

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

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

Committee Members Present:

**Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chairman;
Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ), Co-Chairman;
Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Ranking Member;
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI);
Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH);
Representative Robert Aderholt (R-AL);
Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO);
Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL)**

Participants:

**Michael Carpenter, Senior Director, Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global
Engagement, and former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia,
Ukraine, Eurasia;**

**Steven Pifer, Senior Fellow and Director of the Arms Control and Non-
Proliferation Initiative, Brookings Institution;**

**Stephen Rademaker, Principal, Podesta Group, and former Assistant
Secretary of State, Bureau of Arms Control and the Bureau of International
Security and Nonproliferation**

**The Hearing Was Held From 9:30 a.m. To 11:21 a.m. in Room 208/209,
Senate Visitors Center (SVC), Washington, D.C., Senator Roger Wicker (R-
MS), Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe,
presiding**

Date: Wednesday, May 17, 2017

WICKER: Good morning to everyone. Our first hearing on April 26th rightly focused on human rights abuses within Russia. Today's hearing will examine Russia's actions beyond its borders, specifically Moscow's use of military force to further its ambitions. The mandate of the Helsinki Commission requires us to monitor the acts of the signatories, which reflect compliance with or violation of the articles of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the Helsinki Final Act.

Even a casual observer of international affairs would recognize that Russian military aggression has posed a tremendous threat to the European security in recent years. The Russian leadership has chosen an antagonistic stance, both regionally and globally, as it seeks to reassert its influence from a bygone era. The actions taken by the Russian leadership under the aggressive posture of Vladimir Putin have, without any doubt, violated commitments enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and other agreements.

To name three examples, number one: Russia has breached its commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against other states. Number two, Russia has breached its commitment to refrain from violating their sovereignty, territorial integrity, or other political independence. And, third, Russia has breached its commitment to respect other states' right to choose their own security alliances. Many of Russia's neighbors have faced Russian military aggression in recent years. Ukraine and Georgia have both seen important parts of their territories forcibly occupied, including the illegal attempted annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Russian forces continue to be present in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, against the wishes of the governments of those countries. In addition to its direct aggression toward its neighbors, Moscow has also made it a priority to undermine the effective functioning of several conventional arms control agreements and measures for confidence and security building.

These measures, to which Russia is a party, include the treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe, which limits heavy ground and air weapons in Europe and provides information on current arms holdings, including their location. Number two, the Open Skies Treaty, which provides for mutual unarmed aerial reconnaissance of member states. And, number three, the Vienna document on confidence and security-building measures, which provides for information exchanges, on-site inspections, and notifications of the military activities, arms, and force levels of OSCE-participating states. These agreements, along with others such as the INF Treaty which Russia is also violating, together form an interlocking web of commitments that have proved fundamental to the stability of the post-Cold War European security architecture. They were designed to enhance military transparency and predictability, thereby increasing confidence among the OSCE-participating states. Unfortunately, the actions of the Russian leadership in recent years have demonstrated that it sees little value in the transparency and predictability that have kept the peace in Europe.

I want to reiterate my dismay regarding the tragic death of American paramedic Joseph Stone on April 23rd. Mr. Stone, of Arizona, age 36, was killed while serving his country as a member of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine when his vehicle struck an explosive, likely a landmine, in separatist-controlled territory, an event that also injured two

other monitors. This is the first time in history of the OSCE that a mission member has been killed in the line of duty.

And make no mistake, Mr. Stone's death was directly related to Russia's aggression toward its neighbors. Had Russia not invaded Ukraine, and had it lived up to the Minsk Agreement and ceased supporting, directing, funding and fueling separatist in this region, there would have been no need for the monitoring mission to continue. So I once again extend my condolences to Mr. Stone's family, including his son, and his many friends. I want to take this opportunity to call for an end to the harassment faced by these brave monitors on a daily basis. And I urge all sides to provide the observers with unfettered access. We have put a photograph to my right, over my shoulder, of OSCE monitors as a reminder of the continuing challenges faced by these brave monitors as they carry out their extremely important mission.

Our hearing today will have three objectives. First, examine Russia's undermining of European security, the OSCE and its arms control agreements and commitments. Secondly, assess whether it will be possible to move Russia back toward compliance. And third and finally, explore how we can maximize the value of our agreements in the OSCE as a whole going forward.

I'm grateful to the members of our distinguished panel for their willingness to provide expert views on these topics. And I look forward to our discussion today. We'll first hear from Dr. Michael Carpenter, now a senior director at the Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement at the University of Pennsylvania. Next we will hear from Stephen Rademaker, who has previously testified on a number of occasions before our Commission. Mr. Rademaker is a former assistant secretary of state who headed three bureaus in the State Department. And thirdly, we will welcome back Ambassador Steven Pifer, who has appeared before the Commission previously. The ambassador currently serves as the director of the Arms Control and Nonproliferation Initiative at the Brookings Institution.

We're joined by my friend, Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey. Congressman, would you have some opening remarks before we hear our testimony?

SMITH: I do. Thank you very much. Thank you for convening this very important hearing to examine Russian military aggression in the OSCE region. Russia today stands in violation of the central commitments of the Helsinki Final Act. These commitments include respect for the territorial integrity of states, fundamental freedoms, and the fulfillment in good faith of obligations under international law. In violating these commitments, Russia is threatening the foundations of European security and recklessly endangering the lives of millions.

One such victim, that you just mentioned so well, is Joseph Stone, the 36-year-old American medic who was killed by a landmine while on patrol in separatist-controlled eastern Ukraine with the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission. And he lost his life on April 23rd. If it wasn't for Russia's aggression, and the plethora of challenges that they faced from the beginning of that deployment, there would have been no death of that wonderful young man, Joseph Stone, and so many others – about 10,000 lives that have been lost in this conflict.

Russian aggression is not a localized phenomenon. It threatens the entire region. Moscow has seized sovereign territory by force, threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons against other countries, harassed U.S. and allied military assets, and abandoned key transparency measures and commitments. These actions are unacceptable. In the face of such provocations, the United States must leave no doubt that we stand behind our Eastern European and Baltic allies. There is no time to waste. We must ensure the confidence of our friends at this critical juncture.

One way to do this is to continue building a credible conventional deterrent to Russian aggression alongside our allies, in particular Poland and the Baltic States. I and many others have consistently supported robust funding for the European Reassurance Initiative. With the support of this initiative, since 2014 NATO members have held over 1,000 military exercises in Europe. ERI has allowed the U.S. to participate more extensively in such exercises and increase its deployment of soldiers and military assets in allied countries.

Furthermore, it has also helped us to build the capacity of our partners and generally make our commitment to European security felt. These kinds of activities must be sustained and expanded to ensure that we are ready to counter any threat at any time. This hearing will give us an opportunity to learn what more the U.S. can do on this front, both bilaterally and within NATO.

In particular, I look forward to Dr. Carpenter's testimony about the extent of the challenge posed by Russian aggression in the OSCE region; Secretary Rademaker's thoughts about the implications of Russia's flouting of its arms control and transparency commitments; and Ambassador Pifer's perspective on developments in Ukraine and what they mean for the region. Again, thank you, Chairman, for convening this important hearing.

WICKER: Thank you very much.

And welcome to all of our guests today. We'll begin with the testimony of Dr. Carpenter. Thank you, sir.

CARPENTER: Chairman Wicker, Co-Chairman Smith, Commissioner Whitehouse, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today about the Russian military threat to Europe. There is no question that the Putin regime today poses the greatest threat to the security of Europe, and to the United States. Over the last decade, the Kremlin has twice used military force to violate borders and occupy other countries' territory. It has breached arms control agreements, such as the CFE, INF and Open Skies Treaties. It has undermined transparency and confidence-building measures, like the Vienna Document. And it signs political agreements that it never intends to honor, such as the 2008 Georgia ceasefire and the Minsk Agreements on Ukraine.

One of the chief drivers of Russia's aggression, and its deliberate violation of international agreements, is its desire to roll back Western influence in the post-Soviet region by subverting the foundations of Western democracy and undermining NATO and the EU. In the

non-NATO countries, Russia has proven it is willing to use military force to achieve its aims. In NATO countries, it is turning to asymmetric tactics, such as cyberattacks, covert subversion operations, and information warfare. In either case, denial and deception, unpredictability, and non-transparency maximize Russia's advantages. Nuclear threats and dangerous military activities are also meant to send a deliberate message to the West to stay out of Russia's neighborhood.

In other words, Russia's dangerous and unpredictable behavior is part of a deliberate strategy. Whereas Russian foreign policy for much of the last 25 years was based on cooperating with the West where possible and competing only where necessary, now Russia is engaged in a full-blown competition short of conflict across all domains all the time. That is why it is not the time to negotiate new European security arrangements or agreements with Russia. Expanding channels of crisis communication is important and necessary. The administration should also consider a new round of bilateral strategic stability talks to clear up faulty assumptions that could lead to miscalculation. But in general, we have to understand that Russia is no longer interested in cooperation to strengthen European security – just the opposite.

Our goal, therefore, should be to continue to bolster defense and deterrence in Europe. The U.S. should consider suspending its compliance with the NATO-Russian Founding Act so long as Russia continues to violate its basic principles. This would allow the U.S. to permanently deploy an additional brigade combat team to Eastern Europe as a deterrent force, a step that could be reversed if and when Russia's aggressive posture in the region changes.

The United States should also employ the legal principle of countermeasures to respond to Russia's violations of the Open Skies and INF treaties. Just as Russia denies access to part of its territory under the Open Skies Treaty, the United States should restrict Russian access to U.S. territory until Moscow returns to compliance. The same is true of the INF treaty. The United States should immediately begin research, which is legally permitted by the treaty, into the development of an intermediate-range missile that would match Russia's new capability. And the Pentagon should be tasked with implementing more robust defensive measures to deny Russia an advantage in the meantime.

With regards to Ukraine, Congress should encourage the administration to lift the existing de facto arms embargo and provide defensive armaments such as air defense, anti-tank and counter-artillery capabilities. The United States must also get off the sidelines and join France and Germany in the Normandy Group negotiations to develop a road map with concrete timelines for implementing the steps laid out in the Minsk Agreements. It is clear that Russia is not going to honor its commitments until greater leverage is applied.

