

Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe: U.S. Helsinki Commission

“Baltic Sea Regional Security”

Committee Members Present:

**Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Co-Chairman;
Representative Robert B. Aderholt (R-AL)**

Other Members of Congress Present:

**Senator John Cornyn (R-TX);
Representative Tom Graves (R-GA);
Representative Billy Long (R-MO);
Representative Andy Harris (R-MD);
Representative Lee Zeldin (R-NY);
Representative Jeff Duncan (R-SC);**

Witnesses:

**Douglas D. Jones, Deputy Permanent Representative, United States Mission to NATO;
Lieutenant General Stephen M. Twitty, Deputy Commander, United States European
Command;**

**Minister Raimundas Karoblis, Minister of National Defense, Ministry of National Defense
of the Republic of Lithuania;**

**Major General Krzysztof Krol, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed
Forces, Republic of Poland;**

**Director-General Janne Kuusela, Director-General, Defense Policy Department, Ministry
of Defense of the Republic of Finland;**

**State Secretary Jan-Olof Lind, State Secretary to the Minister for Defense, Ministry of
Defense of the Kingdom of Sweden;**

**Permanent Secretary Kristjan Prikk, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defense,
Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Estonia**

**The Hearing Was Held From 3:00 p.m. To 5:07 p.m. in The Artus Court, Gdansk, Poland,
Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Co-Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation
in Europe, presiding**

Date: Tuesday, July 2, 2019

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WICKER: Good afternoon. This hearing of the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the U.S. Helsinki Commission, will come to order. Good afternoon to everyone. I'm delighted to see this wonderful crowd. And welcome to today's field hearing on Baltic Sea regional security. This event is the first time in the 43-year history of our Commission that we convene outside the United States. We're here to learn from the incredible group of panelists who have agreed to be with us today. But we're also here to underscore America's commitment to security in the Baltic Sea region, and our unwavering support for U.S. friends and allies.

I want to begin by thanking the government of Poland, which has been extremely gracious in working with us to organize our event here in this extraordinary and beautiful city. Indeed, we are especially pleased to be able to hold this event in the historic city of Gdansk. There could be no more fitting place for us to understand the stakes at play when we talk about Baltic Sea regional security. After all, it was just a short distance from here that the first shots of the Second World War were fired, as Poland, despite a valiant defense, became one of the first victims of Nazi Germany.

The people of Poland endured a cruel and devastating occupation that was followed by nearly 40 years of repressive communist rule. Through it all, they never lost their core conviction that their nation belonged among free democracies. Fittingly, it was also in Gdansk where the movement began to end that terrible era, taking historic and courageous steps to reclaim democracy. The Solidarity Movement became synonymous with the transformative wave of protests that swept across Eastern Europe and ended with the collapse of communism across the region, with the end of the Soviet Union, as well as the end of the Soviet Union's violent and illegal occupation of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Since that time, Poland has become a good friend, important partner, and a stalwart NATO ally. It has assumed its rightful place as a leader in a stable and prosperous transatlantic community. We recognize that journey has not been easy, but nothing worthwhile ever is. Poland was given another chance at freedom, and it has not squandered that opportunity.

I also want to mention that just a few moments ago we went to the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in order to pay tribute to the late Mayor Pawel Adamowicz, who was murdered just a few months ago. We met Deputy Mayor of Gdansk Alan Aleksandrowicz and we expressed America's deepest condolences for the loss that this city has experienced. Poles will undoubtedly draw inspiration from Mayor Adamowicz's legacy in public service and civic virtue.

As we sit today, less than 80 miles from Russia's border, citizens of Gdansk are the last to need a reminder that the Kremlin has in recent years shattered notions of a predictable, stable regional order. With its illegal occupation of Crimea and ongoing war against Ukraine, Vladimir Putin's attempts to stoke division and instability abroad is felt every day by our friends in this region. Our delegation well understands that freedom, peace, and prosperity in the Baltic region are crucial to European and global security. This region sits at the epicenter of Europe's new north, a unique intersection of geography, infrastructure, education, good governance, and high-

technology industries. Eighty million people live here and profit from the region's key role in European shipping and transit. The region is also a focal point for Europe's energy independence.

We hope our conversation with today's panelists will provide a better understanding of how our collective efforts will continue to thwart Russia's desire to undermine the peace and security of this crucial region. We want to get a sense of the threats we should be most concerned about as well as a clear understanding of the ways we may best move forward together. Moving forward together certainly includes standing shoulder-to-shoulder with two non-NATO partners present and on the second panel today – Finland and Sweden. Our former Secretary of Defense General Mattis put it well recently when he saluted, and I quote, “both of your nations’ serious approaches to security in support of a global order that respects all nations’ sovereignty and territorial integrity, providing a steady anchor of stability in a region grown more tense as a result of Russia’s unfortunate, unproductive, and destabilizing choices.”

I want to be clear as I can about what our delegation is here to say, that under no circumstances can we be divided from our friends and allies, here or elsewhere. I was reminded of this key principle when I participated, along with a very large congressional delegation, in the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy. I'm certain all of my colleagues are unanimous in their agreement with the sentiment of President Trump on that occasion, and I quote, “To all our friends and partners, our cherished alliance was forged in the heat of battle, tested in the trials of war, and proven in the blessings of peace. Our bond is unbreakable,” end quote.

Our event will proceed in two parts. First, we will hear from a panel of officials from the United States. This panel includes two speakers, Deputy Commander of the United States European Command Lieutenant General Stephen M. Twitty, and the honorable Douglas D. Jones, the deputy permanent representative of the United States to NATO. We thank both of you gentlemen for being here, and we would ask that we begin with Lieutenant General Twitty. Thank you so much and you may proceed in your own fashion. Thank you, sir.

TWITTY: Chairman Wicker and distinguished members of the Commission, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of United States European Command Commander Tod Wolters and the over 68,000 brave and dedicated men and women who are currently operating in the European theater. The threats facing the U.S. interests in the EUCOM area of responsibility are real and growing. Our ability to counter these threats depends on a highly motivated team of patriots who strengthen solidarity and unity with our allies and partners as we improve the warfighting readiness of our joint force.

Given our shared values, defending Europe is an essential element of defending the United States. Knowing the military strength of the Euro-Atlantic, Russia seeks to engage in a conflict and competition below the level of armed conflict, as they continue to demonstrate a willingness to violate international treaties and disregard for the national sovereignty of their neighbors. Russia employs a whole-of-society approach through a wide array of tools to include political provocateurs, information operations, economic intimidation, cyber operations, religious leverage, proxies, and special operations, in addition to their conventional military forces.

In cooperation with NATO, we seek to deter Russian adventurism and address the arc of instability building on NATO's periphery. Alongside our European partners, the United States is fielding an interoperable and multidomain combat-credible force that underscores our shared deterrent mission and demonstrates our unwavering commitment to the collective defense from all NATO members. When the Kremlin looks to the West, they see a cohesive alliance that has both the military capability and the political will to defend its member nations to increase posture, operations, and exercises. In security assistance, we have increased our building partnership capacity activities, special operation forces, and our vertical lift capabilities.

EUCOM is also working a proposed 435 million (dollar) integrated air and missile defense project to assist the Baltic nations in the development of a robust command and control network that will contribute to the NATO deterrent efforts and the overall combat credibility of our combat force posture. Operationally we have shifted significant U.S. forces in the Baltic Sea area region by adopting changes in Operation Atlantic Resolve. Where previously there was one U.S. company on a six-month rotation in the Baltic nations, we now support a periodic exercise-based presence in the region, in addition to undertaking lead nation responsibilities for the NATO enhanced forward presence battle group in Poland.

This U.S. eFP battlegroup became operational in 2007, while the United Kingdom, Canada and Germany act as framework nations for similar battlegroups in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania respectively. We recently concluded our annual BALTOPS exercise, which practiced high-end warfare, amphibious landing capability, and interoperability in the Baltic Sea. EUCOM also supports the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission in the region. EUCOM's Joint Cyber Center also works closely with each of the Baltic nations to help build up integrated planning teams, central elements to refine NATO cyberspace operations and interoperability. We continue to enhance our intelligence sharing and our indication and warnings capability with our NATO partners and allies.

Our alliance is strong. And our actions prove that we stand together in solidarity with NATO and in support of our Baltic allies. Since 2015, Congress has authorized and appropriated nearly 17 billion (dollars) in EDI funds in response to Russia's aggression and malign influence. EDI underwrites our nation's enhanced deterrence and our defense posture throughout the theater by prepositioning and positioning the right capabilities in key locations in order to respond to adversarial threats in a timely manner. As stated in the national security strategy, the NATO alliance of free and sovereign states is one of our greatest advantages over our competitors. And the United States remains committed to our Article 5 obligations.

Our bonds are strengthened by a shared commitment to collective defense, democratic principles, and mutual respect and national sovereignty. Ultimately, the United States is safer when Europe is prosperous and stable. I close by, again, thanking Congress and this Commission for your continued support, especially on sustained and predictable EDI funding. EUCOM's future success in implementing our National Defense Strategy, protecting our NATO allies, and deterring Russian malign influence is only possible with Congress' support. Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

WICKER: Thank you. And we will have a number of questions. We appreciate your testimony General Twitty.

