

01 Mar. 2016: General Breedlove, Senate Armed Services Committee Transcript

MCCAIN:

Good morning. The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on the security situation in Europe and the posture of the United States European Command. We're pleased to welcome back General Philip Breedlove, the Commander of the United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander of Europe.

General, this may be your last appearance before this committee. I hope not. So I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your decades of distinguished service to our country. Probably most distinguished was your tour of duty in Arizona, but anyway, I am very grateful for your candor in alerting Americans and Europeans alike to the threat posed by Russia which is growing significantly worse. Unfortunately, you have sometimes been a lonely voice, but you have always been an impactful voice.

This committee relies upon the candor of our nation's senior military commanders. I believe your colleagues as well as your successor should profit from the example of your leadership. We certainly have. Like to welcome your wife, Cindy, a proud graduate of Arizona State University. She has been a strong advocate for Air Force and military families, especially concerning education. We're grateful to her and your three children for the sacrifices they've made over your many years of service.

To the surprise of no-one on this committee, it only took until the second day of the so-called cease-fire in Syria before Vladimir Putin resumed his airstrikes in support of the murderous Assad regime. I am sure Russia will say it has only targeted quote terrorists. And while the Administration and many others will likely express their quote concerns, I'm sure they will preserve the agreement regardless of the price to U.S. credibility and the cost to our partners on the ground.

All of this comes as no surprise. We know why Mr. Putin agreed to a cessation of hostilities when he did and it's no accident that he violated that agreement when he did. This is the same movie we've been watching in Ukraine for two years. Russia presses its advantage militarily, creates new factions on the ground, uses the denial and delivery of humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip, negotiates an agreement to lock in the spoils of war, and then chooses when and where to resume fighting.

This is diplomacy in the service of military aggression. And it's working, because we're letting it. Ukraine, and now in Syria, Putin has been learning that military adventurism pays. The only deterrence that we seem to be establishing is over ourselves. Indeed, two years after Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea, the Administration has still not provided Ukrainian forces with the legal assistance they need to defend themselves, and which the Congress has authorized.

Now we may be starting this cycle once again. In recent weeks fighting in eastern Ukraine has intensified, Russian shelling and small scale skirmishes have increased, Russian tanks have been moving to support the separatists and Russian forces conducted a snap military exercise near Ukraine in the Caucasus in February. The cease-fire in Ukraine, which was coordinated to begin precisely as Russia readied its intervention in Syria, now appears increasingly tenuous.

MCCAIN:

Of course Russia has still not lived up to its obligations under the so-called Minsk II agreement. But with the fighting in Syria capturing the headlines, Putin has succeeded in diverting international attention from this invasion of Ukraine.

It's not that the United States and NATO have done nothing to respond to the challenge posed by Russia. It's that none of the actions we have taken thus far are adequate to the scope, scale and seriousness of the challenges Russia presents to our national security and to the international order.

Ultimately, the reason for maintaining a strong U.S. military presence in Europe is the same as it ever was: to deter conflict and prevent aggression. But we must revisit (Inaudible) running of a visionless Russia that is undergoing significant military modernization and that is willing to use force not as a last resort but as a primary tool to achieve its neo-imperial objectives.

In short, the United States and NATO need to prepare ourselves to deter and if necessary, defeat Russian aggression, whether it's in the nuclear, conventional or hybrid domain.

Vladimir Putin used nuclear weapons as an integral part of his strategy to reestablish Russian dominance in the former Soviet Union. To increase credibility NATO's nuclear deterrent we must continue the ongoing modernization of the U.S. nuclear forces and ensure that NATO's nuclear deterrent forces are survivable, well-exercised and increasingly ready to counter Russian nuclear doctrine, which calls for the first use of nuclear weapons.

As General Breedlove has pointed out, the current U.S. force structure in Europe and its underlying resource and is predicated on a mistaken policy of what he terms quote, "Hugging the bear." While some may try to argue otherwise, Putin is not a security partner.

General Breedlove, we look forward to hearing what steps you think are required to rectify our force posture and resourced efficiency in light of Russia's modernized conventional capabilities, especially in its anti-access area-denial network from Kaliningrad to Crimea to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

In a realm of hybrid warfare we are unfortunately playing catch up in areas such as information operations and cyber warfare (inaudible) by Putin's propaganda machine and his army of trolls and hackers.