One option is to inform Russia that sanctions on Russian banks will go into effect if Russia fails to honor specific deadlines for implementing the Minsk road map. The U.S. can do this unilaterally since, unlike sanctions on the defense or energy sectors, financial sanctions can be highly effective even if the EU does not match them. The administration should also consider developing the mandate for an armed U.N. mission for eastern Ukraine.

In response to the cyberattacks and information warfare that the Kremlin has perpetrated against the U.S. and our European allies, the U.S. should invest significantly more resources in cyber defense. And Congress should legislate a common set of cyber defense standards for the private sector companies that control our critical infrastructure. We are way behind the curve on this.

Finally, we must immediately appoint an independent special prosecutor to determine whether or not there was collusion or cooperation between the Russian government and Trump campaign representatives in the last election cycle. Congress must also establish a select committee to look at the broader question of Russian interference in the U.S. electoral process and Russia's ability to undermine our institutions and infrastructure.

Chairman Wicker, Co-Chairman Smith, members of the Commission, the United States has an obligation to enhance deterrence and build resilience against Russian aggression and malign influence across the OSCE region. It starts here at home, by responding forcefully to Russia's subversive actions. We must also push back on Russia's violations of arms control and confidence-building agreements. And finally, we must apply greater leverage against Moscow, and strengthen Ukraine's defenses. If we do not check Russian aggression with more forceful measures now, we will end up dealing with many more crises and conflicts, spending billions of dollars more on the defense of our European allies, and potentially seeing our vision of a Europe whole and free undermined. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

WICKER: Thank you, Dr. Carpenter.

Mr. Rademaker.

RADEMAKER: Thank you, Chairman Wicker, Co-Chairman Smith, Commissioner Whitehouse. Thank you for the invitation to testify today. Let me say at the outset that I work at a government relations firm in Washington. We have a number of clients. I'm not here on behalf of any of my clients. I'm here on behalf of myself. I was asked to present my personal views, and that's what I'm doing here.

I was asked to assess Russia's compliance with the various arms control agreements that Chairman Wicker outlined in his opening statement. I will – have prepared a lengthy statement – a lengthy written statement. I will summarize the written statement and then come to my conclusions.

The first treaty I was asked to evaluate in terms of Russia's compliance was the CFE Treaty, Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, that was concluded in 1990. This was a very important treaty. The conventional military imbalance in Europe, the advantage that the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact had during the Cold War was the driver of the nuclear arms race for much of the last century. And with the achievement of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, the imbalance was corrected, and it became possible to negotiate deep reductions in nuclear force levels. And so this was a very important treaty at the time it was concluded.

Regrettably, in 2007 President Putin ordered what he called a suspension of Russian implementation of the treaty. Now, this is not something that the United States or any of our allies consider to be a legally permissible step on their part. It's essentially breach of the treaty by Russia. We have continued to try to implement the treaty to the extent we can. But in 2011, we and our allies concluded that Russia was determined not to comply. And so we have stopped requesting inspections and expecting data declaration by Russia pursuant to the treaty, although among ourselves we continue to abide by the CFE Treaty. And technically we hold that it's still in force.

The reason that Russia essentially pulled out of the CFE Treaty in 2007 was because for a long time Russia had become increasingly unhappy with the way that the treaty applied to them. Russia was especially unhappy with what are called the flank limits of the treaty, which limited military deployments on Russia's periphery. They believed that those limits interfered with their ability to prosecute the war they were waging in Chechnya, for example.

They were also very unhappy that the treaty was being used by Georgia and Moldova to try and compel Russia to withdraw its armed forces from their territory. Those armed forces remain present in those two countries without the consent of the two governments. And that is a violation of the CFE Treaty. Those countries, with our support, were pressing Russia to withdraw those forces, and to eliminate the equipment that Russia had deployed in those countries. For all of these reasons, Russia reached the conclusion 2007 that this treaty no longer served their interests. And as I indicated, President Putin suspended Russian implementation of it.

The second treaty I was asked to look at was the Open Skies Treaty. This unarmed aerial observation treaty is a confidence-building measure. There are 34 parties to it among the OSCE countries. Russia continues to implement the Open Skies Treaty, but it does so in a way to minimize the benefits of the treaty to other parties, such as the United States.

Perhaps the best illustration of that is the Kaliningrad Oblast, which is that part of Russia that's sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania. It doesn't border the rest of Russia. Obviously, it's a very sensitive piece of territory. It's subject aerial observation under the Open Skies Treaty. Russia has adopted, unilaterally, restrictions on the overflights that would be conducted for surveillance purposes. The effect of these restrictions – they limit the distance of the flights out of the relevant airfield in Russia. The effect of that restriction is not to prevent us from doing aerial observation of Kaliningrad, but it requires us to use multiple flights to completely observe the territory of the Kaliningrad Oblast. So it's essentially a nuisance restriction designed to make it harder for us to achieve the benefits under the treaty to which we and our allies are entitled.

They've adopted a number of other measures – minimum altitude restrictions that limit observation over Moscow. They've previously applied that same restriction over Chechnya. They ended that last year. But again, they were trying to minimize the benefits of this treaty to us with respect to Chechnya. They do not allow flights adjacent to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, those two regions of Georgia. And then in the case of Ukraine they've adopted a nuisance restriction. They require Ukraine to make payment in advance before Ukraine can conduct

overflights over Russian territory. This is inconsistent with the provisions of the treaty. And the consequence has been that Ukraine has not conducted any overflights of Russia since that policy was adopted. So Russia implements the treaty, but it does so in a way designed to defeat some of the purposes of the treaty.

Similarly, I was asked to look at the Vienna Document, which is what's called a CSBM, a confidence and security-building measure about force levels in Europe. And Russia has implemented it in a very similar manner to the way that it has implemented the Open Skies Treaty. They comply with it, but in way that minimizes the benefits. The State Department's annual arms control compliance report, which it issued just last month, said the following, which I think said it all about Russian compliance with the Vienna Document. The State Department said: The United States assesses that the Russian Federation's selective implementation of certain provisions of the Vienna Document, and the resultant loss of transparency about Russian military activities has limited the effectiveness of the CSBM's regime. Russia's selective implementation also raises concern as to Russia's adherence to the Vienna Document.

As with Open Skies, there are a number of examples of things they've done to not fully implement their obligations under the treaty. Perhaps the best illustration or the best example is with regard to advanced notification of military exercises. A pattern has emerged where Russia either provides no advanced notification or notifies that there will be a limited exercise, and then when the exercise takes place it turns out to be a much larger exercise. They put forward legal explanations for this. Sometimes they claim that, you know, these were just snap exercises, or they claim that these were multiple exercises under separate command and therefore they didn't have to be notified as one exercise. But considering the pattern, these are sort of legalisms, and they really reveal a pattern of attempting to minimize their compliance with their commitments under the Vienna Document.

Finally, I looked at the INF Treaty, a very important treaty that limited intermediate-range missiles in the United States and Russia, where both countries are prohibited to have these missiles. Under the Obama administration, it was determined that Russia was testing a missile that was not compliant with the INF Treaty. More recently, it's been reported in the press that Russia has moved from testing that missile to actually deploying it. And it's supposed to be operationally deployed with two Russian battalions.

Both the Obama administration and the Trump administration have tried to have a dialogue with Russia about this to persuade them to correct the violation. It's a very sterile dialogue, because the Russian side essentially says, we have no idea what you're talking about. There is no such missile. We've never tested such a missile. The U.S. government has presented details about the location of – you know, geographic coordinates of tests, the dates of tests. The Russians throw up their hands and say, we have no idea what you're talking about. There was no such test.

So there's not even really a willingness on the part of the Russians to engage in a dialogue about returning to compliance. The underlying issue here, I believe, is that, as with the CFE Treaty, Russia concluded some time ago that the INF Treaty no longer serves its interests. I think they consider it's an unfair treaty because it prohibits them, and us, to have intermediate-

range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. But it doesn't impose such a restriction on some of Russia's neighbors – like China, Iran, Pakistan, North Korea. And those countries are deploying missiles of those ranges. So from Russia's point of view this is unfair to them. And for a long time, they've expressed interest in trying to get out from under the treaty. I think their steps to simply deploy a missile that violates the treaty is consistent with their view that they need to somehow sidestep the restrictions of the treaty.

So my conclusion is that, looking at the overall pattern of Russian compliance with their arms control agreements, that Russia will comply with them to the degree that Russia judges that they serve Russia's interests. But to the degree Russia concludes that these treaties and transparency measures no longer serve its interests, it will either seek to terminate them, as it did with the CFE Treaty; it will violate them, while continuing to pay lip service to them, as it's doing with the INF Treaty; or it will selectively implement them, as it is doing with the Open Skies and Vienna Document agreements.

So what's the underlying issue here, both with respect to arms control and some of the other activity we see in Ukraine, for example? What I suggest in my concluding remarks in my testimony is that, regrettably, Russia sees security in Europe as a zero-sum game. And it thinks the best way to enhance its security is by diminishing the security of its neighbors. And that, of course, is completely inconsistent with the OSCE principles and the principles that underlie all of these arms control and transparency agreements. Because the principle that underlies them is quite the opposite, that security in Europe is a positive-sum game, that all countries will be more secure to the extent their neighbors are more secure.

I think the evidence we have, of course, is that Russia just takes a different view of that, and thinks its security is enhanced if a country like Ukraine's security has been diminished. And I think until we can change that fundamental mindset – and, you know, I don't know that we can change that fundamental mindset. It may just be a matter of time and experience that gets us to a different place with Russia. But until Russia stops thinking of the European Union as a threat, and NATO as a threat, and strong and stable neighbors as a threat, and rather sees that as a net positive for their own security, I think we will continue to see these problems in compliance with arms control treaties and similar problems that we have in other areas. Thank you.

WICKER: Thank you, Mr. Rademaker.

Ambassador Pifer.