Mr. Jones, welcome and thank you so much for coming here on behalf of our Mission to NATO.

JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished commissioners, members of Congress, for the opportunity to testify here today on the topic of Baltic Sea regional security. I'm particularly honored to be speaking on the topic here in Gdansk, which is, as the senator mentioned, the birthplace of the Solidarity Peace Movement. I spent three years of my life in my youth, from 1978 to 1981, living in Poland when my father worked at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw. And although I was young at the time, the significance of what was happening in those years, which were the years that Solidarity was born, was not lost on me and my siblings and I would frequently walk down to Solidarity headquarters in downtown Warsaw to buy Solidarity pins and t-shirts and bags so that we would have our own little piece of history.

And my trip to Poland to speak here today at this hearing is my first time back since my family departed in 1981, a few months before the Communist government declared martial law in an attempt to destroy Solidarity. So it's a particular honor to be speaking here today because I believe that this hearing is, in its essence, about how do we preserve and defend those democratic freedoms that the people of Poland, the people of Estonia, the people of Lithuania, and the people of Latvia fought for and won, starting with the Solidarity Movement and other resistance movements in the Baltic region.

Today, Western democracies, in particular those on Russia's borders, again face a threat from an increasingly aggressive Russia intent on dominating Europe and reasserting its global influence. To accomplish this, Russia seeks to disrupt and undermine Western democracies and their institutions, weaken the United States, and divide the NATO alliance. NATO has played a crucial role in the spread of democracy in the Baltic region, and in preserving it – first, by protecting Western democracies from the reach of communism during the Cold War, and then by opening its door to the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and providing them the protection of its collective defense. NATO is not only a military alliance but, more importantly, an alliance of values – of nations committed to the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law.

The challenge posed by Russia in the Baltic Sea region is real and concerning. Russia treats the Baltic Sea region as its own domain, yet we must remember that six NATO countries and two key NATO partners – in Finland and Sweden – also border the Baltic Sea. The overall security of the Baltic Sea region is clearly an area in which the United States and NATO must play an important role. In response to Russia's increasing threats, NATO took concrete steps in 2014, and 2016, and 2018 to strengthen deterrence and defense in the Baltic region. Foremost, NATO implemented an enhanced forward presence, consisting of multinational battlegroups in Poland and the three Baltic states with contributions from across the alliance. These battlegroups are a visible and capable demonstration of NATO's foundational principle that an attack on one ally is an attack on all.

The United States continues to do its part in each of these areas, thanks in large part to the sustained support of Congress. Our commitment to Baltic security has been demonstrated through the European Deterrence Initiative, which exceeds \$6 billion in 2019. EDI is an unmistakable signal of U.S. resolve to ensure the readiness, responsiveness, and resilience of our forces in Europe. And I'm grateful to be joined by Lieutenant General Twitty, who's outlined these activities from the perspective of European Command.

But the threat from Russia has evolved beyond simply a military one. It includes hybrid attacks, as we've seen in Ukraine and Montenegro, to name only two examples, cyberattacks, and influence operations designed to inflame fault lines within our societies and to weaken our democratic institutions. To address these new and evolving threats, NATO developed a new strategy for responding to hybrid threats and established a mechanism to deploy counter-hybrid support teams to support allies, and it continues to strengthen its cyber defense and response.

In addition to these many adaptations, to be an alliance fit for purpose NATO must ensure it has the resources necessary to sustain a credible deterrent and the requisite defense capabilities. For the United States, your support in Congress has assured that we will lead by example with defense investments that keep our military prepared. Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia are all meeting their commitments under NATO's Wales Defense Investment Pledge to spend 2 percent of their GDP on defense. But this approach is not shared by all allies. In fact, sustaining our alliance military strength and ensuring NATO has the capabilities to maintain its deterrence and defense will only be possible if all allies meet their commitments under the Defense Investment Pledge.

Mr. Chairman, for more than 70 years NATO has been at the center of the transatlantic relationship. This year we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the alliance in Washington, D.C. It was a tremendous milestone. NATO has succeeded for 70 years because it has constantly adapted to meet new security threats. Today, we are making progress, but much more remains to be done. The state of our alliance is strong, but we must continue to adapt to ensure our collective security for the next 70 years. Thank you.

WICKER: Well, thank you very much to both of you. And, Mr. Jones, let me pass along our appreciation to Ambassador Hutchison, our former colleague. I have spoken to her, a number of us, in preparation for this hearing. And so please thank her for her support and for sending you along. General, thank you for being here and for your career of service to the United States, which continues.

Let me make sure we understand the view from a general standpoint. Is this region more dangerous than it was two years ago, or is it less dangerous, General? And how would you justify your response.

TWITTY: Yeah. I will tell you it's more dangerous from the standpoint of malign influence. From the standpoint of our deterrence capability against a Russia ground threat, I would say it's less dangerous. Through your assistance with EDI, it allows us to increase our capability, both from an exercise standpoint with our Baltic partners and building capability and capacity here in terms of infrastructure. And, as you know, we also rotate a brigade combat team

– an armored brigade combat team and an aviation combat team in Poland that shores up the deterrence posture in this area.

Also that's in this area is the eFP, which I spoke of. And we've increased our exercise activities. In a year's time, we conduct five major exercise in the Baltic area now – high-level exercises – and then 10 mid-level exercises. So the focal point for much of our operations in EUCOM has been here in the Baltic area to ensure that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our Baltic partners.

WICKER: So the region is more dangerous than – at least, we can say the threat level is higher than it was a few years ago. And our response, as far as the United States goes and our allies, is stronger as a result of that. Is that correct?

TWITTY: Absolutely, sir.

WICKER: And a part of our response from the United States, and part and parcel to our contribution to the European Defense Initiative, is our increase in troop strength, in personnel strengths here in the European region. Is that correct?

TWITTY: That's correct, sir.

WICKER: And including also more air strength and our – the size of our fleet. Would that be correct?

TWITTY: That's correct, sir. We've increased here in Poland up to 4,000 U.S. military on the ground. As you know, a couple of years ago we just had shy of 2,000 soldiers. So we increased to 4,000. I think you're aware of the \$2 billion Polish offer which has been accepted, which will allow us to go up to an additional 1,000 soldiers to increase the capability here as well.

WICKER: Thank you. And this Congress has enacted as a statutory provision that the 355-ship requirement is now the statutory law of the United States of America. Are you going to need a larger or a smaller fleet in the next few years here in this region?

TWITTY: We will require a larger fleet. We're working with the Pentagon and OSD now. We're looking at two more additional destroyers that would come to Europe to allow us to be able to operate not only in the North Atlantic, but down through the North Atlantic, in the Baltic Sea, in the Black Sea, and into the East Mediterranean. If you look at the Russian maritime capability and what they're doing now, they're operating in those areas. And we need to be able to extend our reach into those locations as well.

WICKER: Is it fair to say that the additional expenditure enacted by this Congress over the past two years, or the two-year budget number that was consistent and reliable, is a very important part of your capability to provide security?

TWITTY: Absolutely. Sir, without EDI we could not progress the way that we have progressed over the last two to five years. That increased money, it has allowed us to focus on the exercises that we require, focus on the interoperability with our NATO partners, and to also increase the infrastructure in this region. The further you go from west to east, there's an immature infrastructure – things such as basing requirement, ammunition storage facility, fuel capacity, and so forth. So that money has allowed us to do those type things, to posture the theater in the east.

WICKER: Sir, if we were, for some reason, not able to agree on a budget number, and if we moved back to the practice several years ago with continuing resolutions and uncertain budgetary figures for you for a period of time, what would that do to your capability of fulfilling our mission and our aim here in the region?

TWITTY: Yeah, we need sustained and predictable EDI funding over the long haul to continue to set the posture that is required not only to deter Russian aggression, but indeed to defend the Baltic states and the European continent.

WICKER: OK. Thank you, very, very much. And who would like to volunteer to ask the next question? Senator Cornyn.

CORNYN: Well, thank you, Chairman Wicker. And thanks to our two witnesses for being here today. It's an honor to be at this historic hearing on a continent whose last century saw two world wars take place. And obviously our goals as a nation, along with our allies, is to make sure we never have to fight another war – either here, on the continent, or anywhere else, if possible. And I want to talk to you a little bit, General, about the role of deterrence in a moment, but let me start with you, Ambassador Jones. I was very impressed when you and Ambassador Hutchison were able to work with our NATO allies and secure support for the U.S. decision to announce that Russia had – was in violation of the INF Treaty, the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. And in fact, isn't it the case that they had covertly been developing a ground-launched intermediate-range cruise missile in violation of the INF Treaty?

JONES: Yes, sir. I would say NATO has had a clear and unified position on the INF Treaty. And it was December of last year that NATO made its first clear statement on it. And it fully supported the U.S. assessment that Russia is in material breach of the INF Treaty. The United States has, for years, been talking to Russia about this violation. It started in the Obama administration. And after repeated interactions with Russia, we've been met only with denial and obfuscation, and no explanation. And so all 29 allies support this finding that Russia is violating the treaty.

