

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

**Room SDG-50  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Tuesday, April 28, 2015**

**To receive testimony on United States security policy in Europe  
*(As Prepared for Delivery)***

Admiral Stavridis, Mr. Brzezinski, and Dr. Sestanovich, welcome.

Let me thank the Chairman for setting up this hearing to review the security situation in Europe, which will inform our upcoming deliberations on the annual defense authorization bill. On Thursday we will hear from General Breedlove, the commander of U.S. European Command and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe.

The transatlantic relationship remains central to U.S. and global security. Our NATO allies and European partners have been the primary contributors to U.S.-led coalition operations in the Middle East and south Asia. In Afghanistan, European countries have deployed more than 260,000 personnel since 2007, accounting for more than 90 percent of the non-U.S. forces participating in the ISAF mission that ended last December.

Today, however, our European partners face security challenges closer to home. As noted at the NATO Summit in Wales last September, Russia's aggression against Ukraine has challenged the Alliance's vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Russia has engaged in hybrid warfare to seize Crimea and back separatist forces in eastern Ukraine. In violation of the ceasefire agreements signed in September last year and this February, according to U.S. and NATO military leaders, Russia continues to flow heavy weapons and equipment into the separatist areas in Ukraine, sparking fears of renewed heavy fighting within the coming weeks.

One step this Committee and Congress have supported is providing Ukraine the military assistance, including defensive weapons, necessary for it to defend itself against further attacks. A recent report by leading think tanks, which Admiral Stavridis co-authored, argues that "Assisting

Ukraine to deter attack and defend itself is not inconsistent with the search for a peaceful, political solution—it is essential to achieving it.” I hope our witnesses will address whether they believe there is a coalition of countries willing to provide lethal assistance to Ukraine and whether preparing such a coalition effort would help or harm compliance with the ceasefire agreements.

At the NATO Wales summit, members approved a Readiness Action Plan to enhance the alliance’s ability to respond quickly to security challenges. This year’s budget request includes \$800 million, on top of the \$1 billion approved last year, for the European Reassurance Initiative, to enhance the U.S. military presence and activities in Europe. A key issue over the coming years will be how U.S. forces should be postured in Europe to reassure allies and provide for collective defense. This will depend in part on whether our NATO allies live up to their pledges on defense spending and the levels of host nation support for U.S. forces in Europe.

NATO is facing security challenges along its other borders as well. Countries along the Mediterranean border are grappling with the prospect of tens of thousands, possibly more, of migrants fleeing instability in Libya, Syria, Eritrea, and elsewhere. Efforts to respond to this crisis have been mixed to date, and it is clear more must be done soon, as the flow of migrants is not likely to subside given increasing violence in Libya and other conflict zones. To the southeast, the flow of foreign fighters across Turkey’s border into Syria and back heightens the risk of future anti-Western attacks like those in Paris and Brussels and raises a question as to whether ISIL has more broadly infiltrated Europe’s cities. In the north, Russia is expanding its military activities in the Arctic, potentially challenging international norms and laws governing that region.

I look forward to our witnesses’ testimony on these and other security challenges in Europe and I thank them for their willingness to appear this morning.