PIFER: Mr. Chairman, Co-Chairman Smith, members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to appear today to testify on the Russian military threat in Europe and how that threat has manifested itself in Ukraine. I will summarize my statement for the record.

Russian actions towards Ukraine have grossly violated fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including the commitment of the participating states to respect each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, and to refrain from the threat or use of force. It is useful to understand Russian end goals as regards Europe and Ukraine. Moscow seeks a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space. It wants to weaken NATO and the European Union.

President Putin and the Kremlin, moreover, appear to fear the prospect of a modern, successful democratic Ukrainian state. The fear is that that kind of Ukraine could prompt Russians to question why they cannot have a more democratic system of governance.

In February 2014, after then-President Yanukovich fled Kiev, Ukraine's parliament appointed an acting president and an acting prime minister who made it clear that Ukraine's number-one foreign policy goal was to draw closer to the European Union. The Kremlin apparently concluded that it lacked the soft power tools to prevent that. Shortly thereafter, the Russian military seized Crimea. Within days, following a sham referendum, Russia annexed Crimea. In April 2014, Russia began assisting armed separatism in the eastern Ukraine region of the Donbas, providing leadership, financing, ammunition, heavy weapons, other supplies, and, when necessary, regular units of the Russian army.

Three years of fighting, despite the Minsk II Agreement worked out in February of 2015, have resulted in nearly 10,000 dead. Unfortunately, the ceasefire and withdrawal of heavy weapons from the line of contact that were called for under the Minsk II Agreement have not been implemented. While Moscow implausibly denies involvement in the Donbas, NATO and Ukrainian officials believe that Russian military officers continue to provide command and control, training and advising for forces there. The Kremlin is not pursuing a settlement of the conflict, but instead seeks to use a simmering conflict as a means to pressure and destabilize the government in Kiev.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has played an important role in trying to find a solution to the conflict, chairing a trilateral contact group that brings together Ukrainian and Russian officials, as well as representatives of the occupied part of the Donbas. OSCE also has a special monitoring mission on the ground in Ukraine, with some 700 monitors, many of them who are observing the implementation or non-implementation of the Minsk II ceasefire and withdrawal provisions. And it was that mission that Mr. Joseph Stone was a part of.

What is needed to bring peace, however, is a change in the Kremlin's policy. The United States and the West should support Kiev politically and, provided that the Ukrainian government more effectively implements economic reforms and anticorruption measures, give Ukraine additional economic assistance. The United States should continue to provide military support, and that should include certain types of lethal assistance such as man-portable anti-armor weapons. The United States and the European Union should continue to put political and economic pressure on the Kremlin. That means keeping in place the economic and other sanctions on Russia. And the West should consider applying additional sanctions.

In addition, it is important that the administration and NATO continue the steps agreed at last year's NATO summit in Warsaw, to enhance the alliance's conventional deterrence and defense capabilities in the Baltic region and Central Europe. Such steps will lead to more secure European allies who will be more confident in supporting Ukraine. The United States should also continue to support the German and French efforts to promote a solution to the Ukraine Russia conflict. It is very difficult to see Minsk II succeeding, but it is the only process on the table.

At the end of the day, Ukraine needs a settlement which has Russian buy-in. Otherwise, Moscow has too many levers that it can use to make life difficult for Kiev, and thereby deny Ukraine a return to normalcy. Finally, it is all but impossible to imagine Russia agreeing to return Crimea. At present, Kiev lacks the leverage to change that. The United States and the West, however, should not accept this. They should continue a policy of non-recognition of Crimea's illegal annexation, and continue to apply sanctions related to the peninsula.

Mr. Chairman, Co-Chairman Smith, members of the Commission, over the past three years Russia has employed military force to seize Crimea, and sustain a bloody armed conflict in the Donbas in pursuit of the Kremlin's goal of asserting a sphere of influence and frustrating the ability of Ukraine to succeed. These Russian actions are in stark violation of Moscow's commitments under the Helsinki Final Act and other agreements. These actions endanger peace and stability in Europe. They raise concern that the Kremlin might be tempted to use military force elsewhere.

The United States should work with its European partners to respond in a serious way. That will require a sustained and patient effort, but it is essential if we wish to see the kind of Europe that was envisaged when the Final Act was signed in 1975. Thank you for your attention.

WICKER: Ambassador, you say that the Minsk II Agreement is likely not be abided by, but it's all we've got. Dr. Carpenter suggests that any type of an agreement – new agreement or negotiation with Russia is pointless. Help us understand, is there daylight between the two of you there? I'll start with Dr. Carpenter first.

CARPENTER: I'm not sure, Senator, that there's all that much disagreement between Steve and myself. My point simply – I agree that Minsk provides right now the only road map that is bought-into by all the parties that are concerned, include France and Germany, with this conflict. My point simply is that Minsk, and this is where I agree with Steve, will never be implemented until we apply greater leverage on Russia. So until Russia feels there are consequences, and until we identify concrete timelines under which the various steps that are laid out in the Minsk II Agreement, the February 15 agreement – unless there are timelines and consequences for failing to meet those timelines, Russia will continue to engage in these Kabuki negotiations with the French and Germans, which are, frankly, going nowhere.

WICKER: Mr. Ambassador?

PIFER: I would agree. I think my concern is – I mean, the first problem in implementing Minsk is that the Russians do not want it to be implemented. There is no doubt in my mind that with Russian control of their forces, but also over separatist forces in the occupied parts of Donetsk and Luhansk, if Russia wanted to deliver a ceasefire and withdraw the forces from the line of contact and allow the OSCE monitors full access, those are the first three provisions of Minsk II. The Russians could make that happen. It hasn't happened now in two years and two months because the Russians do not want it to happen.

There's an additional problem, though, and this is why I think we need to have a sense of urgency about Minsk. The longer that we go since the year 2015, it becomes harder, I believe, for the Ukrainian government to implement some of the political provisions, such as passing a constitutional amendment on decentralization, or passing a special status law, because you have public attitudes and attitudes within the Rada, Ukraine's parliament, which are hardening because over two years they see more and more Ukrainian dead. But Minsk II, right now it's the only process. We need to do what we can to push it. But it's going to require pressure on Russia to change the Kremlin's calculation.

WICKER: Mr. Ambassador, you mentioned success in Ukraine. Would you and Dr. Carpenter help us by defining success? And isn't that success one of the most important foreign policy achievements we could assist with?

PIFER: I believe a successful Ukraine is important for the kind of Europe that we want to see – that's a Europe that's stable, secure and at peace. It is going to be a problem that the United States government cannot ignore if you have a failing Ukrainian state on the border of institutional Europe. That's going to be a problem that is going to be something that we will have to deal with. On the other hand, if you could see a successful Ukraine – and by success, I mean, a normal democracy, a growing market economy, a country that increasingly looks like, say, Poland, its neighbor to the West, that would be success. The problem that the Ukrainians have is the Russians, I believe, fear that kind of success, because they worry that the Russian population will say, well, wait, the Ukrainians, who the Russians see as probably the closest of the post-Soviet peoples – the Russian start asking, how come the Ukrainians can have a democracy or they can vote, or they have a political voice and we can't? That disturbs the Kremlin.

WICKER: But, Dr. Carpenter, in spite of all of the problems if we saw that success, it would be a major achievement for the West, would it not?

CARPENTER: So, I agree, Senator, that Ukraine is pivotal to the future of European security. And if the Kremlin looks 10 years from now on its military intervention – violating borders and annexing territory, occupying another chunk of territory – as a success on its part, then that will just fan the flames of Russian ambition, revanchism across the whole region, and we will continue to deal with these sorts of crises in the future. So I think strengthening Ukraine's sovereignty through empowering its reformers, but also hardening its defenses, is absolutely vital.

And just one other point on this. I think Russia would be happy to settle the conflict peacefully. But what Russia's vision of the Minsk II settlement looks like is where you create an analogous situation to Republika Srpska in Bosnia for the Donbas. In other words, they have a veto over foreign policy. They can, in fact, veto a lot of other policies that pertain to the national state. And that would give Moscow leverage to prevent Ukraine from moving towards NATO or the EU for the indefinite future. But that is not success for us. For us, success has to be a sovereign, independent Ukraine that develops on its own trajectory, and hopefully one that is increasingly democratic.

WICKER: The Republika Srpska example is certain one that we would want to avoid.

We'll continue with six-minute rounds. Mr. Smith.

SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just say, thank you very much, all three of our distinguished witnesses, for their very incisive comments. It really does help this Commission, and I think by extension both the House and the Senate, to have the benefit of your insights. So thank you so very, very much.

Let me just ask, Mr. Ambassador, you pointed out in your testimony that it's important that the United States continue to provide military assistance. You make the point that in particular man-portable anti-armor weapons, to increase Ukrainians' ability to deal with the influx of Russian armor in the Donbas is one of the points that you underscore. And my question would be from the beginning – because, you know, many of us have been frustrated almost to tears in our inability for years to provide the kind of deterrence capability to the Ukrainians to end the fighting. Without a credible threat of deterrence – you know, as Poroshenko told us in a joint session of Congress, you can't fight a war with blankets. Blankets are important. Medicine is important. But you've got to have deterrence. Have we done enough years to date? And is there any sense that you have that we are now looking at a pivot where we will now give them the capabilities to deter so that negotiations can be successfully concluded?

PIFER: Well, yes, sir. I think that's an excellent question. I do not believe the United States has provided what it could to Ukraine. I was in Kiev and also at the Ukrainian field headquarters in Kramatorsk in Donetsk about two years ago, along with one of my successors, Ambassador John Herbst, and also retired General Chuck Wald, who'd been the deputy commander of the U.S. forces in Europe. And what we heard from the Ukrainians at Kramatorsk was that some of the non-lethal assistance was very useful in terms of, for example, counter battery radars. But they pointed out that their stocks of Soviet-era man-portable anti-tank weapons just didn't work. So that was a huge need. And they cited that in view of increasing armor that they saw the Russians bringing in to equip separatist forces in the Donbas. So I think that would be a very important need.