Again, under the misguided premise that Russia is a partner, we have let our intelligence on Russia's tactical and operation capabilities languish. This has made countering hybrid tactics through effective attribution all the more difficult.

Finally, as we consider all of these important issues, it's important that we never forget the nature of the regime that threatens our security in the place of Europe. This weekend marks the one-year anniversary of the murder of Boris Nemtsov, on a bridge in the shadow of the Kremlin.

Boris was a friend to many of us. He was a Russian patriot who had the courage to tell the truth about the authoritarianism, rampant corruption, and imperial ambitions that are endemic to Putin's regime.

Boris gave his life to tell these truths. We must honor his memory by resisting Vladimir Putin's dark and dangerous view of the world and by speaking up for the aspirations of so many Russian's who still long for a future of opportunity, rule of law, and good relations with Europe in the United States.

That is what 30,000 Russians did this Sunday, marching across Moscow in tribute to Boris, chanting "Russia will be free." That is our hope as well.

Senator Reed?

REED:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd be joining you in welcoming General Breedlove.

And again, this could likely be your last hearing here. General, thank you also for your extraordinary service to the Air Force and to the nation.

And to thank Cindy for her service in the family.

You've made us extraordinary proud of all your efforts. Thank you.

The security landscape in your area of operations has undergone fundamental changes on many fronts.

To the east, an aggressive Russia continues to violate international convention in attempt to fracture the post-Cold War vision of Europe that is whole, free and at peace.

To the south, Europe faces multiple threats to stability, including the ongoing conflict from Syria Iraq, and North Africa, the prospect of foreign terrorist fighters returning to your area of operations and the overwhelming influx of refugees that shows little sign of abatement.

And in the far north, as the Arctic becomes increasingly accessible to international shipping traffic, Russia has intensified the military activity along the northern sea route in what may be seen as an attempt to militarize a region that should remain peaceful.

To address this multifaceted security situation, your command recently released an updated EUCOM service strategy. The strategy characterizes Russia as the most

prominent and imminent security challenge and it lists deterring Russian aggression as the top priority. This is a significant departure from past strategy documents.

Despite these new realities, the U.S. force posture in Europe is still sized for a time when we viewed Russia through a much different set of lenses.

The president's budget request to the European Reassurance Initiative is designed to address this new security paradigm. The ERI request would increase ongoing efforts to reassure allies and partners and focus more intently on deterrence measures.

The predominant expenditures are for prepositioned equipment in Central and Eastern Europe (inaudible) the heel-to-toe rotation deployment of an armored brigade combat team, although this force posture will only represent a fraction of the Cold War presence.

General, on the committee we're very interested to hear your views on the appropriate size and shape of U.S. forces in Europe to effectively carry out these assurance and deterrence missions.

ERI also provides funds for increased and expanded bilateral and multilateral exercises and additional efforts to build partner capacity. The committee will be interested to hear your views on how we can best assist our allies and partners (inaudible) be capable and credible forces.

We'd also like to hear your views on what you believe these activities will do to help incentivize NATO members to fill their Wales commitment to achieve defense spending at 2 percent of their GDP in the coming year.

In light of hybrid warfare tactic used by Russian's (inaudible), the (inaudible) separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, it's critical that we have the proper capabilities to provide proper capabilities to provide indications and warnings of Russian military activities.

The committee will be interested in hearing your views regarding the capabilities you need in order to provide early detection of Russian intention and actions.

The Middle East conflict and resultant refugee crisis in Europe is something unseen since the founding of the alliance. The security implications of the crisis are enormous, threatening to unravel a vision of Europe that has permeated the last few decades.

While not specifically a military challenge, the committee will be interested in hearing your views, especially regarding the cooperation among allies and partners in addressing this instability and stemming the flow of foreign fighters in returning -- that may be returning to Europe.

General Breedlove, again thank you for your service. We'll look forward to your testimony.

MCCAIN:

Welcome, General Breedlove.