And they also have fully supported the U.S. position that if Russia does not return to compliance within a six-month period, that will expire on August 2nd, then the United States will withdraw from that treaty. And it has reached the conclusion of supporting this position of the United States because allies know that the United States has remained fully compliant with INF throughout its entire 30 years, but a situation where one country is complying with the treaty and another country is violating that treaty is not sustainable. And that's not good for security. It's not good for arms control.

CORNYN: And, General Twitty, does Russia's development covertly of a ground-based cruise missile – is that a destabilizing development here in Europe?

TWITTY: It absolutely is, sir. And as you know, we're watching Russia build its capability and capacity closely. They're on a fast-track to modernize, not just on the ground-based systems but also their sub capability as well, their counter-space activity as well, and many of their ground-based platforms.

CORNYN: Well, as I believe you detailed and Ambassador Jones talked about this as well, Russia's behavior sort of belies their statements of a desire to – that they desire peace, when you look at what they've done not only in Ukraine, in Crimea, but in Georgia, when you see what they're doing in Syria, and of course what you see them doing even in our own elections in 2016, the sort of active measures that they've been using to create disruption and discord in democracies, not just in Europe but also now in the United States. This is – strikes me as an ominous development.

But true to form, the Russians then declared they no longer would comply with the treaty, after the United States announced that they were in breach of the treaty, and gave them until, I think you said, August the 2nd in which to negotiate their compliance and reenter the treaty. But the fact of the matter is that it doesn't appear that they're serious about that at all. And I would just ask, Mr. Jones, isn't it true that China is not bound by the INF – they weren't a party to the INF, correct?

JONES: That's correct, sir. I would add just also to your comments. Russia is violating the INF Treaty. That's received a lot of attention. But it's not the only treaty that Russia is in violation of. It's part of a larger pattern. And the United States and NATO have called on Russia repeatedly to return to compliance of the INF Treaty by destroying the SSC-8 missile, the violating missile, its launchers and associated equipment. But as you say, unfortunately there's been no indication yet – any sign that Russia is serious about returning to compliance to this treaty. And so it is not – we will have to prepare for the likelihood that we will be soon in a post-INF world. And NATO is preparing to ensure its own deterrence and defense posture in that environment. China, as you said, is not a party to the INF Treaty. It's a bilateral treaty with only Russia and the United States. There were other parties that are – no longer hold those missiles.

CORNYN: Thank you very much. I have two other – two last questions, General Twitty. Why would Russia want to develop this system? And how have they deployed it? And what's the impact on Europe?

TWITTY: Well, the reason why is they seek to undermine U.S. influence in Russia – I mean, correction – in Europe, number one. The second thing, they seek to be a regional power – the regional power in Europe. And the third thing is, they know with their systems that they can intimidate and bully their neighbors, such as in the Baltic states. And so they can deploy it in a myriad of ways. One is push it forward into Kaliningrad and use Kaliningrad as a base of operations to be able to conduct destruction inside Europe. The other one is take a tactical

nuclear approach from within inside Russia. So there are a myriad of ways that they can do this. But they are obviously developing capability because they want to compete with the U.S.

CORNYN: Obviously our military is supposed to fight and win our wars, but I think of our military as the peacekeepers, the ones that make sure that no one risks war because they fear the consequences, in part. What is the – what is the role of NATO and Europe defense in deterring Russian aggression? And could you explain how they may misinterpret our inaction as weakness, and maybe encourage them, via provocation, for further aggressive action?

TWITTY: Yes, sir. So every single day as one of my missions as the deputy commander European Command is to determine whether we're pulling the right levers to deter Russian aggression in the European theater. We do that along with NATO and at headquarters. So there's various capabilities and activities that we do to act as a deterrent, mostly focused on Russia's malign activities, particularly here in the Baltics. We see them conducting cyber operations here in the Baltics to intimidate the government here, to undermine the government here. You see the propaganda and information campaign that they're doing with the local populace in our Baltic states.

We conduct information campaigns along with it, counter cyber operations as well, to support our NATO partners and members in that effort as well.

WICKER: Thank you very much, Senator Cornyn.

Mr. Jones, what other treaties have – quickly – are the Russian leaders violating?

JONES: I would say the Open Skies Treaty, Vienna Document, INF come to mind.

WICKER: OK. And if you could supplement that answer that would be helpful.

We have Representative Tom Graves.

GRAVES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let me – let me thank you for assembling this conversation today. I think this is a very important topic to be discussed. And no better location to have that discussion than this important region. So thank you for the effort of you and your team to do this.

General Twitty, you referenced, I guess, Kaliningrad, and that territory. Can you help us understand, what is – what is it being used for, what do you see happening there, you know, some of the new developments of that territory, and the strategic positioning of that area and what it might mean to this region?

TWITTY: Thank you for the questions.

First of all, as you know, Kaliningrad is noncontiguous to Russia. It is used as a forward location that can provide significant military capability for Russia. As you look at Kaliningrad today, they have about two brigades of infantry and armor sitting there. They also have a

significant integrated air defense missile capability there, in the form of SA-20s and SA-21s. In the Baltic Sea, where they have a seaport there, they have a pretty significant naval capability there. And so overall they have forward capability that they could use its geographical location to its advantage.

Now, the disadvantage is, if you look at where Kaliningrad is, it's surrounded by two NATO countries – Poland to the south and Lithuania to the north. And just as they are positioning capability forward, we're positioning an equal capability to be able to counter the Kaliningrad threat that we have.

GRAVES: So you would consider it, in essence, a military outpost?

TWITTY: If you want to call it that. It has the capability to be a formal outpost from which to launch significant capability from Russia into Europe.

GRAVES: Do you have any concerns about nuclear weapons in that region – to be deployed from that region at all?

TWITTY: It's a possibility. As you probably have heard, they have the Iskander that's located also in Kaliningrad. I have no reports of whether they have nuclear-capable cruise missiles at Kaliningrad. But that Iskander has the capability to launch nuclear weapons.

GRAVES: I guess my last question about that territory, have you seen a recent uptick or a building up of military forces or strength in that region within the last six months, eight months, 12 months?

TWITTY: In the past year we've seen an increase of bombers as well as fighters. They have approximately three fighter units – fighter squadrons in Kaliningrad, approximately two bombers and one fighter squadron. So we have seen an increase in fighter capability into Kaliningrad.

GRAVES: Thank you. Thanks for that report. Thanks for keeping an eye out on that territory.

Mr. Jones, we have taken action from a U.S. perspective to enact sanctions against many leaders in Russia, and Russian companies. Are you seeing positive impact? Is that helpful? Or should there be more? And are other NATO countries participating equally? Or what's your perception on that impact? Is it helpful?

JONES: Thank you for the question. And I would say yes, it is helpful. There have to be clear consequences for Russia for its behavior. And that's an important part of deterrence. They have to know that there will be repercussions for the kind of aggressive behavior, and those repercussions can come in different ways. But sanctions is an important element of that. We have seen some European allies and the European Union have also implemented sanctions, particularly in response to events in Ukraine. And as always, we're more powerful when we act together, can send a more unified message.

GRAVES: Mmm hmm. And after the aggressive acts towards Crimea a lot of folks have similar concerns about this region as well. Is that something that you think is a possibility, or is this – are we overly concerned about that? Is this a different perspective because these are NATO countries? What would your response be to that?

JONES: Well, we are concerned about it, because we've seen Russia is becoming increasingly aggressive and it's using – it has sought to – it is seeking as part of a comprehensive strategy to weaken ourselves, the United States, our allies, and the NATO alliance. It is different. These countries that we're talking about today are NATO allies. And they're under the protection of Article 5. So it would be a very different ballgame. That would be an attack on the alliance as a whole.

I think what we're especially concerned about is Russia's use of hybrid warfare and its attempts to undermine the allies and, in particular in this region, using tactics that fall below the threshold of Article 5 in an attempt to achieve their aims without invoking a full military response. That's the area where NATO has built up increasing capability, but it's one area where I think there's also more work to be done.

WICKER: Thank you very much, Representative Graves. And thank you for that last question and for your response, Mr. Jones. The Russian invasion of Crimea, the Russian invasion of the sovereign nation of Ukraine, was a gross violation of international law. It violated every single principle that Russia had signed onto as a member of the OSCE. And it was an outrage. You have stated that that action against a NATO ally would in fact be a different ballgame altogether. And I appreciate you saying that on the behalf of the United States of America. And I would underscore that. And I think every member of this panel would underscore this. We have Article 5 obligations to our NATO allies. And as far as I'm concerned, they are sacrosanct and would present a far different scenario if anyone were to try that sort of action. So thank you for allowing me to interject that.

We next have Representative Billy Long of Missouri.

LONG: Thank you. And thank you all for being here today and for participating in this historic field hearing. Really appreciate it.

General Twitty, what's Vladimir Putin's biggest fear? What's he afraid of?

TWITTY: A couple things, I would say, sir. Number one, he fears NATO continues to grow on his periphery. And every day he wakes up and looks west, and he sees a pretty credible capability and solidarity of a NATO alliance on his backdoor. So he fears that. The other thing that I will tell you that he fears is the U.S. in the region. He wants to be the – Russia wants to be the dominant regional power in the region. And he's working hard through his malign activities to gain that.