I would also make the point that I believe that all three of us came away from our conversations both in Kiev and Kramatorsk believing the Ukrainian army understands they cannot beat the Russian army. They're not talking about give us weapons to drive the Russians out of Donbas. What they want is they want weapons that allow them to raise the cost to the Russians of further aggression, to take away easy military options – which I believe is in our interest in terms of steering the Kremlin away from military solutions towards a genuine political settlement.

SMITH: Let me ask Mr. Rademaker, with regards to arms control, is there any penalty for Russia's violations of its commitments, solemnly entered into and at the time we thought faithfully entered into? And have the Iranians, close friends and allies of Russia, gleaned any lessons? Because I'm one of those who believes – and I'm not alone; there's Democrats and Republicans who believe the Iranian deal was egregiously flawed, and we believe it's already,

with regards to ballistic missiles, when they kept that out of the treaty – or it's not even a treaty, the executive agreement – will violate with impunity at the time and place of their choosing. I'm talking about Tehran now. But did they learn something from the Russians? And, again, is there any penalty for violating any of these arms control treaties?

RADEMAKER: Thank you, Co-Chairman Smith. Your question really goes to the issue of the limits of arms control. Arms control is a consensual process. Countries sign arms control agreements because they decide it's in their interest to do so. But treaties, agreements, they're governed by international law. And under international law, treaties can be terminated. And that's important, actually, for getting countries to sign treaties in the first place, because if it were seen as an irrevocable step, lots of countries would hold off signing treaties. So we have to take the good with the bad. The fact that countries who sign arms control agreements know that they can get out of them is part of what contributes to their willingness to enter into the process.

But it also means that countries who over time conclude that a treaty is no longer serving their interest have the legal option of getting out from under it. I think President Putin would consider that that's what he did in the case of the CFE Treaty, with this suspension of Russian implementation. They didn't formally terminate Russian participation, but they've suspended it. The effect is essentially the same. You know, Russia's no longer complying. If we really push the issue – the legal issue, I guess what we end up with is a notice of termination and a notice of withdrawal from the treaty by Russia. I think there's still some hope that maybe Russia will have a change of heart. So they've never been really pushed on the question of, well, why don't you just terminate the treaty, rather than suspend your implementation.

In the case of INF, I think the Russian position is that they're complying with the treaty, and that these allegations that they have tested and now deployed a non-compliant cruise missile are fantasy – you know, fake news, I think is what they would say about that. The U.S., I believe, is pretty confident in its intelligence information about these tests. There's a mechanism for dialogue under the treaty, where the parties of the treaty can come together and talk about compliance issues.

But it's not like we can take them to court or – you know, there's no panel out there to adjudicate disagreements. We have the option of terminating the treaty. I think some are wondering whether we should do that. I personally do not favor termination of the INF Treaty, because I think that would actually be a gift to Russia. I think Russia would like us to terminate the treaty. And I think we ought to be looking at ways to punish them for cheating, not doing things that they would consider a reward for cheating on the treaty.

Dr. Carpenter laid out some ideas about what we should be doing in a case like the INF Treaty. I think taking steps to show that we are prepared to respond, that we will potentially develop and, if necessary, deploy our own missiles that correspond to the ones that they're deploying, looking at enhancements in our missile defense capabilities to counter the illegal missiles that are being deployed on the Russian side. Those kinds of steps are perfectly appropriate and those are the things that we should be doing. But at the end of the day, we can take reciprocal steps in response to what they do, but if we really push the issue then they can withdraw from these treaties.

As far as the lessons that Iran could take from that –in other venues I’ve testified in opposition to the Iran nuclear deal for some of the reasons you alluded to in your question. I think it’s a good deal for Iran over the long – too good a deal for Iran over the long term. It enables them to achieve nuclear weapons threshold capability and then, at a time and place of their choosing, they can deploy nuclear weapons. Now, that’s prohibited under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. But, you know, North Korea was part of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty until they decided they didn’t want to be anymore. And now they have nuclear weapons. So I think there’s a takeaway for the Iranians from that experience.

WICKER: Thank you, Congressman Smith.

Senator Whitehouse.

WHITEHOUSE: Thank you, Chairman.

Dr. Carpenter mentioned the array of non-kinetic tools that Russia uses – cyberattacks, covert political subversion and information warfare, and described Russia’s intensity on them as all domains, all the time. The CSIS Kremlin playbook looks at this same pattern of activity and draws what I think was a very reasonable conclusion, which is that corruption is at the heart of all of those techniques and is the ultimately enabler of a great many of those techniques, which causes me to wonder whether we have done enough as the United States of America to take on the vast international infrastructure of corruption enablement that the Panama Papers gave us one little window into.

But it’s a much broader world of people who are paid a lot of money – lawyers, accountants, and others – to take care of kleptocrats, hide their money, allow super-wealthy people to dodge taxes, and, of course, enable corruption. It seems to me that with the EU cleaning up its incorporation transparency, America now looks to be the last bastion of shell corporations and that that is a significant vulnerability against this larger context. And to the extent that our political money is not transparent at all, that’s a vector for foreign influence as well as whatever special interests now take advantage of the dark money operations.

So I guess my question is, from zero to 100 how far along that – with zero being we’re doing nothing and 100 being we’ve really go this, how far along the spectrum do you all feel we are in terms of knocking down the infrastructure of corruption enablement and closing up the vectors of corruption that the United States presents?

CARPENTER: So thank you for that question, Senator. I completely agree that the name of the game right now for Moscow is the weaponization of corruption to be able to subvert Western societies and Western liberal democracies. In terms of where we are on the spectrum –

WHITEHOUSE: And just to jump in one point on that, but please continue, but these non-rule-of-law corrupt countries actually need rule of law when it comes to hiding their assets, because if they leave them in Russia they’ll get scooped by Putin or the next bigger thug that comes down the road. So they’re in an interesting balance where they actually depend on rule-

of-law countries to enable their corruption even though they are operating outside of rule of law, I believe.

CARPENTER: I think that's absolutely right. I think that in terms of where we are on the spectrum, I think we're in the single digits. We're just beginning to come to terms with the threat and how it's manifested. So Russia's using a variety of different tools. It's using our media freedom to sow disinformation through various Russian outlets, but also through social media bots and trolls. It's using political pluralism to be able to covertly fund parties, candidates, think tanks, NGOs. We see this across Europe. And then it's using also oligarchs and business ties to be able to subvert and corrupt economic interests in foreign countries that can then be used to lobby for political outcomes. So it's across the board.

I think, you know, for us, Citizens United allows for a vast amount of money to flow into our party financing system with very little transparency and accountability. And clearly, Russia – perhaps other states as well – have taken advantage of that. I would recommend the creation, actually, of an interagency taskforce between law enforcement, between the intelligence community, the State Department and the Pentagon to look at how to root out Russian both organized crime networks, but also these organized crime networks are also usually coterminous with some of these corrupt influence operations.

WHITEHOUSE: My time has pretty well run out, but if I could get the other two witnesses to give me a number on that zero to 100. Michael thinks we're in single digits on those fronts.

PIFER: Way below where we should be. I can't quantify it. But when I was in Ukraine –

WHITEHOUSE: Way below. And – I don't want to go into my colleagues' time. Mr. Rademaker.

RADEMAKER: I'll agree with Ambassador Pifer. Way below where we should be.

WHITEHOUSE: OK.

Thanks, Chairman.

WICKER: Thank you, Senator Whitehouse.

Senator Shaheen, and then Congressman Aderholt.

SHAHEEN: Well, thank you all very much for being here. And I want to follow up on the measures that we can take to put more pressure on Russia in Ukraine. So you talked about lethal weapons as being one of those. I know that shortly – as the Minsk Agreement was being negotiated there was reluctance from the Germans and the French to provide lethal weapons. Has that changed? Anyone, do you know?

CARPENTER: So I can start. There was reluctance from a lot of our West European allies to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine. Now, when Chancellor Merkel first raised this in February of 2015, when essentially the media had gotten wind of the fact that there was some debate here about the possibility of providing lethal weapons, her statement was not unequivocal. There was – she said that it would not be beneficial at that moment in time, but it was not unequivocal.

I personally believe there are a lot of our NATO allies, especially on the eastern flank of the alliance, that would welcome U.S. leadership in this regard and that, in fact, would follow suit rather quickly after we were able to provide lethal weapons in providing weapons of their own. And for Ukraine, this is actually very important because a lot of these former Warsaw-backed allies have non-NATO standard equipment, that is the type of equipment that the Ukrainian military is most used to using and currently employs and would benefit from, because their stocks have been radically depleted over the course of the last two and a half years of war.

SHAHEEN: Does anybody disagree with that?

PIFER: I would just briefly second Mike's point. And note that when we were at NATO two years ago, we heard from certain allies that, yes, if the United States did that, that would give them political cover to also begin providing lethal assistance.

SHAHEEN: So I would just point out that I know the Armed Services Committee in the Senate has taken a position – general the majority of us – in support of that. I'm not sure about the Foreign Relations Committee. But this is one area where the United States could exercise some leadership and add to the pressure on Russia.

Sanctions is another area. Do we have any sense of whether the Europeans are going to support rolling over those sanctions again, to continue to put pressure on Russia?

CARPENTER: Senator, I would say right now there is a good chance that the Europeans will roll over sanctions. I think it would be very difficult for them to apply any additional sanctions above and beyond what's been applied right now. My suggestion for the United States to be able to apply greater leverage is to focus on financial sanctions because the defense sector and the energy sector sanctions can easily be backfilled by both European countries, but also by Asian – Korea, Japan, and Singapore and other countries that have expertise in this area. On the other hand, financial sanctions are primarily dependent on the U.S. dollar and the U.S. financial system. So we could easily crank up the financial sanctions on a calibrated ladder, and have great effect in terms of the impact on Russia's economy in the near term.

SHAHEEN: And I assume you all are probably familiar with the more comprehensive sanctions bill that has been introduced. Is that the kind of sanctions legislation that – effort that you think would be helpful? Or are you not familiar enough with the bill to be able to –

CARPENTER: No, I am familiar with Senator Cardin and Senator Corker's collaboration on this bill.

SHAHEEN: I'm actually talking about Senator McCain and Senator Cardin.

