

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

**Room SDG-50
Dirksen Senate Office Building
Tuesday, April 30, 2015**

**To receive testimony on U.S. European Command programs and
budget in review of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2016
and the Future Years Defense Program
*(As Prepared for Delivery)***

General Breedlove, welcome. Thank you for your many years of military service, and please pass along our gratitude to the service men and women serving in the U.S. European Command area of responsibility.

Let me also thank the Chairman for holding an excellent hearing on Tuesday with witnesses from outside the government on the security situation in Europe. That hearing, along with today's, will help inform the Committee's mark-up of the annual defense authorization bill.

General Breedlove, you have responsibility for maintaining the critical transatlantic relationship with Europe. As our witnesses on Tuesday emphasized, Europe does indeed matter for U.S. national security. Our European partners have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to coalition operations in the Middle East and South Asia. Our longstanding basing arrangements in Europe provide vital support to operations in CENTCOM and AFRICOM. And NATO remains a critical component of U.S. security, based on its Members' shared values and interests.

Today, EUCOM confronts a range of challenges in or around the European area, many of which have just arisen recently. Foremost is the threat from an increasingly confrontational and antagonistic Russia, which has revived old fears of a divided Europe. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has challenged the post-Cold War vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. EUCOM is leading efforts to respond to the hybrid warfare tactics used by Russia in seizing Crimea and secretly supporting separatist forces in eastern Ukraine. EUCOM and NATO have sought to counter Russia's false narrative on Ukraine, highlighting the continuing flow of heavy weapons, Russian military leadership, and training to the separatists, in violation of the Minsk ceasefire agreements. General Breedlove, we would be interested in your assessment of the security situation in Ukraine and whether you believe heavy fighting is likely to resume in the coming weeks, as some are predicting.

From early in the Ukrainian crisis, EUCOM has been working with the Ukrainian Government to identify military and security shortfalls and advise on building Ukraine's capability to defend itself. There is broad support in this committee and in Congress for providing Ukraine military assistance, including lethal, defensive weapons, necessary for it to defend itself against further attacks. As discussed at Tuesday's hearing, any arming of Ukraine involves risks, and needs to be done carefully and thoughtfully. But as a recent report by several leading think tanks concluded, "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."

EUCOM has also played a critical role in reassuring our NATO allies closest to Russia. EUCOM has increased the presence, on a rotational basis, of U.S. military forces in eastern Europe on the land, sea, and in the air. At the NATO Wales summit, members approved a Readiness Action Plan and other steps to strengthen the alliance's capability to come to the aid of a member whose security is threatened. One issue I hope General Breedlove will address is whether U.S. forces in Europe are postured to deter further Russian aggression, and whether this mission can be carried out over the coming years through the use of U.S. forces rotating into the European theater from bases back home.

Ultimately, much will depend on whether NATO members fulfill their Wales commitment to achieve defense spending at a level of 2 percent of GDP in the coming years. The budget request includes nearly \$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.

EUCOM also must contend with security challenges along Europe's other borders. The transit across the Mediterranean of tens of thousands, possibly more, of migrants fleeing instability in Libya, Syria, Eritrea, and elsewhere has overwhelmed countries in southern Europe. Efforts to respond to this crisis have been mixed to date, and clearly more must be done soon, as the violence and instability in Libya and elsewhere continues unabated. To the southeast, Turkey's porous border with Syria continues to attract foreign fighters travelling to the conflict and back, heightening the risk of future anti-Western attacks like those in Paris and Brussels and adding to concerns about a rising ISIL presence in European cities. In the north, Russia's expanding militarization of the Arctic is potentially at odds with international efforts to promote cooperation and increase economic activity in this region.

I look forward General Breedlove's testimony on these and other security challenges in Europe.