LONG: On a scale of one to 10, give a one to 10 on the success of their buildup – military buildup over the last 10 years.

TWITTY: Russia's buildup?

LONG: Yes, uh-huh.

TWITTY: I will tell you that Russia is growing in capability and capacity. What has allowed them to become better, quite frankly, is the operations that they've done in Ukraine, and continue to do in Ukraine, the operations that are going on in Syria. Just like U.S. forces rotating in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan, they've gained a lot of experience by participating in those operations.

LONG: And their military buildup, as far as weaponry and things, what –

TWITTY: Yes. In terms of their military –

LONG: Pretty successful? I mean, are they eight on a scale of one to 10, or 10, or?

TWITTY: The oil money and the funding that they received as a result of the oil money, he's used it well. In terms of his capability and his submarine capability, he's probably got one of the best submarine capabilities out there – (inaudible). He also has significant space-based capability and counter-based space capability. He's improved his air defense capability. The SA-21 and SA-20s are pretty good systems. And he's also improved his land-based maneuver systems and his tank capability, and his infantry fighting capability. And they've gone down a pretty serious modernization path that is a pretty capable force.

LONG: Yeah. It wouldn't take much to roll into the Baltic states, would it – a few short hours?

TWITTY: What I will tell you is he's got geography at his advantage. But what he doesn't have is an alliance at his advantage. And when you look at the capability that's in the Baltics now, it's vastly different than the capability that you remember from 2014. He's staring at pretty good national defense forces, and then he's up against the eFPs that I talked about earlier, with readiness, and capacity, and capability, presence in this region to be able to counter the threats that Russia poses.

LONG: To paraphrase what you said earlier, you said Russia will act below the level of combat, or contact, or whatever, but they're precipitously close – I mean, they're so close when you're flying jets 50 feet, or whatever, from each other, and when you aggressively come after a ship that obviously has the right of way and then say, oh no, America was in the wrong. What's his endgame there? I mean, no one wants a shooting war. And I wouldn't think Vladimir Putin would want a shooting war. But what's his endgame with these acts of aggression – that type of aggression, I mean?

TWITTY: Yeah. A couple – a couple of things. Again, he seeks to intimidate his neighbors. So the way you intimidate them is you fly in the air, you invade Lithuania's air space, and you intimidate them. The other thing that I will tell you, if you take a look at his

flight patterns and so forth, it is my assessment that they're probing our response time. They're looking to see how just how capable the U.S. and NATO are in terms of deterring and defending Russian capability. So they've taken the opportunity to assess us as they do these particular operations.

LONG: Well, when then – if you take Georgia, take Crimea. I was in Ukraine shortly – I mean, it was when Putin said he didn't have any troops there. The body bags were coming from training exercises, so that's how early in that I was there. But when you see those type of things that happen, and there's no real response, doesn't that embolden Vladimir Putin to do more of these aggressive acts, so to speak?

TWITTY: It could. The difference, as you know, Ukraine, non-NATO partner, but a partner.

LONG: Right.

TWITTY: And so a non-NATO partner, but a partner. But what you have here, and we thoroughly demonstrate it by our actions and your assistance, is we built the combat capable force in this region – in this region to be able to respond.

LONG: Just two takeaways from what you said. The submarine, the space force, I hope people took note of that, and thank you, again, for being here. I yield back.

WICKER: Let's do this. The next three on our list are Representative Harris, Representative Zeldin, and Representative Duncan. We need to excuse this panel at five after the hour, if that's all right. So let's see if the next three can divide up thirteen minutes evenly. And we'll begin with Representative Harris of Maryland.

HARRIS: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. And I will try to be brief. Mr. Jones, I appreciate your comments about a family connection. My parents came from Galicia and Hungary, escaped Russian aggression after World War II. So I can fully appreciate, you know, what your family has seen.

General, let me follow up just briefly on Kaliningrad, because I guess the concern would be that the Russian capability there could, in effect, block off reinforcement of supplies going to a Baltic conflict. Do we have the capability now, with EDI, are we developing the capability to make sure that doesn't happen?

TWITTY: Yes, sir. We absolutely are. First of all, before I answer your question, I want to thank you and your state partnership program. It's been vital to the region. It has allowed us to build the capacity we need with cyber. You know, Maryland does it best in terms of having a cyber force to help us out in the region, so I want to thank you very much.

HARRIS: Well, you're very welcome.

And Mr. Jones, just very briefly, you know, how do we push back against the argument that the NATO Russia Founding Act doesn't allow us to do some of the things which we would – you know, rotational forces, et cetera?

JONES: Well, I would say to that that the United States and our allies have actually remained fully compliant with the NATO Russia Founding Act. It's not something we can say about Russia. The NATO Russia Founding Act talks about some important principles, like non-use of force, respect for sovereignty, peaceful resolution of disputes – all of which it's clearly violated through the actions we've talked about in Ukraine, Georgia, and more. The United States – NATO and the United States, through its actions in – with enhanced forward presence, the recent decision in Poland, our assessment is those are fully compliant with U.S. and NATO's obligations. They are rotational and do not meet the threshold for substantial forces.

HARRIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Jones. I yield back.

WICKER: Thank you, Representative Harris.

Representative Lee Zeldin of New York.

ZELDIN: Well, thank you to Chairman Wicker and to your entire staff for setting this event up. It's an honor, as a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, to be invited to participate in this first meeting of the Helsinki Commission outside of the United States. It's a great honor to be here in Gdansk, Poland. And also, as someone who represents a robust Polish American community, greetings from the east end of Long Island, the 1st congressional district of New York.

Lieutenant General Twitty, thank you for your service. As a former ROTC commissionee and Fort Bragg paratrooper –

TWITTY: Hoo-ah.

ZELDIN: I greatly admire your entire history of service, going back now decades. And thank you, as well, to Mr. Jones for your history of service, including your dedicated time towards issues of strengthening alliances all throughout the world, including the U.S.-Israel partnership, which I know has been a big focus of your career as well.

I'm going to just ask you to comment about any one or all of these three items in our limited amount of time. I'd love to be able to get your thoughts on Nord Stream 2, Turk Stream, and the discussion with regards to Turkey's acquisition of F-35s and S-400s from both the NATO position as well as from the EUCOM position. And feel free to take them in any order.

TWITTY: OK. So I'll take the S-400 one. I think we've been pretty vocal based on when General Scaparrotti had the position, and now General Wolters, sir. Our position is that Turkey receives the S-400 then we're pretty clear that they should not receive the F-35. I think you're aware now that we've instituted an unwind plan, or we've stopped the training of Turkey pilots in the U.S. until we can come to resolution whether Turkey's going to decide to continue

on with their efforts with the S-400 or not. It appears that they're going to go in that direction. And it was just announced in the open press that they should be expecting delivery of that system within days. So our view is they do not receive the F-35 if they receive the S-400.

JONES: Briefly, I would say the Nord Stream project is not a project that is contributing to stability in Europe. In fact, it will weaken certainly Ukraine's position by depriving it of important revenue. And at a time when we are confronting Russian aggression and misbehavior, we don't believe these types of commercial deals, to which there are alternatives, are advisable.

On the S-400, the general has clearly laid out the position of the United States. This is also, of course, an issue for the alliance. And acquisition of the S-400 would hurt interoperability within the alliance. And we hope that Turkey does not take possession of this weapon system.

WICKER: Do you view Nord Stream 2 as a done deal?

JONES: I'd have to ask the Germans. I don't think so.

WICKER: Thank you very, very much.

And now Representative Jeff Duncan of South Carolina.

DUNCAN: Thank you, Senator. And I would thank both you for being here and thank you for your service to our great nation. Let me just stress that United States Congress will not abdicate this responsibility to support the men and women under your command, nor will it abdicate its responsibility to support our NATO allies or the Baltic states allies that we have.

General, you said in your statement that when the Kremlin looks to the West they see a cohesive alliance that has both the military capability and political will to defend its member nations. You go on to say that Moscow is intent on undermining NATO activity, seeking and exploiting fissures in alliance solidarity. When I think about the recent events in the European Union – Brexit coming to mind, but also what President Macon said yesterday – reminded his counterparts that the EU countries give an image of Europe that's not a serious one.

So when you talk about fissures, what are we doing to shore those fissures up, and how are we meeting them head on? Because I don't believe we want to show any weakness to Moscow, and I don't think we have any weakness. I think we are showing solidarity. I think we're showing strength, and force, and numbers, and then financing it. We're seeing NATO and Baltic states countries increasing their spending. So how can we make sure that you can assure us that those fissures are being closed up and addressed?

TWITTY: Yeah, well, thank you, sir. I think you know, that I'm from South Carolina. And you're from the great state as well. So it's good to see you.

DUNCAN: Go Tigers.

TWITTY: I like your tie. (Laughter.) But anyway –

WICKER: Objection. (Laughter.)

TWITTY: But at any rate, to answer your question, as you know that we're in an alliance that includes 28 other nations. And then you add on the EU there, that's 22 common nations when you add on the EU. And as you know, EU will have their priorities and we will have our priorities as well. You know, one of the priorities in the EU right now, as well as NATO, is ensuring the flow of immigration from North Africa up into Europe – make sure that they suppress that. And that is a priority. And in some cases, if you talk to many of our allies, Russia is not the number-one priority. So it's those type things, ensuring that we stay locked in step with continued funding, the 2 percent increase, number one. And also, that operations and activities and exercises are fully funded as part of NATO, and they're actually participating in these exercises. And so it's those things that we need to make sure that we stay in lockstep and agreement and continue to show solidarity.