CARPENTER: Oh, the McCain bill. I think it's a – I think it's a step in the right direction. It does not – it is not tied to specific benchmarks for implementing Minsk. I would suggest that that would be a way to incentivize better behavior by the Russians. But generally speaking, I support that bill.

SHAHEEN: Mmm hmm.

PIFER: And I would just add, I would hope that the bill would also, though, would make it clear that if the Russians met those benchmarks that the sanctions would come off. I mean, that's been, I think, a problem in the past sometimes with Congressional sanctions, is they go on. But if the Russians can't see a possibility that those sanctions will then come off when the Russians deliver the desired behavior, the sanctions lose their value as inducements to better behavior by the Kremlin.

SHAHEEN: And one other question. I know the Magnitsky legislation actually put sanctions on individuals – so prevented certain individuals from coming to this country. How effective are those kinds of efforts in addressing some of the corruption issues that Senator Whitehouse and you all were talking about, and also in trying to ratchet up pressure on Putin and his allies in Russia?

CARPENTER: So I believe, Senator, that those sanctions are highly effective, and precisely for the reasons that Senator Whitehouse indicated, that a lot of these oligarchs have money stashed in Western countries. The thing about the Magnitsky legislation is that it has been vastly underutilized by both the previous administration and this administration. There are only a couple dozen, as far as I know, individuals that have been sanctioned under that legislation. And largely, it is targeted at a narrow group of people around Putin. If it were more widely applied to target those who are corrupt and who violate human rights within the Russian system, it would have a significant impact.

SHAHEEN: And don't you agree that we should also include the families of some of those individuals, that we should not allow some oligarch to corrupt countries and send his kids to our universities to get the best education they can, to go back and be part of these networks?

PIFER: I think that would be a fantastic way to increase the pressure on the oligarchs. If the kids cannot go to the United States or Britain to go to college, and spouses can't travel to do their London or Paris shopping trips, that increases the pressure. And I think we should be looking at ways to put pressure on the Russians to stop what's going on in Eastern Ukraine.

SHAHEEN: Absolutely. Do I still have any time?

WICKER: You'll have time later. (Laughter.) But very helpful suggestions. Thank you, Senator Shaheen.

Congressman Aderholt, and then Senator Gardner.

ADERHOLT: Thank you. I apologize for coming in a little late. There was a lot of meetings, as you can imagine, here in the middle of the week here on Capitol Hill. But I did want to just talk a little bit about Russia's political leadership, how they are appearing to build a modernization of their military, and of course we're getting reports of that, that they are now ranked right there, overtaking Saudi Arabia and now ranked behind U.S. and China. And I'd open this up to anybody – any of you on the panel here. What are the main elements of Russia's military modernization program that you're aware of and that you're seeing right now?

CARPENTER: Well, I can start. Russia's military modernization was launched when Putin came to power in 2000 – really, in earnest around 2005. So they've had over a decade in which they've been at this. They have both reorganized their military to be more agile in terms of the structure – it's focused on brigades now as opposed to divisions.

But they've invested heavily and are investing in modernizing their nuclear triad. They have superb, world-class nuclear-powered submarines that have very quiet acoustic signatures that are very difficult to detect by U.S. submarine watchers – either undersea or also in the air. They have developed world-class cruise missiles, as we saw, the ones that were fired from the Caspian Sea and the eastern Med in the Syrian theater. And they have exceptional cyber and electronic warfare capabilities, which we have seen as well in Ukraine and in Syria. And their air defense systems are not as – not as good as ours, but they're pretty good and they're pretty powerful. So, across the board, they've invested significantly in military modernization.

Just one caveat here. A lot has been made of their A2/AD, anti-access, area-denial capabilities. These are very sophisticated capabilities, but sometimes these are little bit overblown. I think the U.S. has the capability, both through standoff munitions – either air launched or sea launched – to penetrate some of the A2/AD bubbles. So, while they do have a significant capability there, it's perhaps been hyped up a little bit too much in recent months.

RADEMAKER: In the case of their modernization in the strategic nuclear area, I think it's largely driven by Russia's perception that there's a conventional military imbalance in Europe really across their periphery, to their disadvantage. And so in some ways it's the mirror image of the Cold War situation, where we and NATO were satisfied that there was a conventional imbalance in favor of the Warsaw Pact and in favor of the Soviet Union. And we had to rely on nuclear weapons, a nuclear deterrent to ensure the security of Europe.

I think since the end of the Cold War, the Russians have been convinced that the opposite's true, that they're at a conventional military disadvantage. And so their doctrine relies increasingly on both strategic nuclear weapons and also tactical nuclear weapons. And you see investments by them in this area that I think underscore that they believe that nuclear weapons really are the last guarantor of their security.

PIFER: Congressman, I tend to worry less about what the Russians are doing in terms of strategic nuclear modernization because a lot of it is replacing old stuff with new stuff, as we'll be doing in about 10 years' time. And their modernization program seems to be sized to fit within the limits of the New START treaty. I tend to worry much more, though, about what

they're doing in terms of tactical nuclear modernization, and things like this "escalate to deescalate" doctrine which suggests that they may have a threshold for nuclear use that is much lower than would be wise.

ADERHOLT: It's the same for you all as far as your major concerns. Thanks for mentioning your concerns. That was my next question, what would be your – Dr. Carpenter – what stands out as the most concerning to you about particular aspects of these buildups?

CARPENTER: Well, I think the conventional military buildups are a concern. As we've seen in Ukraine, the multiple rocket launch systems and the artillery that is slightly older in terms of the technology has been highly lethal. It has decimated the armored personnel carriers that have been used by the Ukrainians on the battlefield. And we see similar in Syria. And so for our partners and our allies, this is a huge concern – less so in the event of a conflict with the United States. But then we're talking about a strategic confrontation, which is an entirely different ballgame.

I am concerned as well about the "escalate to deescalate" doctrine for settling a conventional conflict. This is a doctrine that allows for Russia to use a nuclear weapon first in the conflict to try to terminate it on Moscow's terms. And you can envisage the use of a tactical nuclear weapon, potentially a very low-yield tactical nuclear weapon, which would be potentially highly escalatory. And so this may be an aspect of their doctrine where the Russians are miscalculating, and in fact could be very dangerous and highly escalatory, despite their belief in the opposite.

ADERHOLT: Mr. Rademaker?

RADEMAKER: I would say that my concern is not just the fact that they're modernizing, because I think they have reasons that they can point to for wanting to do that. And they would argue it's essentially defensive in nature. But I think the reality is that they're not only modernizing, but they're now using their modernized military forces very actively. We see that in Ukraine. We see it in Syria. And I think it's that combination of not just modernization, but the willingness to deploy their forces and use force to try and effect outcomes on their periphery, but, as in the case of Syria, beyond their periphery.

ADERHOLT: Thank you.

WICKER: Thank you, Congressman Aderholt.

Senator Gardner.

GARDNER: Thank you, Senator Wicker.

And thank you to the witnesses for your time and testimony today.

I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to visit some of our soldiers out at Fort Carson and Colorado Springs, Colorado. It's the home of the 4th Infantry Division, the 10th

Special Forces Group, and, of course, a lot of involvement in Atlantic Resolve and throughout Europe, various deployments over the past several years. In conversations I had with them, and obviously with our personnel at NATO, talked a lot about our muscle memory in Europe, and the fact that the United States over the past several decades, after the end of the Cold War, that we lost a lot of muscle memory when it comes to our activities, our presence, and our execution in Europe.

So, as it relates to Russia, what do you think is the most alarming loss of muscle memory in Europe? Is it on the intelligence side? Is it how to move quickly through Europe, if necessary? Does it go back to some of the RAND research that talks about the amount of time Russia, if they decided to go into Eastern Europe, could move and the speed with which they could accomplish that movement? Could you talk a little bit about muscle memory, those concerns?

CARPENTER: Senator, I would say that probably number one concern is the inability of moving troops quickly through the European theater to the locus of a conflict. And so U.S. Army Europe has been focused on trying to build a "Schengen Zone for the military" to be able to get troops and supplies quickly to either the Baltic theater or the Black Sea theater in the event of a crisis there. But we're way behind the curve. And it takes a long time for the U.S. to be able to reinforce troops that are positioned on the front lines.

That, and I would say the other thing is simply the absence of force posture. So I think we're rectifying that problem right now with the deployment of an additional brigade combat team on a rotational basis. I would support deploying on a permanent basis an additional brigade combat team, armored above and beyond that. I think having armor, especially on the eastern flank of the alliance in the Baltic states, would be significant. It would be a large deterrent for Russia. And especially if it is manned by Americans, as opposed to the multinational brigades, which are a step in the right direction because they provide allied skin in the game. But there is nothing that substitutes for American presence on the eastern flank.

GARDNER: Anyone else care to comment?

RADEMAKER: I would volunteer the observation that, yes, there are important issues of American, what did you call it, muscle memory loss. But I think far more important than that has been muscle memory loss on the part of our allies. And I'm not talking about in the last year or two. I'm talking, you know, over the span of the last two decades, where I think a lot of our allies sort of just got beyond the whole notion of NATO as an important defensive alliance, because they didn't really perceive a realistic Russian threat. They didn't understand why they continued to need this alliance. And you saw reflected in their defense spending and their force structures that, you know, there really wasn't any expectation on their part that they were preparing or needed to be prepared for a situation where their security was actually threatened by Russia or some other external force.

The Russian actions in Ukraine, one collateral consequence of that has been I think it has reminded some of our allies of the fact that contrary to their hope at the end of the Cold War, they do continue to live in an environment where there are security threats. And the NATO

alliance and their own military investments continue to serve an important function for them. I hope – you know, President Trump does seem to have elevated the importance of the issue of defense spending on the part of our allies. And I think we see some of them are now trying to get to the 2 percent threshold– the self-imposed threshold of NATO. So that would be a positive development, to see our allies start to regain some of the muscle memory.

GARDNER: Since – Ambassador, did you want to add to that? I'm sorry.