BREEDLOVE:

Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I've had no greater honor in my 35 -- 39 years really than to lead the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsman and civilians of the U.S. European Command. These remarkable men and women serve not only in the European theater but also in harm's way across the globe. I thank this committee for your continued support to them and their families.

Representing those families and with me this morning is my wife, Cindy. I would like to recognize for her own 37 years of service.

I'm also honored to serve alongside the men and woman in uniform of the nations of Europe. They are willing and capable. They play an essential role in helping to protect our own vital interest.

The last time I addressed this committee the security situation in Europe was complex. Since then the situation has only grown more serious and more complicated.

Today Europe faces security challenges from two directions.

First to the east, Europe faces a resurgent, aggressive Russia. Russia has chosen to be an adversary and poses a long-term existential threat to the United States and to our European allies and partners.

Russia's eager to exert unquestioned influence over its neighboring states in its buffer zone. So Russia has used military force to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia and others, like Moldova.

In Ukraine specifically, Russia continues to use all elements of national power to hinder Kiev. We have recently seen an increase in the level of violence along the line of contact in the Donbass, as well as a number of diplomatic, economic and propaganda efforts to keep Ukraine from moving closer to the West.

The U.S. and other allies continue our effort to assist the Ukrainians reform their military and better train and develop Ukraine's servicemembers. Russia uses snap exercises to mask real deployment and to desensitize us to that possibility.

Russia has established anti-access area-denial environments, as you have labeled, and I do as well, A2AD, in Kaliningrad, in the Black Sea, and most recently in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and western Syria, sharply constraining our access.

Russia seeks to reestablish a leading role on the world stage. Russia does not just want to challenge the agreed rules of International order, it wants to re-write them.

Russia sees the U.S. and NATO as threats to its objectives and as constraints on its aspirations. So Russia seeks to fracture our unity and challenge our resolve.

Russia recognizes strength and sees weakness as opportunity. To that end, Russia applies all instruments of national power, including its military to (inaudible) corrupt and undermine targeted European countries. Some call this unconventional warfare, some call it hybrid.

In the end, we see Russia using diplomatic, economic and informational tools, in addition to military pressure, to shake and influence nations while trying to remain below triggering a military response.

To the south, from the Levant through North Africa, Europe faces the daunting challenge of mass migrations spurred by state instability and state collapse and masking the movements of criminals, terrorists and foreign fighters.

Within this mix ISIL or Daesh is spreading like a cancer, taking advantage of paths of least resistance, threatening European nations and our own with terrorist attacks. Its brutality is driving millions to flee from Syria and Iraq, creating an almost unprecedented humanitarian challenge.

BREEDLOVE:

Russia is entering into the fight in Syria has exasperated the problem, changing the dynamic in the air and on the ground. Despite public pronouncements to the contrary, Russia has done little to counter Daesh but had a great deal to bolster the Assad regime and its allies. And together Russian and the Assad regime are deliberately weaponizing migration in an attempt to overwhelm European structures and break European resolve.

All genuinely constructive efforts to end the war are welcome, but actions must speak louder than words. The war against Daesh sits home particularly hard for our close NATO ally Turkey, which shares borders with Syria and Iraq. Turkey faces its own internal threat from the PKK and it views the Syrian Kurdish opposition group, the YPG, as close PKK affiliate.

This prospect of YPG control of Syrian territory all along the Turkish border is unacceptable (inaudible). And further complicating the picture, sharply divergent interests in Syria have created a deep tension between Turkey and Russia.

The risk of miscalculation or even confirmation remains credible. EUCOM is standing firm to meet this array of challenges. To counter Russia, working with allies and partners, we are deterring Russia now and preparing for conflict if necessary.

That demonstrated preparedness to defeat is an essential part of our deterrent message. In an ideal world, as a core element of deterrence, we would significantly bolster our permanent, forward presence.

In a resource constrained environment, we are aiming for the appropriate mix of forward presence, preposition war stocks, ready to be used if needed and the ability to rapidly reinforce with troops coming from the continental United States.

This means making sure we can accomplish our mission, even when confronted with A2AD challenges. To counter Daesh, EUCOM is actively facilitating intelligence sharing and encouraging strong military relationships across ministries and across borders. And to meet all real and potential challenges EUCOM is a central part of U.S. leadership of the NATO alliance.