DUNCAN: Thank you. I would ask Mr. Jones to talk about the funding, and how NATO's shoring up or solidifying those fissures that we're talking about.

JONES: Well, as an alliance of 29 allies, we do have disagreements. We don't make a secret of that. But what NATO has been successful in doing is always coming together on the important issues of deterrence and defense and building strong unity within the alliance. And we've always found ways to come to unity on important questions. Defense spending is one area where we have, I wouldn't say disagreement, but different approaches. But the trend is positive in general. This will be the fifth consecutive year of non-U.S. allies increasing defense spending. But this year it's predicted that eight allies will meet the 2 percent target, as compared to only three in 2014. And if you look at the period from 2016 to 2020, there'll be almost \$120 billion of extra defense spending than originally planned.

The trend is positive. It's just not sufficient. If we are to have credible deterrent, all allies must reach that 2 percent. All allies have agreed that they have made this commitment. And we need to continue to push them to meet that goal.

DUNCAN: I think that's a great point. Senator, I just want to remind the committee here and the CODEL that our president has challenged our allies to step up in their defense spending. I think they have stepped up. I think we're seeing that commitment on NATO, from what I heard from these gentlemen. With that, I yield back.

WICKER: And thank you. And I certainly want to say that on my behalf I hope our Congress continues to meet its commitment as we – as we struggle to find a budget number that's agreeable in divided government, in two-party Congress.

Let me – let me thank each one of you, and ask you: Would either of you or both of you like to say anything that you feel we haven't covered, or make some last few comments in summary that this international audience needs to hear?

General, is there anything you'd like to add?

TWITTY: I would just like to say that EUCOM is laser-focused on the Baltics. We think we've built tremendous capacity, capability and interoperability here. And our plan is to continue to stay focused in this area. I think you will see, as you move about the Baltic states, new capability that has grown within the internal national defense forces, as well as the capability that we provided here in the way of the enhanced forces presence and our rotational – our armor brigade combat team and our aviation combat team. They provide tremendous capability to this region. Thank you.

WICKER: And thank you so much, General.

Mr. Jones.

JONES: Thank you, Senator. I would just like to restate the ironclad commitment of the United States to Article 5, which has been expressed not only by the president but many senior leaders of this administration. The United States remains committed to the NATO alliance, and to keeping it strong. Thank you.

WICKER: Thank you very much to both of you. We are – we will excuse you at this point, and we have – our staff is going to help us change the nameplates, and we're going to bring our distinguished friends from the region forward. So thank you very much, and we will stretch for 60 seconds while our friends come forward.

(Break.)

WICKER: (Sounds gavel.) If we could convene in the next moments, or so. If our witnesses could come forward. And, once again, let me thank our first panel for their excellent contributions and for the way that our members were able to get them to enlarge on their comments. I think this is very valuable testimony.

We now have an extraordinary set of senior officials from this region before us today. I want to express my profound gratitude to all five of you for taking the time to join us here in Gdansk for this very important occasion. Our speakers for this panel are Raimundas Karoblis, minister of national defense from Poland – from Lithuania. Pardon me, yes. Let me get my bifocals adjusted here. And then – and then from Poland, Major General Krzysztof Krol, deputy chief of defense. From Estonia, Kristjan Prikk, permanent secretary and minister of defense. Then from Sweden, Jan-Olof Lind, state secretary to the minister for defense. And then from Finland Janne Kuusela, director-general of the Defense Policy Department in the Ministry of Defense of Finland.

So, gentlemen, thank you very, very much for participating. And I'll begin by calling on Minister Karoblis of Lithuania.

KAROBLIS: Thank you very much, honorable Chairman Wicker, members of U.S. Helsinki Commission, ladies and gentlemen. I'm highly honored to speak in front of such

distinguished U.S. Congress delegation. Thank you very much for traveling so long from the United States and thank you for your keen interest in the security of the Baltic region.

This lovely, peaceful city of Gdansk is a very appropriate place to conduct field hearings on the Baltic security. We are just fifty miles away from Kaliningrad area, one of Russia's anti-access/area denial, which is A2/AD, fortresses. The missiles that are based in Kaliningrad, and there are many including nuclear-capable Iskander, it was described in the previous session, are targeting NATO forces in Europe, their ability to reinforce the Baltics in particular. Russian intermediate-range missiles, SSC-8, which have been deployed in violation of the INF Treaty, also seek to undermine NATO's ability to move forces in Europe and to conduct collective defense. This is a matter of grave concern of the countries located in Russia's neighborhood.

For many reasons – geographic, historic, social – the Baltic region is bound to remain the most vulnerable part of the alliance. It will, therefore, require special attention of NATO military planners. Year after year, we observe Russia exercising operations against NATO in the Baltics. The focus of these exercises is the Suwalki Corridor, a narrow strip of land between Lithuania and Poland. It is critical for the defense of this region. In case of conflict, Polish and Lithuanian forces will have a special role to keep this corridor open for allied reinforcements. To succeed, we need credible NATO military plans, regular exercises, as well as full engagement of the United States with its unique military capabilities.

Taking the opportunity, I would like to thank the U.S. Congress for your resolute support to NATO and the transatlantic link, which is the core of our security. We would not allow other policy issues and disagreements, be it on trade, climate, or Middle East, damage the defense relations between Europe and the United States. I would also like to thank the U.S. Congress for the assistance that your country provides to the Lithuanian armed forces. With your support, we were able to accelerate our capability development programs, in line with NATO priorities, expand military infrastructure, which is also used by NATO allies, as well as to increase our large caliber ammunition stockpiles.

This is an issue of beneficial operations. Since 2014, the United States has invested nearly \$80 million to support the Lithuanian armed forces. In this same period, Lithuania has committed more than \$200 million in national funds to purchase U.S. defense articles. This figure is likely to grow significantly as new major projects are currently under consideration. Mr. Chairman, esteemed members of the Congress, I am proud that Lithuania, together with our Baltic neighbors in Poland, are among those allies who already spend 2 percent or more of their GDP for defense. This shows our serious approach to national security, as well as to our NATO commitments.

We're determined to act as security providers and to show solidarity with our allies. Lithuania has deployed forces to all key operational theaters, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, and Ukraine. Our troops have served side-by-side with American soldiers for many years now. And the cooperation between the United States and Lithuanian special operations forces is truly legendary. At present we are working with the U.S. South Command Europe on a new very interesting project to improve situational awareness and intelligence sharing in the Baltic region.

Also we would like to highlight our very close and productive cooperation with the Pennsylvania National Guard. This partnership is already more than 25 years old and is of great value to our countries. And also was example last month – it was the month of the partnership between Pennsylvania and Lithuania. And this was announced by decision of the Senate – or the Pennsylvania commonwealth.

We also grateful to United States for leading the process of NATO adaptation to the new security realities. There is a substantial progress in number of areas, including overall defense spending within the alliance. NATO command structure and plans will be adjusted to meet the requirements of Article 5 situations. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of U.S. second fleet, which has just completed the first major exercise in the Baltics, which is BALTOPS. The alliance also works to improve the readiness of NATO forces and to facilitate military movement across Europe. This key stance of work is the enduring legacy of the former U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to highlight two areas which now you – will require special attention over the coming months. One relates to the recently announced deployment of additional U.S. forces to Poland, which we sincerely welcome. Presence of U.S. troops changes the risk calculus in the Kremlin, making military challenge to NATO considerably less likely. We hope therefore that these additional U.S. forces will be used to maximize their deterrence value for the entire Baltic region.

The second issue is air defense. This is a critical capability gap in Baltics which we urgently need to address through our national and NATO efforts. The new Commander General Tod Wolters is fully aware of the situation, and we look forward to working closely with his staff and chief U.S. European Command to address this critical shortfall.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you very much for the opportunity to address this – your distinguished group of U.S. congressmen. I am very much looking forward to our follow-on discussions. I will be ready to answer your question to the general treaty about are we secure of not, questions about Kaliningrad and also, of course, Ukraine, which is keeping the southeastern flank of NATO. Thank you very much.

WICKER: Thank you very, very much, Minister Karoblis. We very much appreciate it.

And Major General Krol, you are next, and you're recognized.

KROL: Chairman Wicker, distinguished members of the Commission, thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to you about regional perspective on Baltic Sea regional security. On behalf of Minister of National Defense, Minister Blaszczak, allowed me to express our gratitude for your decision to pay a visit to Poland and convene a field hearing in Gdansk.

We are absolutely honored that the Commission took decision to hold proceedings first time in its 43-year history in Poland. And let me also underline that our presence here is extremely remarkable, taking into account fact that the Second World War outbreak took place near 80 years ago, 1st September, 1939, a few miles from this location, where armored[?]

Schleswig-Holstein opened fire from all her guns on the Polish army debarkation point at Westerplatte.