PIFER: Just I would agree that I think President Trump has brought allies to think more seriously about their defense contributions. It's also, I think, important for our European allies, though, to think about how they spend their money wisely, because if you do do a dollar-to-dollar comparison between American military spending and European military spending, we get much more in terms of deployable force than the Europeans do. And they have to be smarter about how they spend their money.

GARDNER: Part of that – the muscle memory was a conversation about the shift of our intelligence assets that went to the Middle East after the Cold War. And that that intelligence has never been necessarily rebuilt in Europe. Could you talk a little bit about our intelligence efforts with our allies in Europe, and how that stands today? What needs to be done?

CARPENTER: Senator, I think our intelligence in terms of – I don't want to go too far into this subject – but I think in terms of liaison relationships and human intelligence is pretty solid in Europe. Where I think we are less solid is in terms of ISR, for example, which is a high-demand, low-density platform that is being – all of those platforms are being sucked into the Middle East, where they're being used on a 24/7 basis. And so we have less coverage from an ISR, SIGINT type perspective in Europe. But that is simply a product of not having enough of these systems to be able to satisfy the demand that is there, both in the European theater, in the Middle Eastern theater, and now, as well, in East Asia.

GARDNER: And I understand – we may be under a time limit – so I want to just have one quick question. Should we be entering into some kind of an intelligence agreement with Ukraine? Would that be a useful tool, more than we have today?

PIFER: Actually, we do have an agreement going to the 1990s. There is already –

GARDNER: One some of the cyber sharing issues, a little bit further.

PIFER: – an exchange of classified military information. That is in place. And I think we now have an American unit in Yavoriv, in western Ukraine, training Russian – or, training the Ukrainian military and the national guard. And my guess is we're actually learning quite a bit too, because some of the guys that we're training have actually been in Donbas. They've experienced the new Russian tactics. So this is actually a two-way exchange.

WICKER: Thank you, Senator Gardner.

Senator Rubio.

RUBIO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being in this meeting. I know I came in late. I may have missed some of your conversation about escalate in order to deescalate, the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield to kind of raise the specter of that.

So, just to put it in perspective, the Russian economy is the size of the state of California, maybe even smaller. It's equivalent to Spain or Italy. So their ability to sustain the sort of broad defense posture the way the United States does across multiple potential theaters, it is limited. Nonetheless, they have shown the capability of spending more on that than wise policymakers would, because it's what gives them influence. Certainly, the nuclear stockpile's a different situation. It raises their influence above what their GDP would justify.

All that said, the one area that I don't know if it's been discussed, and falls with what I think is an emerging threat if not an already existent one, is the use of asymmetrical means on behalf of the Russians in any conflict. And we saw evidence of that both in Crimea and in Ukraine, also in Georgia in 2008, and the sort of electronic warfare that targets critical infrastructure, command and control, obviously there's an element of disinformation and propaganda that becomes associated with that as well. But this is an asymmetrical means of either escalating to deescalate and/or denying your potential – your adversary some of their more advanced capabilities. And it is one that is quite cost effective, dollar for dollar.

So I don't know if that's been talked about enough, but perhaps – and then if you are prepared to talk a little bit more in depth about some of the means and measures used on behalf of the Russians in their intervention in Crimea and Ukraine and before that in Georgia in terms of the use of electronic warfare to target critical infrastructure – both civilian and military – and, of course, command and control and the like, because I think that ultimately will pose a threat first from Russia, but from other adversaries around the world as well as the years go on.

CARPENTER: Thank you, Senator. I would completely agree with you. I think you see an evolution in terms of Russian doctrine from a largely conventional war in Georgia to an unconventional war, where they used special forces, little green men, in Ukraine, to a military intelligence organized coup d'état in Montenegro, that was luckily foiled, to political subversion campaigns across the United States and Western Europe.

So they are both expanding the geographic scope of their gray zone operations, but they are also increasingly moving from conventional military force to more covert, subversion measures. And I think it's because it's cheaper, it's easier, and it's likely more effective. But, in both Ukraine and Georgia, while they were able to stall Euro-Atlantic integration, the populations have become rather pro-Western – have stayed pro-Western or become even more so, and have developed some hostility towards Moscow. So.

RUBIO: And obviously, I know it's been extensively discussed and I think it's very relevant and a big threat. I'm going beyond just that. I'm talking about the ability to shut down power grids, the ability to shut down command and control. The ability to shut down or attack

the banking sector. The sorts of critical infrastructure attack that we saw evidence of some of that in the Ukraine-Crimea situation. Saw some of that even before that in the Georgia 2007, 2008 timeframe. That's one that's not getting a lot of attention, but I think poses a real threat. And I have no doubt we would see deployed in any sort of European – Eastern European conflict or potential conflict, especially nations that perhaps have not invested in hardening against that sort of intrusion.

CARPENTER: Well, that is primarily, Senator, a cyber threat more so than an electronic warfare threat. But it has been deployed, as you say, in Georgia and Ukraine. And we know the Russians have penetrated a lot of U.S. government networks, the networks of our allies as well. So their ability potentially to be able to shut down critical infrastructure is enormous. I mean, they have shut down electric power plants in Ukraine. They have penetrated networks in other allied countries, including Ministry of Defense networks in a lot of our allies. And so this is something that we need to work on, both here domestically but also in terms of building up the cyber defenses of our allies. It's critically important. This is potentially one of the most lethal threats that we face, even if it is non-kinetic.

RUBIO: And just in closing I would say that the proper terminology is probably cyber. The reason why I always kind of describe it a little differently is because when people think of cyber in the public they're thinking, oh, they're going to hack my emails. This is way more than hacking emails. We're talking about shutting down potentially a power grid and the like. And in a conflict, everyone could imagine how debilitating that would be to any nation-state, particularly some of these Eastern European NATO allies that would probably be on the front lines of any such effort.

WICKER: A health care system, for example, Senator Rubio.

RUBIO: [the lights in the room dimmed briefly] They just did it right now. (Laughter.) There you go. There you go. (Laughter.)

WICKER: You spoke it and it happened. (Laughter.)

Senator Cardin.

CARDIN: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for being late. I had a couple other committees that I had to participate in.

But I just really want to underscore the importance of this hearing and thank our witnesses. It's very interesting. I've been dealing with Russian policy for a long time – from the former Soviet Union. Russia has violated every one of the Helsinki Final Act's 10 guiding principles – every single one. And I've sat across from Russian parliamentarians where they complained that we tried to interfere with their internal operations, even though the Helsinki Final Act gives us the responsibility to raise violations. And we're not interfering with their country.

But then Russia directly attacks other member states, as they did with Ukraine, the most recent. It wasn't the first country that they violated. They were involved in Moldova. They were involved in Georgia. Ten thousand people lost their lives as a result of the military incursions in Ukraine. So it has deadly consequences. And many, many thousands have been displaced. I mention that because Russia's dangerous. And the United States policies need to recognize that danger.

So I guess my question is that Russia seems to go in wherever there are voids. They see an opportunity where we don't have a NATO member in Europe, where there's some chaos. They come in and try to stir it up, and then bring their military presence in to cause instability, trying to weaken the European Union, trying to weaken the transatlantic partnership. So where's their next move in Europe? Where do you see the vulnerabilities that could lead to Russia's military operations in an effort to stir up problems?

There's a lot of countries in Europe that have large Russian-speaking populations. Where would you want us to focus on concerns where other countries could become prey to Russian aggression? We know they don't always use their direct soldiers. They send in resources. They use a local population that they have influence over. Where do we think the next attack is likely to occur?

PIFER: Senator, I would continue to worry about the Baltic states. I don't think Russian military action against the Baltics is likely. But it's not a zero probability. And I think if we were having this hearing five or six years ago, we would have said it was a zero probability. So I'd worry about that. But it does get to your point about making clear – we need to make clear to the Kremlin that there are red lines. I hope that when the president is in Brussels at the NATO summit next week that there's a very clear American commitment to Article 5, because we don't want the Russians to miscalculate and believe falsely that the United States would not respond to military action against an ally.

Likewise, I think on questions like the Russians' loose talk about nuclear weapons and escalate to deescalate, we should begin to devalue that notion in the mind of the Russians right now by basically saying: Look, a nuclear weapon is a nuclear weapon. If you use one, even if it's a small one, you still have crossed a threshold that has not been crossed in 70 years, and you should anticipate that the consequences would be unpredictable and potentially catastrophic. And in the case of Ukraine, we should make very clear that a major Russian offensive will lead to major consequences. Not sending the American military, but new economic sanctions and a certain American military support.

We need to begin to shape Russian thinking, that they have to understand that there are certain places that the West will not tolerate Russian overreach and will push back on. And hopefully, as we shape that thinking, maybe Moscow comes around to a more accommodating view on some of these questions. Because red lines are going to be important if we want to make our dialogue ultimately be more successful.

CARDIN: Well, NATO has red lines. I would think that that is pretty clear. If we don't enforce the red lines in NATO, I think we have serious challenges. But you raise a very valid

point. We've been, in the first months of this Congress, playing defense to try to maintain our sanctions against Russia, both internally as well as in Europe. And we have been able to maintain our sanctions. But Russia's activities have gotten worse. They're much more aggressive. The cyber activities that we talked about – much more aggressive. So without U.S. leadership on saying there's a consequence to that, it's very, very unlikely that you'll see Europe do much without the United States taking the lead.

So we don't see any leadership from the Trump administration in using stronger sanctions against Russia. The congressional branch of government needs to show leadership here. And we have a bipartisan bill that has strong support. Senator McCain is my co-sponsor, and Senator Shaheen is one of the great leaders on that bill. And we've had the support of Senator Graham and Senator Rubio and Senator Wicker has been an outspoken supporter of taking a strong stance against Russia. We need to take some action here in Congress. Do you agree with that?

PIFER: Yes, sir. One of the things I worry that if the West response in the case of Ukraine is not sufficiently strong, does the Kremlin conclude that the tactics that they've employed against Ukraine over the last few years can be managed at acceptable cost? In which case, they might be tempted to use them elsewhere. Likewise, I think that there should be a stronger American reaction to the Russian interference in our election. Right now, my guess is at the Kremlin they're thinking, you know, this doesn't have many costs and it's pretty tempting to try it again, as we've seen in France and as I believe we're going to see in the next three or four months in Germany.

