

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator Jack Reed
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SDG-50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Tuesday, January 27, 2015**

To receive testimony on global challenges and U.S. national security strategy.
(As Prepared for Delivery)

Let me join Senator Inhofe in welcoming the witnesses here today.

Let me also again thank Chairman McCain for pulling together this series of hearings and briefings to examine the U.S. global security strategy. These discussions will help inform our consideration of the Administration's budget request which will be submitted to Congress next month.

Last week, two of the most prominent U.S. strategic thinkers, General Scowcroft and Dr. Brzezinski, discussed a number of issues with the committee. Among these was the need to give multilateral negotiations on Iran's nuclear program sufficient time to reach a conclusion. They urged this body not to press forward with additional sanctions – even if they are prospective in nature. This matter is being discussed at this very moment in the Banking Committee – only a few floors from this hearing – and I look forward to discussing this issue with today's panel of distinguished witnesses.

Much of last week's discussion revolved around the Administration's strategy in Iraq and Syria for confronting the regional and global threat posed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL. General Scowcroft and Dr. Brzezinski stressed that efforts to take on ISIL require a comprehensive approach which includes both political and military elements.

We also received testimony last week from the Department of Defense on the Administration's program to train and equip the vetted opposition in Syria. This is just one aspect of the Administration's comprehensive approach to the ISIL threat in Iraq and Syria, which is built upon an international coalition, including regional Arab and Muslim states; using economic tools to go after ISIL's financing; and a sustained campaign of airstrikes against ISIL leadership and facilities.

This morning's hearing provides an opportunity, in particular, to examine the military aspects of our strategy for addressing the ISIL threat. All three of you have been outspoken in your recommendations for that strategy, many of which are reflected in the actions the Administration has taken to date. As of January, U.S. and coalition aircraft have flown 16,000 sorties over Iraq and Syria, of which 5,886 have involved kinetic strikes against targets. President Obama has authorized the deployment of over 3,000 military personnel to Iraq to advise and assist Iraqi and Kurdish security forces in driving back ISIL forces from Baghdad, Erbil, and elsewhere. At the Administration's request, the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act included \$5.6 billion

in Overseas Contingency Operations funding for Department of Defense activities in Iraq and Syria, including \$1.6 billion for the Iraq Train and Equip Program.

In their testimony last week, General Scowcroft and Dr. Brzezinski emphasized the need to work with and through regional partners and the international community to address the ISIL threat, so that the United States does not end up “owning” the problem itself.

I hope today’s witnesses will provide their views on the appropriate level of military engagement in Iraq and Syria and what political prerequisites should be met before increasing U.S. involvement. Additionally, I hope our witnesses will address other pertinent questions, including:

- How to most appropriately and effectively support Syrian opposition units that are produced by the train and equip program?
- Whether the imposition of a no-fly zone would be viewed of an act of war by Syria and, if so, whether such a no-fly zone could be accomplished without impacting our current freedom of action against ISIL targets?
- The potential ramifications of taking direct action against Syrian military who may become engaged with elements of the vetted and trained Syrian opposition; and
- The likely reaction from Iran at a time when we have nearly 3,000 military personnel in Iraq.

I hope our witnesses will also address other global challenges, including:

- Those related to cyber. The North Korean attack on Sony America – an attack that destroyed property, imposed substantial costs, and threatened a core value of free expression – demonstrated anew the limits of the government’s ability to protect our economy and society from attack through cyberspace. It will not be lost on potential adversaries that even small countries, without traditional military means of attacking us, can potentially threaten significant harm to the U.S. homeland through cyberspace. This is a disturbing new consideration for our national security;
- With regard to China, how should the U.S. keep the relationship from spiraling into conflict while still demonstrating to its allies and partners in the region that it will and help to counterbalance China’s aggression, especially in the maritime and cyber arenas?; and
- As for Russia, a key issue remains whether to engage with Russia where doing so is in U.S. interests, even as we deter Russian aggression and raise the costs for Putin's violating international norms.

Thank you again to our witnesses.