As the alliance continues its adaptation through the Warsaw Summit, that includes increasing the readiness and responsiveness of the entire NATO force structure, improving our indications and warnings, or IMW, and sharpening our ability to make decisions at speed. This year's budget request reflects our solemn commitment to the security of our allies and partners and to protecting our homeland forward.

EUCOM does not yet have the personnel equipment and resources necessary to carry out its growing mission. But the continuation of the European Reassurance Initiative or ERI, would strongly support EUCOM's efforts to counter Russian aggression and other threats by closing gaps in our posture and resource.

EUCOM has carefully planned and executed the ERI funds you have authorized over the past two years and we are thankful for those funds. And we have done this even as our headquarters continues to shrink.

This year's budget request would significantly increase ERI. That would let us deepen our investment in Europe along five key lines of effort: providing more rotational force, increasing training with our allies and partners, increasing preposition war-fighting equipment in theater, increasing the capacities of our allies and partners and improving the requisite supporting structure.

Together, the tools ERI would provide would send a clear and visible message to all audiences of our strong will and resolve. Our further efforts to assure, deter and defend, supported by ERI, would complement those of the entire whole government team.

EUCOM remains committed to a shared vision of Europe, whole, free, at peace and prosperous. As my military career draws to an end chairman, I want to thank you again for your unwavering support of the men and women of our Armed Forces and the opportunities that you all have given me to lead them. And I now look forward to your questions.

MCCAIN:

Thank you very much general. I wish that every American could have heard your testimony today. Maybe we would have a presidential campaign that doesn't focus on the size of people's ears and whether they sweat or not.

It's disturbing because I wish every American could hear your assessment of the situation and maybe we would focus on some of these issues. So I thank you for a very, very compelling testimony. General, some of us have believed that the Russians are using the refugee issue as a means to break up the European Union. And, is that - what -- do you share that view?

BREEDLOVE:

Chairman as you heard me describe, I've used the term weaponization of immigration. I cannot find any reason for the way Bashar al-Assad has prosecuted much of his campaign against his own people. As a fighter pilot I understand the ballistics of how you deliver a weapon. There is no understandable method by which you deliver a barrel bomb that reaches military utility.

Barrel bombs are designed to terrorize, get people out of their homes and get them on the road and make them someone else's problem. These indiscriminate weapons used by both Bashar al-Assad, and the non-precision use of weapons by the Russian forces, I can't find any other reason for them other than to cause refugees to be on the move and make them someone else's problem.

MCCAIN:

Some of us also worry about the so-called cessation is a -- the Russians seeking the opportunity to consolidate their gains, remove largely the moderate opposition from the area around Aleppo and then to consolidate their gains authenticated by the facts on the ground.

I wonder if -- what your view of that is?

BREEDLOVE:

Chairman I would like to say up front that if we -- any genuine effort to bring a peace that is durable and meets the needs of the Syrian people would be welcome I think, for all of us. What we see of course is, as you have described, is a cessation. We have not really seen a change in the type of sorties being flown et cetera, as you described in your opening statement.

We have -- we do understand that these sorties are ostensibly being flown against Daesh and Al Nusra and others, but I think that this remains to be seen. And we'll have to watch the actual activity of the cessation to determine whether it is a valid one or not.

MCCAIN:

In the -- in your ability to attempt to predict, do you predict that the Russians will increase their military activity in eastern Ukraine? And, do you support us supplying weapons to -- defensive weapons to Ukrainians?

BREEDLOVE:

Chairman, thank you for the question. I literally, just hours ago, got off the phone with our ambassador in Ukraine to get his latest reading of what he sees happening along the front. Because we get reporting consistently that the number of attacks are up.

In an unclassified format, the reporting IC is, in the last 24 hours, over 71 attacks. And in the last week, over 450 attacks along the line of contact. The report from the

ambassador is there are several disturbing trends in those attacks and that is that some of them are now happening in places that were heretofore quiet, closer to (inaudible).