Poland's tragic and existential—the worst possible—experience from that period, established a clear direction in our efforts related to building safe and secure environment for Poland and for the region. Our attention and efforts continuously focused on Russian militarization and aggressive behavior, which is the biggest challenge for stability in the Baltic region. There is no doubt U.S. involvement is crucial in all these efforts.

Let me present Polish perspective and priorities in countering these challenges.

So, first of all, I'd like to say a few words about Russian foreign policy concept promulgated in November 2016, where Russia positions itself as an independent global great power. Russia is self-reliant in defense and participates only in Russia-centric or Russia-led military alliances. Russia maintains a Russian-centric economic security order in its neighborhood, claiming its sphere of influence.

What are the Russian – Russia goals and priorities in their foreign policy? Weaken the unity of Western policy, accelerate inevitable although difficult U.S. adaptation to the realities of multipolarity and a world without Western hegemony. So now we understand why they behave as they behave.

Russia is looking forward for opportunities to challenge and reshape the post-Cold War international order, particularly to challenge the U.S. position in areas where Russia claims its strategic interests in its Central European neighborhood particularly. Russia has a very limited possibility to compete in economy for social perspective in citizens' level of life or cultural domain. But at the same time, Russia built military strength and capabilities to destabilize situation, stimulate regional tensions, escalate proxy wars. There is no doubt this military tool is the most important in Russia politics reservoir.

Russian Federation executes massive and snap exercises ranging from the high north through the Baltic region to the Black Sea and Mediterranean region included.

We witness negative tendencies in the Russian military posture. Russian western and southern military districts are leaders in terms of modernization and new capabilities development.

Let me provide you some figures concerning Russian state armament program 2018-2027. So they decided to spend around 700 billion U.S. (dollars) officially. However, if – as we calculate it, their expenditures, taking into account purchasing power in Russian defense industry, the amount increases up to 2.5 times.

Russia remains the third-largest in the world, with much higher percentage – I'm talking about defense spending – and Russia has much higher percentage of its defense spending dedicated to research and development than in most developed European countries.

We observed that there is visible but no decisive impact of sanctions on Russia building its capabilities. We assess that Russia will continue to build and develop their capabilities in A2/AD systems, electronic warfare, command control, communication information, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, short-notice readiness, supersonic missile systems, cyber, electronic warfare, strategic nuclear triad, and non-strategic nuclear capabilities, plus space program.

Russia is obsessed with maintaining control over escalation dynamics. It will seek to determine possible conflict quickly, and the chief objectives in a very short period of time, using all means at its disposal, conventional or nonconventional. Threat of using nuclear weapons, asymmetric responses, hybrid tools, use of special operations forces—such as was the scenario, for example, of recent exercises, Zapad '17. We are also in front of next exercises, that will be held this fall, Union Shield, and we will closely monitor that exercise as well.

It should be also underlined that a large percentage of the land component of the Russian armed forces is available at a high readiness for short-notice contingencies. Militarization of the Baltic Sea region by Russia has already been underlined by my predecessor pointing out at Kaliningrad, for example.

However, let me also underline another area. Russia is noncompliant with conventional arms-control regimes and confidence and security-building measures. For example, the Vienna document and Open Skies Treaty, Russia is constantly circumventing the notification or observation commitment in case of massive exercises; for example, exercise Zapad already referred to.

Russia alternately increases and decreases the intensity of international tensions. We assess that in the future, Moscow, playing its game with the West, could try to convince us that the regional security situation in Eastern Europe is stable again, just like it was prior to Russia-Georgia conflict. So we must remember that it might be another Russian test of our solidarity and resolve.

Is Russia willing or ready for any compromise with the West? This is another question we're asking ourselves nearly every day. In 2017-2018, we did not see any breakthrough from the Russian side. Russia continued its aggressive actions, persistent violation of international law, military buildup and political cohesion.

Concluding this part, I'd like to underline that we do not hope that President Putin's administration will change its attitude towards Euro-Atlantic community and reshape its policy to Ukraine or Georgia.

I'd like to say now a few words about hybrid threat, how we assess that, not only in a military dimension but also in other dimensions. The military pressure is complemented by the hybrid warfare, combining different instruments, military and nonmilitary, the hostile intentions of below the threshold of the recognized war.

We are targeted by cyberthreats that intensify continues to grow. Cyberwarfare does not have a dramatic impact of a conventional military attack but have a destructive effect that might be even more damaging. The challenge of growing importance remains potential interference in the political debate of NATO and EU countries.

Allow me in this place to remind you about Russia goal to accelerate U.S. adaptation to the realities of multipolarity in the world without Western hegemony. Adaptation means change of the ruling elites. From this perspective, interfering in the Western countries' domestic political affairs, meddling in democratic elections, active means of disinformation, efforts to polarize societies, as well as attempts focused on creation and boosting internal discord with Euro-Atlantic and European communities, including in variety of countries, is better understood, and it requires building proper required resilience from our side.

From Polish perspective, energy security is also important. We highly value the cooperation between Poland and the United States in the field of energy security; for example, LNG long-term contracts. It is important for the whole Baltic Sea region, especially in the context of the unfortunate Russia-German Nord Stream 2 project.

Facing a full spectrum of threats and challenges from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and also from hybrid to potentially high intensity, we need to increase the deterrence and defense of our region.

The ongoing process of enhancing deterrence and defense has one ultimate goal: Assure the capability of NATO to conduct, in accordance with Article 5 of the alliance founding treaty, large combat operations of collective defense. Collective defense remains, in fact, the core mission of the alliance.

From military standpoint, the crucial objective is to achieve the right balance between forward presence and reinforcement for increased deterrence and defense in NATO's eastern flank to counter Russia short-notice scenario and political and military isolation of the conflict.

To achieve it, we would continue NATO adaptation. The most important focus of these areas are the following: from Polish perspective, we welcome and support comprehensive efforts to increase NATO ability to reinforce, including full implementation of readiness initiative, well-known "4x30" project, decided at the Brussels summit; continuation of NATO command and force-structure adaptation; further streamlining movement of troops across the Euro-Atlantic area. In this domain, cooperation between NATO and European Union, from our perspective, seems to be absolutely important.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee, U.S. political leadership and meaningful military contribution is and continues to be critical for deterrence and defense against Russian threat. Therefore, we extremely value current and planned increase of U.S. military enduring presence in Poland.

The U.S. remains the framework nation for the EFP battle group deployed to Poland. In 2017, the U.S. deployed an Armored Brigade Combat Team and Combat Aviation Brigade in the framework of European terrorist initiative, already highlighted in front of this commission.

We also continue the cooperation with Washington in the area of missile defense, including contribution of the missile-defense site—building the missile-defense site in Redzikowo, Poland. I'd like to underline also great cooperation and support from Illinois National Guard for Polish armed forces during operation in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. This cooperation is absolutely great.

Let me also underline that last month president of Poland and U.S. signed a joint declaration on defense cooperation regarding U.S. forces' posture in the Republic of Poland. The joint declaration forces the establishment of the enduring U.S. military presence in Poland and its growth by about 1,000 additional military personnel in the near term. That means that the average U.S. personnel will amount up to 5,500 troops on the Polish territory, available for U.S., NATO, and for maintaining security in the region.

Mr. Chairman, Commission, I'm more than – I will be more than happy to answer any questions you provide.

WICKER: Thank you. Thank you very much, General.

KROL: Thank you.

WICKER: Let's stay on this side of the sea before we jump across. So Secretary Prikk, you are recognized.

PRIKK: Honorable Chairman, distinguished commissioners, let me first thank you for this very positive initiative to hold this field hearing in Europe, to hold it in this distinguished city of Gdansk, and give the Estonian government also the opportunity to present our views.

I won't be able to cover all the issues of interest, so I'll focus my remarks on the issue of effectiveness of NATO's regional deterrence posture.

Let me start by saying that NATO's posture in the Baltic region has grown much stronger since 2014, in addition to significant development of region's home-defense forces, the forces of our own militaries, and several counter-hybrid efforts. We also have NATO battle groups in all Baltic states and enhanced NATO air policing presence and more allied maritime visits to our ports. We see an increased number of NATO and allied live exercises in the region. The recent announced additional presence of larger contingent of American troops in Poland further strengthens NATO's posture regionally.

It is important that those troops also contribute to the U.S. military footprint in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. This would significantly add credibility to NATO's deterrence in the Baltic states. However, we all need to understand that the current NATO presence is and was never designed to be militarily a match to what Russia has in Kaliningrad and the western military

district and the capabilities that they can mobilize very quickly, as we have seen during the latest large-scale exercises.

The current NATO presence is primarily political and intended to show that NATO and its members would be involved in any conflict with Russia from day one. This critical but nevertheless limited presence is intended to be complemented by a very quick reinforcement by NATO in case of a crisis.

The problem is that the bulk of NATO forces is still far away, and our ability to deploy forces quickly and sustain them has important limitations. Issues such as the readiness, availability and mobility of our forces, the preparations required by means of detailed advance plans, live exercises, and swift decision making need further work. Today, Russia plans and exercises in the region exactly as they intend to fight, and we do not.

NATO has discussed the need to improve its ability to defend against air threats and strengthen its maritime posture for years. Despite some steps in the right directions—some very important steps in the right direction—we are still not very far along.