CARDIN: Thank you.

WICKER: Glad to hear that there's bipartisan support for stronger action on sanctions. And I think, Senator Cardin, before you came in there was testimony to the effect that the Magnitsky list should be expanded by the State Department. And I know you and I support that also.

I want to – we're going to take a second round. Congressman Smith will go next and then I'll follow him.

SMITH: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for your testimonies.

Both my older brothers were military pilots. One of my brothers, Tom, flew A-7s off the USS Enterprise. As in control as fighter pilots are, and we had a conversation about this last week, my brother expressed to me his deep concern that the probability of an incident, a collision, increases exponentially with the number and proximity of these very provocative acts, these near-misses that are occurring with increasing frequency. I wonder if any of you might want to speak to what's behind this reckless behavior. Again, a pilot might think that he can, you know, break off. But it's going to happen, I think. There are just too many of them, that something is going to happen. What's behind this reckless behavior? And are the two-way

communications between ourselves and the Russians – NATO and the Russians sufficiently adequate to mitigate any kind of escalation, both immediate in proximity to what’s happening, and maybe even a further escalation into war by miscalculation?

CARPENTER: So, Congressman, I believe that a lot of these aggressive intercepts are part of a deliberate strategy. You just have to contrast how Russia behaves in the Baltic or the Black Sea with how they behave in Syria, where we have a deconfliction channel and where our pilots are in very close proximity in a very congested air space, and manage to avoid these sorts of incidents. I personally don’t believe that any sort of new communication channels or agreements on transponders, as has been proposed, will have any effect on Russian behavior, because the desire on the part of the Kremlin is to intimidate, to send a message, to keep the United States, but also our NATO allies, out of their backyard.

And so if they see any diminution of our ops tempo, of our operations, in these regions, they will conclude that this is a successful strategy and will continue with it. And so my view is that we need to continue with our ops tempo exactly as it is. But this is certainly dangerous behavior, endangering the lives of both American and Russian air crews.

PIFER: I agree with Mike that I think this is actually a part of deliberate Russian policy to raise this risk of accident and miscalculation. But I don’t think there’s anything that the United States or NATO lose by trying to set up channels. So, for example, in 1989 we had the Dangerous Military Activities Agreement that regulated U.S. and Soviet forces along the inter-German border. I wonder if a resurrection of something like that might make sense now in the Baltic and the Polish region, where you do have NATO forces on a border directly facing Russian forces.

And that Dangerous Military Activities Agreement had things like, for example, agreed radio channels where, if you saw the guy on the other side of the border doing something that you didn’t understand, you had a channel. Call and say: What are you doing? Things like that. I’m not sure the Russians would accept that, but I see no harm and potential value to NATO in trying to engage Russia on those sorts of channels, because, you know, the sides presumably should not have an interest in war breaking out, just because somebody makes a mistake or misunderstands what a young Russian pilot is doing.

SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

WICKER: Thank you. Gentlemen, let’s talk about Russia’s destabilizing transfers to neighboring and regional countries of threatening weapons systems. Just this past year, Russia delivered the S-300 missile system to OSCE member state Belarus, with a range of upwards of 250 kilometers. It has also – Russia has also positioned the Iskander-M missile system to its base in Kaliningrad, which has the capability of carrying a nuclear payload within 500-kilometer radius. As a matter of fact, the Lithuanian foreign minister said in October of last year that with some modifications this could go to 700 kilometers, which would include then Berlin. Also, Russia has transferred the Iskander-E missile system to OSCE member state Armenia. How troubling is this? And would you three gentlemen have comments on these destabilizing arms transfers and how they are stoking tensions throughout Europe and Eurasia?

Mr. Rademaker.

RADEMAKER: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's a long history to destabilizing Russian transfers to countries of concern. I recall during the 1990s, there was great concern about missile technology transfers by Russia to Iran. And, in fact, Congress enacted legislation – the Iran Nonproliferation Act – directed at precisely that issue – seeking to impose sanctions on Russian entities that were involved in making such transfers. That law, aimed at what were violations by Russia of its obligations under various supplier regimes for limiting exports of sensitive technology and systems. And, you know, these regimes exist under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. That one's called the nuclear suppliers group. They exist under the chemical weapons and biological convention. That's called the Australia Group. The missile technology control regime exists to limit missile technology transfers.

Some of the transfers you alluded to violate these regimes. The S-300, that's not a ballistic missile so the transfer of that's not limited by the missile technology control regime, but it's nonetheless a destabilizing transfer. And you didn't mention the transfer of S-300s to Iran, but that's another step that the Russians have taken, over strong U.S. objections. The Iskander missile, which you referred to, that is a ballistic missile.

My understanding is there are two versions of the Iskander. There's the Iskander-M, which is a roughly 500-kilometer range. Transfers of that are limited by the missile technology control regime. Russia is presumptively not to transfer that technology to anybody. Then there's the Iskander-E, which is – E I think stands for export. It's supposed to be the export-controlled version, which has a range less than 300 kilometers. So it could be transferred consistent with the missile technology control regime.

Obviously when they deploy it in their own territory, in Kaliningrad, that's not a transfer to anybody. But if they transfer it to a country like Armenia, then the key question is which version did they transfer? Was it the E or the M? If it was the E, then it was consistent with the missile technology control regime. If it was the M, it would be inconsistent. I've actually seen conflicting press accounts of which version was transferred to Armenia.

WICKER: Ambassador.

PIFER: Mr. Chairman, I actually tend to be pessimistic about our ability to stop some of these things. I mean, the Russians will argue, for example, on the S-300 sale to Belarus, they're saying, you know, Belarus is one of the few countries in the world that would say is an ally of Russia. And they would say that providing that air defense system to Belarus is the same as, for example, the United States selling the Patriot Air Defense system to Poland.

On Iskander to Kaliningrad, from what I've seen, the Iskander, they're in the 4-to-500-kilometer range, which is not covered by the INF Treaty, the ballistic missile. It seems to be that the Russians are now, basically as they phase out the SS-21, which was their previous short range surface-to-surface missile, those units are now receiving the Iskander. From what I've seen, the Iskander has been deployed temporarily with exercises in Kaliningrad, but the Russians

previously had SS-21 permanently based there. And it's my expectation that at some point you'll see the Iskander in Kaliningrad. So we'll have to think about, on the NATO side, what are the sorts of defenses that you would want to be able to deal with that system. But I don't think we're going to be able to persuade the Russians not to go forward with it.

WICKER: Thank you.

Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to follow up on Senator Cardin's question about where do we expect the Russians may agitate next in Europe, because I'm very concerned about reports that are coming out of the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia and Serbia and Kosovo, where it seems they're agitating to try and prevent further calming of the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo, and also where they're rinning up the Republika Srpska, since we mentioned that, to continue to try to agitate to leave Bosnia and really play on some of the tensions that exist in the region. So I wonder if you all can comment on that, and what you're hearing, and also what should we be doing as we think about the challenges that the Balkans are facing to try and support their continued move towards democracy and integration in the EU and the West.

CARPENTER: Well, thank you for that question, Senator. I was going to reply to Senator Cardin's question with precisely this answer: That the Western Balkans is in the crosshairs of Russian influence operations right now, particularly Republika Srpska, where they have been encouraging President Dodik to pursue his secessionist agenda. And we could see, in fact, within the course of a year, that a referendum will be declared on the succession of Republika Srpska from Bosnia and Herzegovina. They have also been intervening in Macedonia, supporting Mr. Gruevski and accusing the United States of trying to subvert the previous government and of meddling. But this is now being superimposed – this political tension between the formerly ruling party, VMRO, and the opposition, SDSM, with an ethnic overlay between ethnic Albanians who are members of the coalition and ethnic Macedonians.

And so the potential for this spinning out of control and creating a full-fledged ethnic conflict in the Western Balkans is, in my view, very high. And so you have really – and I mentioned the plot for a coup d'état in Montenegro in October – across the whole region Russia is meddling and trying to subvert some of the governments and sow chaos and instability. And so I think for us we just simply need to get more engaged in the Balkans. We need to support the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue. We need to support those in Bosnia and Herzegovina that want to activate MAP and move forward with their NATO integration process. I'm not saying membership, just MAP, which is has been held up for very artificial reasons over the issue of registration of defense properties.

But when I was at the A5 Defense Ministerial in December of last year, I heard from absolutely everybody across the board – including quietly from the Serbian delegation – that Russia was playing an outsized role in every country in the region.

WICKER: Tell us – tell us about what the Serbian leadership’s position would be with regard to this proposed possible referendum in Republika Srpska.

CARPENTER: Very much opposed. But of course, the previous Serbian prime minister, Aleksander Vucic, is now the president of Serbia. And so when we have a new prime minister, which is where most of the executive authority in Serbia is vested, we will see whether they will pursue that policy of trying to push back Dodik’s more aggressive moves in Republika Srpska and Banja Luka, or whether they will, in fact, stand by or potentially support them more. In fact, the decision on who will become the next prime minister will be a bit of litmus test as far as whether Serbia is hedging more towards Moscow or more towards Brussels.

SHAHEEN: Any other comments anybody wants to make on that issue?

RADEMAKER: Senator, I noted in the conclusion of my testimony that Russia’s approach to the region really is based on a zero-sum view of security, that they think keeping their neighbors weak and vulnerable keeps them stronger. And I think you see that in looking over the last 10 or 15 years in their policies towards some of their neighbors. What is very interesting is, though, that they do – hopefully for the right reasons – they do seem to be respecting the lines that NATO draws. They have focused their efforts on countries that are not NATO members. And of course, as members of NATO, we have no obligation to defend non-NATO members. I think the Georgians discovered that, to their chagrin, in 2008. But it was true. Ukraine has discovered it more recently.

The Western Balkans is an area that, by and large, lies outside of NATO. And therefore, I think for Russia, it presents an opportunity. And it is something that I think we need to be deeply concerned about. I also worry – as Ambassador Pifer noted in responding to Senator Cardin’s question – if the Russians ever decide to press or, you know, look beyond the NATO borders, I think the area most at risk would be the Baltic states, which, of course, were a part of the Soviet Union and, you know, therefore arguably part of the Russian near-abroad, where they’ve asserted publicly they think they have a – they’re entitled to have a special role – a special security role.