And also that the type and style of the attacks reflect the weapons that were banned heretofore before caliber size and range. I believe that Russia will dial up and down the pressure along the line of contact, to keep Kiev under pressure to meet their part of the agreements first, which as you know, are tough for Kiev to do.

And so I do believe that we will see Russia using the line of contact and the activity on the line of contact to keep unhelpful pressure on Kiev.

MCCAIN:

And I finally do believe we should divide defensive weapons to?

BREEDLOVE:

Sorry Mr. Chairman. I have said to you before and in this committee before that I believe that we should not take any tools off of the plate as we address this problem. Russia is using all the tools of a nation's power against Ukraine. We use that simple model of DIME, diplomatic, informational military and economic.

And we see Russia bringing pressure in all of those. And so, in the military environment, I do not think that any tools should be necessarily precluded. And I've made my recommendations along those lines.

MCCAIN:

Thank you. (OFF-MIKE)

(UNKNOWN) [REED]

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and thank you general for your excellent testimony. And I know when you hear last year, there was a real concern that these separatist elements, actually Russian surrogates would even surge beyond the (inaudible) line and indeed go for some major urban areas, particularly at coastal ports.

Because of your activity and more importantly because of the curvature of Ukrainian forces, that has stopped. But as you point, there is continued activity, military activity.

But there seems to me, based on my trip last September a shift to political destabilization of the regime in Kiev. And that requires not only a military response but also reforms by the Ukrainian government, support by the international community.

Can you talk about this other dimension of the fight, which at this point might be more critical? Your comments please?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir, thank you for that. And in my conversation with the ambassador this morning, I just would point out again, in an unclassified setting that, that there appears to be some probing actually going back and forth across the line now.

But it's nothing like a major military muscle movements. And clearly the path that you describe is a very tough one and a critical one for the Ukrainian government.

As we all know, the current leaders of Ukraine were elected in a reform environment and their own people expect reform as a part of their performance. And as you -- I think correctly layout, what we see now is Russia bringing broad pressure on that government to force problems in this change.

BREEDLOVE:

And I must say and I've said this before. It's really hard to do major change in your government when your nation is in the field fighting for its existence. And so, having to affect these changes while the military is defending forward is also tough.

And I believe that by slowing and discrediting the government that there's a lot of pressure by the people and they are encouraged by these actions that you mentioned. It is, I think a very worrisome matter.

(UNKNOWN) [REED]

Thank you.

Stepping back a bit in terms of the overall Russian overall strategy and capacity, I think the Chairman once famously described Russia as, "a gas station masquerading as a country." I don't think it's been said any better, frankly, and we saw the initiation of a lot of these activities when gas was roughly \$80 to \$100 a barrel, it's now \$20 to \$30 a barrel.

But it suggests long run -- or at least raises the question long run, if we can through our actions, keep crisis at the low range. At what point might you see Russian in capacity have internal problems that distract them from these efforts. Is that something that you're -- do you see any indications yet?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, I think that -- now, I'm not an economist but I will -- I think I can talk ...

(UNKNOWN) [REED]

That doesn't anyone here from talking about the economy.

BREEDLOVE:

I think clearly, the combination of sanctions, of the general economy, and the extremely challenging gas prices for Russia has brought pressure on them. In the past, I've actually intimated that I didn't see it changing anything on the battlefield, but now Senator, I do see a few changes.

I'd like to just stop there and have my staff discuss the particulars in the classified environment.

(UNKNOWN) [REED]

That's fine sir. Thank you for your answer.

Just a final point to it, we had the chance to meet, you indicated partial denial efforts of the Russians or their extensive use of submarines. In fact, in your command you're only able to fill a fraction of the requests that you make for a U.S. Submarine activity. If you could share that with us, that would help.

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, thank you very much.

I'll -- and I may actually just get up if it's okay and walk over to the map just for a tiny moment. I'll tell you what, I'll just sit here and do it from here.

(UNKNOWN) [REED]

Why don't you ask somebody to go and cover the map? If the mountain won't go to the man, the man shall go to the mountain or vice versa.

BREEDLOVE:

So Senator, as you know this is an area that we sort of described as the bastion and this is where Russia does all of it's production, testing, and work of it's most sophisticated submarines. This is not classified information.