In particular, NATO has assessed time and again that the Russian air and missile defense and presumed strike capabilities would mean a considerable challenge to NATO's line of communications and reinforcement. The new SSC-8 capability that is in breach of the INF Treaty will add another capability into the Russian hands to attack critical targets in the whole of European theater.

All this affects NATO's ability to guarantee the security of this region by putting the ability to reinforce by the allies at risk. Without real solidarity between allies, NATO posture in itself is just an empty shell. Thus, while we are strengthening collective defense in practice – and we are doing it on a daily basis – we must not forget that the communication is a critical part of deterrence. This concerns every ally, but in particular the American commitment to the alliance – that's what I would state here – and its willingness to give the ultimate guarantee to the Article 5. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we – we all, Europeans and North Americans alike – use any opportunity to clearly send the message of unwavering commitment and solidarity to each other. We collectively have benefitted so much from the alliance. We, individually and collectively, have so much to lose from being alone.

That's all for mine. Thanks.

WICKER: Well, thank you, and let me just interject that, as far as I'm concerned, our commitment to Article 5 is absolute. And I hope we can give you that reassurance.

Let's move along then to Secretary Lind of Sweden. Thank you very much for being with us.

LIND: Thank you, Senator Wicker and distinguished members of the Commission. I would like to echo my colleagues. Thank you for organizing this event and giving me the

opportunity to elaborate a little bit on the Swedish perspective on the Baltic Sea security environment.

First of all, I would like to state – which has been already done by other – that the military strategic situation in our region has deteriorated. Russian actions in Georgia and Ukraine have shown that Russia is prepared to use military force to change established borders in Europe. The illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in Eastern Ukraine, Donbass region, is the greatest challenge to the European security order since it was established 25 years ago. Russia is using a broad variety and combination of methods and actions to achieve its objectives. This is what we refer as the hybrid threats gray zone. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is one example of Russia's intention to coordinate relevant instruments of state power with the use of proxy fighters to achieve political goals.

In parallel, Russia has shown a more challenging behavior in the Baltic Sea region, including disrespect of its neighbors' territorial integrity as well as provocative and unprofessional behavior in the air and on the sea. Because of Russia's interest in the region and as it is one of the busiest shipping areas in the world, the significance of the Baltic Sea region to European security has increased. Freedom of navigation and secure sea lines of communications are essential, not only for the countries in the region, but also for other nations.

Russian activities are not only a challenge to the countries in its close vicinity; they are also a challenge to the right of every country to make their own policy choices. This is a cornerstone in the European security order and international security order if you will. Therefore, Russian actions are a concern to all of us and make our response all the more important.

The complexity and scale of challenges at hand means that no state can face them alone. Together we need to use the entire range of security policy instruments, enhanced national defense capability, international cooperation, and dialogue, and confidence-building measures.

Challenges to European security must be met together, but on the national level, every country must take their share of responsibility. This is why Sweden is pursuing a defense policy with two reinforcing pillars. On the one hand, we are strengthening our national military capabilities. The Swedish total defense concept, which includes both military and civilian defense, is developed in order to meet an armed attack against Sweden, including acts of war on Swedish territory.

On the other hand, we are deepening our security and defense cooperation. Sweden gives priority to the cooperation with our Nordic neighbors; with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania; with Poland, Germany, and of course, as well as with the U.K. and the U.S.

We are also focusing on our efforts with and within multilateral organizations such as the EU and NATO. Regional cooperation, like the Nordic Defence Cooperation, and the U.K.-led Joint Expeditionary Force, are important to complement the security network in northern Europe.

A strong transatlantic link is vital for both European and American security. U.S. and NATO presence is necessary for the stability in the Baltic Sea region. Therefore, we welcome NATO's enhanced forward presence and the increased U.S. presence in Europe through the European Deterrence Initiative. The EDI has been instrumental for exercises and other joint activities. Exercises in the Baltic Sea region signals shared responsibility for the security. Maritime exercises like BALTOPS and Baltic Protector enhances our interoperability and strengthens our common maritime capability.

Sweden will continue to be an active partner to NATO, and our status as enhanced opportunities partner is key in this regard. And we share this, of course, with Finland. This relationship is crucial to the development of our interoperability and capabilities.

Political dialogue on common security challenges and how to counter them – in particular in the Baltic Sea region – is essential in our cooperation with NATO. We see Northern Europe as one strategic area; that is, the Baltic Sea and the Arctic area as well. I think they both go more or less hand in hand today.

A crisis in the region would affect all of us, and we must be prepared to respond to it together. Arms control as well as confidence and security building measures are essential parts of the European security order. Sweden strongly supports continued and complete implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies instruments.

Europe has a key role in meeting the global challenges and threats. Our response must be guided by democratic principles and values. It needs to be firm, clear, and long term, and it needs to build upon European and transatlantic unity. Together we must show that we stand up for international law and international security order.

Thank you very much for your attention.

WICKER: And thank you very much, Secretary Lind.

And now we're delighted to recognize Director General Kuusela.

KUUSELA: Thank you, Chairman, distinguished members of the Commission.

Coming from Helsinki, I would like to first salute you for the great name of your commission – (laughter) – and I'd also like to thank you for taking the time and coming here to our region. I think this – your presence here very clearly demonstrates your commitment to the European security and stability, and your willingness to work with your allies and partners in this region.

A lot has already been covered by my fellow panelists, so I will limit myself to very brief remarks from the Finnish point of view. Seen from Finland, the U.S. and NATO's responses to Russian annexation of Crimea have been well balanced and tailored to meet the needs of allies and partners. The European Deterrence Initiative, together with the decisions that NATO has taken to enhance its defense and deterrence, including the enhanced-forward-presence troops to

the Baltic States and Poland, they have been very positive. They have increased the security and stability of our region, and they send the right signal.

Finland is not a member of NATO, but we share the same security environment with the alliance, and we believe that strong Finnish defense contributes also to regional security. And I'm proud to say that Finnish defense has never been as capable and as interoperable as it is today. This is mostly also thanks for our partners' cooperation, and I hope this also benefits our partners.

Since the Cold War ended, many European countries transformed their armed forces and focused attention to crisis management and counterinsurgency. Finland never did that change. The defense of our own territory has always been the main task for the Finnish defense forces, and we have been – we have kept investing into it. And these investments will continue to the future. The ongoing replacement of our air force's F-18 fighter aircraft fleet, and the ongoing program to build new corvette-sized ships for the Navy, they will take our defense spending above the 2 percent of GDP early next decade.

And in addition, we have also invested a lot of time and effort to modernize our legislation to meet the needs of the new security environment, including the hybrid threats. Today no country can rely on national action alone, and for us, cooperation with our partners is a necessity. For a small country, that is the most effective way to build capabilities and ensure interoperability.

And in the past years, Finland has been deepening the defense cooperation with NATO and with those countries that have a role in the security architecture in the Baltic Sea region. In the case of Finland, this cooperation is not based on treaty obligation, but on strong common interest. Participation in NATO-led and other multinational operations, as well as training and exercising together, are key elements.

Eastern cooperation lays the foundation for what we can do in times of crisis, and I believe this is in line with the United States' national defense strategy as well. A network of alliances and partnerships supports your goal to create a favorable regional balance of power in Europe.

And before I conclude, let me also say a couple of words about resilience against hybrid threats. We rely on our national Total Defence model, which we have been developing since the Second World War, and we are confident with this model which is the reason why Finland made the initiative to establish the European Center of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki, and we hope this center will help all its members – EU and NATO – to build understanding and resilience against hybrid threats.

So to conclude with, I'd like to underline that the transatlantic relationship will continue to define European security in the future as well, and the commitment of the United States to NATO and its military presence in Europe continue to be essential for the Baltic Sea's regional security.

Thank you.

WICKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Director General, and before we move to questions, let me thank you for acknowledging the name of the Helsinki Commission. For those in the audience who do not know where that came from, we named the United States' role in participating in the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly the Helsinki Commission in honor of the Helsinki Final Act, which was the founding document of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, whose parliamentary assembly we'll be attending beginning tomorrow in Luxembourg.

The Helsinki Final Act includes principles that the signatory countries agreed to impose upon themselves. The signatory countries at the time of the founding act included Russia and the USSR, and signed on behalf of that nation and those nations by General Secretary Brezhnev, and signed on behalf of the United States by President of the United States Gerald R. Ford, and by the leaders of some 30-something countries who signed the founding document at the time.

These are not principles that are being forced on some foreign adversary country against our will. We voluntarily – all of the signatories, including General Secretary Brezhnev, including President Ford, voluntarily agreed that in the interest of security and cooperation in Europe we should agree to these principles and abide by them. So thank you for giving me that opportunity.

We're going to now have five-minute rounds of questioning, and I have on my list Representative Aderholt of Alabama and then Representative Zeldin of New York.

ADERHOLT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and let me also thank each of you for being here. And I think we're all actually – as has been mentioned, we are a little bit making history today because it is the first time that this Commission has convened a hearing outside of the United States, and that's in – over a 40-year history. So we're – I'm honored to be a part of it as I know you are as well.