So we need to be alert to use by Russia of some of these new tools that Senator Rubio referred to, if they’re brought to bear in the Baltic states. Whether we’re prepared as an alliance to respond to that, I’m concerned that we’re not. So the ultimate solution is a change in the Russian mindset, where they stop approaching the world with this zero-sum mentality to security issues. But until we get to that point, I think we need to worry about – especially about the countries in Europe that are not in NATO. But also some of the – some of the countries in NATO which border Russia I think we need to be concerned about them as well.

SHAHEEN: And that speaks to Ambassador Pifer’s comment about being very clear that we will – we are committed to maintaining Article 5 for all of our NATO allies.

PIFER: And if I could just briefly add on the Balkans, I am mindful of that when you look at the U.S. global focus, I worry that the Balkans may not get sufficient U.S. attention.

SHAHEEN: Me too.

PIFER: The Balkans, to my mind –

WICKER: Me too.

SHAHEEN: Yes.

PIFER: The Balkans, to my mind, actually would be the place where – this would be a place where I'd like to see Europe lead, where the European Union has traction. This ought to be a focus. And so if we could somehow encourage Europe to take that role, that would be a good thing.

I'm also mindful – I served at the American embassy in London in the early 1990s, and we watched Europe take the lead the first time when Yugoslavia came apart, and it didn't work out well, and ultimately the United States did have to get involved. But at some point we need to figure out, is there a way where Europe can begin to take on some of these responsibilities, you know, because we're going to have to be thinking about other issues that are outside of Europe.

WICKER: You know, we've drawn such bright lines and made such explicit statements with regard to the Baltic countries. I do sort of fear that we haven't been as explicit with regard to the former Yugoslavia, and so I share some of your concerns there. Help us understand this attempted coup in October and whether we should be worried about similar efforts.

CARPENTER: Absolutely, Mr. Chairman. I think this could be the wave of the future in terms of how Russia tries to destabilize countries in the region.

WICKER: So tell our audience in a nutshell what happened there.

CARPENTER: In a nutshell, a small number of Russian military intelligence agents organized and planned a coup d'état on Election Day in October in Montenegro. They hired approximately 20 local mercenaries from Serbia and from Montenegro, members of organized crime groups and radical nationalist circles. They were to dress in Montenegrin police uniforms and fire on protesters outside of parliament on the day of the election in order to incite chaos and assassinate the prime minister. Now, in order to ensure that there would be protesters who turned out on Election Day, Russia also used covert means to fund opposition political parties and NGOs through cutouts in Montenegro. And they also perpetrated cyberattacks on Election Day. They both shut down government networks so that the authorities in Podgorica would not be able to communicate the election results to their citizenry, but they also hijacked social media platforms like Viber and WhatsApp to spread fake news and disinformation claiming that the vote count had been rigged and tampered with. This was an attempt to get protesters to come out.

Now, the coup plot was foiled in advance thanks to good intelligence and a tipoff.

WICKER: How early?

CARPENTER: But the cyberattacks took place.

WICKER: How early was it foiled?

CARPENTER: I would have to address that in a closed session.

WICKER: Oh my gosh. OK. Well, so – but this could certainly occur again, particularly in a relatively small and vulnerable republic.

CARPENTER: Absolutely. I couldn't agree more. And I think the Western Balkans, as I said, are in the crosshairs for this type of action.

WICKER: One of – yes, please. Mr. Rademaker.

RADEMAKER: I just wanted to add the detail that all of this took place in a context where Montenegro was in the process of acceding to NATO. And so success of the coup there might have – you know, depending on whatever government came to power, might have ended their NATO accession process.

WICKER: Is there any question that Mr. Putin was involved in this?

CARPENTER: No question in my mind.

WICKER: Mr. Rubio mentioned the economy of Russia being about the size of Spain. We are trying to insist on 2 percent of GDP for our NATO allies. What percent of GDP does Russia spend? And are they going to have a problem sustaining this military modernization and buildup?

PIFER: Yeah, no, the Russian economy, I think, is projected to grow at about 1.2 percent this year. And I don't know – I think it was about, what, 5 percent that they hit at one point, but the number's actually coming down now, and I think it's reflecting the fact that the Russians understand that there are budgetary limitations. In 2015, they began reducing the budgets for things like health and education, but this year and next year they're projecting significant decreases in military spending. Now, part of that may also reflect the fact that a lot of their modernization has already been funded, but they are beginning to run up against some budget realities.

CARPENTER: Although, if I could, I would just say I don't think we can be too sanguine that they will not be able to continue the tempo that they have in Syria or Ukraine because their reserves remain just under \$400 billion. So they have a significant amount of reserves that they've built up through the 2000s, when oil prices were very high, that they can still draw on to be able to perpetuate these sorts of actions in Ukraine and elsewhere.

WICKER: And, finally, in the area of public diplomacy, Russia eats our lunch. Does anyone agree with that or disagree with that and want to comment about it? And how can we do

a better job without becoming a propaganda organ of getting public information to people in that region of the world? Do they eat our lunch? Am I wrong?

CARPENTER: No, Chairman, I think they do. Not in the United States, but I think their ability to perpetrate information warfare in places like Moldova or Georgia especially, where a lot of attitudes have shifted over the last couple years in both of those countries, but also in the Baltic states, is very robust.

And so I think one of the means of pushing back has to be to inoculate the populations to what Russia is doing. Actually, you find that the Baltic states are quite good at this. There has been an education campaign by the governments in the Baltic states. The population knows that false stories come out of Russian media, and the mainstream media are also very quick to debunk Russian stories.

So, for example, when the multinational brigades – sorry, battalions were deployed to the Baltic states and Russian media started to propagate fake stories about alleged rapes that had taken place by some of the soldiers who are on these territories, immediately the Baltic media were able to clarify that this was false, disinformation, and correct the record. And so they are – they have a lot of experience with this. And I think, you know, some of the Western European countries and here in the United States –

WICKER: And yet, the Baltic media is independent of the government.

CARPENTER: It is. The governments of some of the Baltic states, particularly Estonia, also fund Russian-language media, television – broadcast television which is able to get the message out to the Estonian ethnic Russian, Russian-speaking population.

PIFER: I would add that the Russians devote a lot of resources to this. I recall about two years ago, when I was in Prague, and I turned on the television. I could not find CNN, but I could find RT in English, RT high-def in English, and RT in Spanish.

WICKER: Shouldn't we be investing more resources?

PIFER: I think we should be investing resources, but I would focus on what I believe is the vulnerability of both RT and Sputnik, is that there's a lot of bad information they put out, and the focus should be on discrediting those channels. And then, basically, we want a situation where a target audience in Europe, when they hear something, they say, that's just RT, we know they lie. And that's an area where, you know, perhaps we could do better in terms of fast reaction to discredit the stories immediately when they come out. If we discredit a story five days later, it doesn't really help. But if we can come out immediately and say this is false, here's the evidence, I think we can take down those channels, and reduce their credibility and their potential impact.

WICKER: Mr. Rademaker.

RADEMAKER: Mr. Chairman, I would just add the observation that in the area of information warfare there's sort of the overt and then there's the covert. And I think in the overt area, which is what we've been talking about here, you know, Russia does a reasonably good job. Although I got to say I occasionally watch RT, and to me it's kind of laughable. I mean, it is sort of thinly-veiled propaganda and I don't take it seriously. I don't know whether average citizens find it more persuasive, but you know, I –

SHAHEEN: They do.

WICKER: I'm afraid they do.

RADEMAKER: Yeah. But I worry actually less about that than I do the covert side because, you know, during the Cold War I believe, you know, both sides were engaged in covert efforts to generate information in support of their political objectives. I think Russia remains in that business, especially in Europe. I don't think the United States is very much in that business anymore.

And so, it turns out, there's a very active environmental movement against fracking in Europe and against the construction of the southern energy corridor, and it's pretty clear the money for this environmental movement, a lot of it's coming from Moscow. And what's Russia's concern? Well, you know, it would be nice for Europe to remain dependent on Gazprom and not have alternate sources of energy, either domestic through fracking in countries like Poland or gas that comes from the Caucasus. So that's just one example.

And I think support to political parties that have agendas that are amenable to Russia is another area. Senator Whitehouse referred to that in his question. I think this is an area where Russia has pretty much a free hand and no one is pushing back on them. And I don't think there's even really much effort to call them out on it and expose what the Russians are doing in that area.

WICKER: Do we need to revamp the Broadcasting Board of Governors in this country, Dr. Carpenter?

CARPENTER: I would say – well, the BBG has got some good programs. It's recently launched a program called "Current Time," which is a digital Russian-language platform that reaches Russian-speaking audiences on Russia's periphery and inside – and it's digital, so it can be picked up on the internet in Russia as well. Unfortunately, it doesn't compete with the more glossy Russian broadcast TV channels that offer attractive entertainment programming as well.

I would support putting more resources into this sort of effort, but I don't think it's going to be the be all and end all of countering Russian disinformation. I think we've got to be more active on the offense as well. I think we need to be talking more about corrupt patterns within Russia. Some of the information, for example, that has been brought to light by Alexei Navalny's organization, that has wide currency in Russia. And if we were able to not just play Whac-a-Mole with Russian disinformation and lies, but also spread some of this information, I think that would be highly effective in terms of pushing back.

RADEMAKER: Mr. Chairman, if I could just add, particularly if there is additional information available to the U.S. intelligence community that could be declassified on Russian corruption, I think that would actually be a proper response to what the Russians did to our election, and basically signal the Kremlin: If you want to play this game, we may not be able to play it in the same way, but I'm sure that the Kremlin would not like to see more information about the corruption and the billions of dollars held by people that are close to Vladimir Putin.

WICKER: Thank you, gentlemen, and thank you to our panel and the members of the Commission who participated. And also, thank you to our audience today. This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:21 a.m., the hearing ended.]