And then to get out in to the world, to be able to employ those submarines, they have to come out through this area over here that we call the GIUK Gap. We love acronyms; Greenland, Iceland, U.K. Gap -- the GIUK Gap. And so Senator, at an unclassified level we are challenged to be able to watch all of this activity and the Russians understand the utility of submarines and have invested heavily in those submarines. That does challenge our abilities.

(UNKNOWN) [REED]

Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Senator Inhofe.

INHOFE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Look, first of all, General Breedlove, let me join in the conversation about your career, your contributions, what you've done. If this ends up being the last one, you can still come by and visit right?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir.

INHOFE:

I -- back when the continent of Africa was in three different commands, I was one of them who felt that we should have an AFRICOM. And so, we've had it now for a few years, the problem was as it was set up, it was set up really without resources. So if something happen, then they would depend upon you, upon EUCOM to be able to be a resource so they could deal with you those problems.

Right now, I can name a lot of places in Africa that I have personally looked at and I can see problems coming, Burundi, The Eastern Congo, Zimbabwe, and several other areas on both coasts where they have been oil findings, and pirating and all that. Now, if that should happen, you have already stated in your testimony, you testified that you do not yet have the personnel equipment of resources necessary to carry out your own missions. What would you do if all of sudden you had to have those resources there and you don't have adequate resources to carry the mission as you see it now?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, if you would allow me just a moment of sharing a point of pride of mission, and that is that, our EUCOM forces are as you pointed all also available to AFRICOM. And all of the forces that AFRICOM actually have, we support in Europe, in our basing, etc.

And our command takes great pride when there is an Africa mission in being the best support team commander to General David Rodriguez and our AFRICOM brothers and sisters that we can. And so, what I would say is, we do have a full time job addressing the challenges that we see in the east, Russia, in the South along Turkey's border -- where Russia also is.

But the problems down there, our forces do have a full time job in those endeavors. And so, when we do have to use our forces to support AFRICOM and that is relatively often, of course, that lowers our capacity to respond. And also, it uses our forces time when they're normally what we call, dwell.

Remember, all of EUCOM's forces are still in the rotation like forces from America and other places to do the missions in CENTCOM. And so, when our forces are home from their CENTCOM rotations, are when they're able to address AFRICOM challenges. So we call that, "doing that mission in our dwell," or the time we're suppose to be recovering from and training for our next rotations.

And so, it is a challenge but again, I would offer in a small moment of pride to say that our EUCOM forces do a great job.

INHOFE:

Good, I wasn't implying that they didn't. I'm just saying that if your resources really are not adequate now and something like that could happen there, in the Balkans, or someplace else...

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir.

INHOFE:

... it could be a serious problem.

We've talked about -- Senator Reid, gave his gas station characterization. And I think we all understand that you have actually written the European Continued Dependency on Russian Energy, specifically the former Soviet and Eastern Block states only serves to bolster their --- I think -- and you're right. You're exactly right on that.

Now, when we lifted our 40 year ban on exports, how do see that as rectifying this problem that we all know is there?

BREEDLOVE:

So Senator, thank you and again, just to go back to that simple model, that DIME. The "E" part, and I could just use Ukraine as an example in the "E" part. Russia is very apt to use energy dependency and energy capabilities as one of the tools, adjusting prices, restricting flows, etc. And so, more available sources I think would help to diffuse that tool that they could use.

INHOFE:

And so, I appreciate that.

My time is just about expired but I did want to remind you about the conversation in my office, we talked about the -- I happened to be over there at the time they had their Parliament's election this first time in 96 years. There isn't one communist in their Parliament, and yet, both Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk are having other problems right now. And you were asked about sending defensive weapons over that, and you answered that question, but do you see the fact that they have domestic problems as also contributing to the problem that we're having over there?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir, I do.

In that, I believe that a lot of pressure is being brought on them from the outside to continue this problem that they have to meet the requirements of their people. And so, these are definitely pressures that are being used to exacerbate their attempts to make the changes that they need to make.

INHOFE:

Thank you General.

MCCAIN:

Senator Blumenthal?

BLUMENTHAL:

Thanks Mr. Chairman.

