinitely as Russia develops a new and extremely dangerous military capability.

Third, strengthening Ukraine's sovereignty must be a central element of the U.S. response to Russian aggression in Europe. The current de facto arms embargo on Ukraine should be lifted immediately and defensive armaments should be provided to allow Ukraine to harden its defenses against further Russian aggression. U.S. security assistance should focus on air defense, anti-armor, and counter-artillery/mortar capabilities as well as more robust intelligence sharing. If the United States took the lead, a number of our NATO Allies would almost certainly follow suit and send excess stocks of non-NATO standard weapons to Ukraine to make up for the losses that Ukraine has sustained during the war.

The United States must also insist on joining France and Germany in the "Normandy format" negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in order to participate in the development of a detailed roadmap with concrete timelines for implementing the Minsk agreements. The United States must be prepared to back

up such a roadmap with concrete consequences for Russia's failure to implement the necessary steps, for example by unilaterally applying blocking sanctions on select Russian financial institutions. U.S. and EU sanctions have so far been too blunt of an instrument to affect incremental policy decisions because they have not been tied to any specific benchmarks other than the full implementation of the Minsk agreement, for which they are too weak to shift the Kremlin's calculus. Full blocking sanctions on select Russian financial institutions would have an immediate and significant effect even if the U.S. were to apply them unilaterally, and could help incentivize Moscow's withdrawal of troops from the Donbas if calibrated to match appropriate benchmarks for the implementation of the Minsk agreements.

In the near term, the United States should also seek to upgrade the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine or even consider the creation of an armed UN mission. Following the April 23 killing of an American OSCE monitor with a roadside mine, the OSCE has significantly cut back its patrols in the separatist-controlled areas. These unarmed patrols were never properly outfitted for the mandate they were given and from the very start monitors have only been able to patrol during daylight hours. The personnel of the Special Monitoring Mission have performed heroically under these circumstances and have repeatedly taken on enormous personal risks to monitor compliance with the Minsk agreements. However, the current situation is no longer tenable. The OSCE Structured Dialogue on European security should take up the issue of a larger and more robust monitoring mission as a matter of precedence and urgency.

Responding to Russia's Cyber-Attacks on the West

In response to the cyber-attacks and information warfare that the Kremlin has perpetrated against the United States and other Western democracies, the United States must rally its Allies to impose serious consequences for Russia's aggressive behavior. The response thus far has been weak and ineffectual. The declaration of 35 Russian officials as *persona non grata* and the prohibition on Russian use of intelligence gathering facilities in the United States is a mere slap on the wrist and does not serve as a deterrent against future cyber-attacks.

Given reports of Russia's extensive penetration of U.S. and Allied government networks, the United States must invest significantly more resources in cyber defense. Most importantly, Congress should legislate regulations to force the private sector companies that control our critical infrastructure to adopt a common set of cyber defense standards. As last week's ransomware attack demonstrates, the private sector networks that run our critical infrastructure are extremely vulnerable. The Pentagon should also increase its support for cyber defense of our most vulnerable Allies.

Finally, the United States must immediately appoint an independent Special Prosecutor to determine whether or not there was collusion or cooperation between the Russian government and campaign representatives in the last U.S. presidential election cycle. It must also establish a Select Committee to look at the broader question of Russian interference in the U.S. electoral process and Russia's ability to penetrate our critical infrastructure networks. The failure to take these steps damages not just U.S. national security but also transatlantic security. If the Kremlin's successful execution of one of the most audacious subversive operations in history is not immediately countered, it will only embolden Russia to take similar actions in the future.

Conclusion

Chairman Wicker, Co-Chairman Smith, and members of the Commission, the United States has not only a role to play, but an obligation to enhance deterrence and build resilience against Russian aggression and malign influence across the entire OSCE region from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It starts here at home, by taking Russia's subversive actions against the United States seriously and deploying the necessary tools to expose them and respond with the imposition of proportionate costs. We must also push back on Russia's violations of arms control and confidence-building agreements by implementing necessary countermeasures and denying Russia any advantage. Finally, we must get more actively involved in finding a solution to the Ukraine conflict by applying greater leverage against Moscow and strengthening Ukraine's defenses. The best disincentive for any future aggression against our partners and Allies is for the aggressor to finally understand that in the end the costs will outweigh the benefits.