I want to just open it up and – anyone who wants to answer – get your thoughts on it, regarding the Russian submarine activity in the Baltic Sea. It's not a secret that Russian presence in the Baltic Sea is ever present, and I guess one of the things that I would have – wanted to know your thoughts on is how concerned are you with Russia's activity, and also, is there such a scenario that you could – whereby the Russian forces would actually shut down access to the Baltic Sea and cut off maritime supply lines to the Baltic Sea? Is such a scenario credible? So let me just open it up, and please, whoever would like to start – to begin.

WICKER: So who will begin? Mr. Lind, were you –

LIND: Yes.

WICKER: You had your hand up, and then General Secretary Kuusela.

LIND: Thank you very much for that very important question. Let me answer the question by this – in this way, that Sweden has always put a lot of emphasis on the submarine fleet. We still construct and build our own submarines, and it has to be related to the threat we see in the Baltic Sea. So by that you could answer that – from our perspective that we are concerned. I mentioned that we are concerned with the Russian behavior in the air, on the sea, but I think it's fair to say under the sea level as well.

So of course it's a major concern for us as well. And I think you have to be aware of the fact – and I mentioned that as well – that civilian sea traffic, as you see, the vessels, merchandise, vessels you see it's one of the busiest areas in the world in the Baltic Sea. So even though we might not encounter an attack from the Russian side by military forces, but we have to be very aware of the potential threat of an attack which will largely damage our supply lines, if you will, even though we have the big harbor in Gothenburg on the west coast of Sweden, which is of great importance to many of the Nordic nations. It has to be looked into a Baltic Sea perspective as well because we have to secure our lines of supplies to all the nations. So it is considered a major threat to us as well.

Thank you.

WICKER: Director General Kuusela.

KUUSELA: Thank you, Chairman. I just shortly add to that. It is an issue for countries in the Baltic Sea region, and that's why many of us have developed a good set of anti-submarine warfare capabilities, and it's also one area where we focused and we work jointly with Finland and Sweden.

The Baltic Sea is a tricky region for maritime domain warfare. It's shallow, rocky, it has salinity layers that make it tricky both for submarines and the surface combatants, and it takes some regional expertise to wage a war in that region.

And just to underline that the security of supply by maritime routes is vital for a country like Finland. We are an island basically when it comes to security of supply, and that's why the freedom of navigation in the Baltic Sea is a very big issue for us.

KROL: OK, a little bit more from military perspective. Of course, for Baltic Sea as it was – it has already been described, it's not so – like the depth of the huge sea. Nevertheless, from our perspective, it's supposed to be very easy for Russia simply to block the entire Baltic Sea and any enforcement by the sea lines of communication won't be possible. So at least from that perspective it is absolutely critical to monitor all Russian capabilities developing in this area.

From the other perspective, Baltic Sea is very narrow from perspective of naval missile systems – 200 kilometers, for example, and we can cover entire southern and northern part of the Baltic Sea so any surface movement of the Russian navy could be monitored, could be targeted or countered by our own means.

The submarines – that’s another issue. It is very difficult to monitor. It’s – the only way to cover its movement, and this is real threat in case of any operation at the sea.

Thank you.

WICKER: Minister Karoblis, would you like to –

KAROBLIS: Yeah, thank you very much. Yes, so the submarines and possibility to – well, to block the communications through the Baltic is certainly the big risk, and it’s of the essential importance to have these lines of communication open.

But from our perspective, all the risks which we have around, with the possibilities to block Baltic entrance by the land, by the air and the sea, we assess equally very risky, and really we need the solution starting from the defense planning, the maritime and the air defense dimensions would be there, and then of course capabilities. Well, these are the ways to – for the solutions to avoid the blockage of the Baltic region so – by Russia.

Thanks.

WICKER: Thank you very much.

Representative Zeldin.

ZELDIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And we have people back home who are watching us, so if I could – if you wouldn’t mind indulging me once again for those who might just be tuning in, I just want to remind them who the distinguished five are in front of us.

Raimundas Karoblis, minister of national defense, Lithuania; Major General Krzysztof Krol, deputy chief of defense, Poland; Kristjan Prikk, permanent secretary of the Ministry of Defense, Estonia; Jan-Olof Lind, state secretary to the minister of defense, Sweden; and Janne Kuusela, director-general, Defense Policy Department, Ministry of Defense, Finland, thank you for being here.

And an American value and an American worldview: We want your countries to free, stable, secure. We have – up and down the ranks of our military and in our government, it’s in our DNA wanting and being willing to sacrifice greatly to help ensure that your countries are stable and free. We have service members who would be willing to spill blood, sacrifice greatly, even fight and die to defend your freedom, and we’re here talking about another nation where the ranks are filled with individuals who would fight and die to take that freedom away.

And that’s why I’m so proud to be here, and I’m very proud of my own country as you all are proud of yours. And I think it’s important, if you wouldn’t mind further indulging me, to take a moment and speak to our constituents back home, to speak to our country back home. They are several thousands of miles away. They don’t know this region like you do. They don’t know your countries like you do, so in simple terms, can you explain briefly what our alliance

between our countries mean, and a message to them as to why this region should matter to them, and why this American value should continue and this American world view would continue?

KAROBLIS: Well, thank you very much indeed, and well, first of all I would to thank for this general question, but also, this is the question of values, and speaking about Lithuanian relation with United States so the – we will never forget – the Lithuanians will never forget of the non-recognition policy by the United States. The United States has never recognized Lithuania or the Baltic countries as the part of the Soviet, did not recognize the occupation and annexation.

And also, in 2000, we had the visit of the President Bush, and we have the plate on the home – town hall of Lithuania that the enemies of Lithuania also are enemies of United States, and this is really encouraging. And yes, we are in Europe, we are European country and so we are part of the collective defense system which is defending the sound values, which is – I think it's about that. And we are the part of the alliance with the same value, we are of the NATO, and we are of the European Union also.

And of course relationship with United States is the strategic one, and also, yes, we are getting a lot of guarantees from the security guarantees so the – from the United States also. And these guarantees of NATO and the United States are essential – they are of essential importance for Lithuania.

So, on the other hand, I think that from my different experiences in different positions, and remembering also 2001 September events, indeed really while, yes, Europe and Western civilizations needs the leadership of United States, but on the other hand we understand that United States also needs the allies, which the closest allies is Europe, and in particular of our region. And shoulder-to-shoulder our soldiers, they participate in the foreign operations, ensuring their security shoulder-to-shoulder with U.S. troops and other troops. And our already long time participation here is the reflection that United States could really rely on Lithuanian support and participation also where it's necessary, and the same we expect also from others.

So I think that these are the main elements in the trade section in which we are concentrating and we need to continue to concentrate on once again. We are really thankful for U.S. commitments regarding the interests and the security of Baltic region.

WICKER: Thank you.

Mr. Harris, I believe you said you had a quick observation that you'd like to make, and then I suppose we will close the hearing and –

HARRIS: Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

PRIKK: (Off mic.)

WICKER: Mr. Prikk, would you like to follow up and respond?

PRIKK: I think for the sake of just saving time and giving the congressman possibly to ask a new question I will abstain.

WICKER: Thank you. Mr. Harris.

HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the timeliness of this – of this hearing, two days before we begin the OSCE deliberations – parliamentary assembly deliberations in Luxembourg. And I want to thank all the members of the panel.

I want to point out that it's my feeling that energy security is very, very, important. We discussed Nord Stream 2 on the last panel. But I firmly believe that, you know, Russian dominance in energy markets is not stabilizing to the region. Energy security is stabilizing. I had the opportunity to visit Lithuania, to or Klaipeda to the FSRU there. Poland, I understand, is considering an FSRU right here in Gdansk, which I think will greatly promote stability in the region, and I think the United States stands ready to be an energy partner.

You know, again – you know, we heard from the general on the last panel. Certainly our ability to project military force is important, but the United States now has the ability to project energy force, energy power that I think will be a great stabilizing influence.

So Mr. Chairman, again it's a pleasure to be here in Gdansk where we may have another facility which will import American energy.

I yield back.

WICKER: Well, thank you very much, Representative Harris. And let me thank each and every one of our witnesses on this panel and also the previous panel for being with us today. There are members of the press here who may want to speak individually with any of you, and I hope you will feel free to do that.

Let me just say, I'm up here with white hair. I feel quite young, but I think I have the whitest hair and the – may be the senior-most in terms of years lived. This is an emotional moment for me, I have to tell you. Growing up I never dreamed I would be in Poland at a free hearing, in a free Poland that chooses its own leaders and exercises freedom, and is a friend of democracies around the region, and a part of the Atlantic alliance.

So looking back at the ground we've covered in decades is profound and rewarding to me. And it gives me hope for some of our neighbors in the region who have not been so fortunate, that events can occur, and that the hope, and dream, and aspiration of freedom springs deep from the hearts of all humankind.

And so I salute you all for what you've stood for, for where you have to stand for it, for being friends of ours. And I hope presence today makes a strong statement to that effect. So bless you, and thank you. And on behalf of the United States of America and the Helsinki Commission, I will adjourn this hearing.

Thank you so much. (Sounds gavel.)

[Whereupon, at 5:07 p.m., the hearing ended.]