I want to join the chairman in thanking you for your excellent testimony today and also for your service over many years, and your families as well.

You began to describe for Senator Reid some of the threats posed in terms of undersea warfare capabilities by the Russian, especially our apparent inability to fully track their ingress and activities in that area. And I wonder, more broadly, whether you believe that our investment in undersea warfare capabilities are sufficient? The president has proposed \$5.2 billion in funding of Virginia Class submarines in his budget and \$1.9 million for the Ohio replacement program.

This is more broadly than just tracking -- so Russian submarines in your area of command. Do you believe that our investment in undersea capability is sufficient?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, I would rather not delve into the services budget because I don't know the different things they're having to trade-off and do inside of their budget.

I would rather, if you would allow me to speak to the fact that submarines like other assets; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets, and other things are what we call "low-density, high-demand." They're meaning that, typically the combatant commanders have more appetite than there is supply and I think it is a place where we have tough resource allocations as a military.

And so, I'm sorry to not satisfy about particular budget line items, but I would say that, clearly we could use more of these capabilities. And the one other thing I would say as it relates to submarines, is as it relates to our nation's nuclear capability, I believe it's important to remain ready and capable in that way.

BLUMENTHAL:

A number of witnesses before this committee from the Department of Defense have characterized submarines as one of our chief asymmetric points of dominance. You would agree would you not?

BREEDLOVE:

I think we have a magnificent capability in our submarine force.

BLUMENTHAL:

Turning back to the Ukraine, how significant is the issue of corruption there, in your view?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, this is something that I think is a challenge in many places that we're dealing with around the world and I know that it has been a challenge in Ukraine and I know that if you read the papers you see that they are getting after this and it's causing some disturbance among those who are officials and others in the country. I think that it is a challenge and I see that as they try to address it it does cause turmoil.

BLUMENTHAL:

In the F.Y. '16 NDAA Congress authorized \$300 million for the Ukraine security assistance initiative. \$50 million of that was intended for lethal assistance, including anti-armor weapons systems, mortars, cruiser (ph) weapons, grenade launchers and small arms. Are you satisfied with the pace of provision and delivery of those weapons?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, this year we have a group that I think does a wonderful job. A multi-national joint commission that goes into Ukraine and works with the Ukrainian leadership both uniformed and civilian leaders of their military, and sits down based on our military expertise and those who we carry with us from our ministries to determine what we think in a broad sense is what is needed for the Ukrainian military in the context of these funds that you have graciously provided.

That work typically tracks very closely with what they ask us for when they provide us their wishes. I tell you that to say that we have this year done our work and put together what I think is a comprehensive set of capabilities that would answer broad requirement. Because there are everything from communications to lethal aid that they do need. I have provided my inputs to my leadership with both lethal and non-lethal options and I know that that is working through the process now, sir.

BLUMENTHAL:

So they're getting pretty much everything they ask for -- is that, when you say they track their requests I understand that to mean their requests are met.

BREEDLOVE:

They track closely with what the Ukrainians typically provide, like when they provide lists to visiting CODELs and others.

BLUMENTHAL:

My time has expired. I thank you very much.

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, sir.

BLUMENTHAL:

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

AYOTTE:

Thank you Chairman. General Breedlove, I would like to thank you for your excellent leadership and service to our country and your family as well.

I would like to ask -- you said I think on several occasions before this committee that you submitted your plans on your recommendations for both lethal and non-lethal

support to Ukraine. I would like to ask you how long ago did you submit those proposals to the Administration?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I'll get this exactly wrong. It has been some weeks ago.

AYOTTE:

Has it been a month?

BREEDLOVE:

Can I get you that answer so I can get it exactly right?

AYOTTE:

Yes. Here's my question. You've been before our committee before, we've talked about the dire need, in Ukraine, and we all know the situation continues to escalate based on your testimony. Is it fair to say though that you've already submitted your recommendation -- I know that you're going to check on me but we're talking more than weeks -- aren't we talking months here?

BREEDLOVE:

It could be, ma'am. I just need to get it right.

AYOTTE:

I think it's important for us to understand this because you haven't got an answer yet, have you?

BREEDLOVE:

We have not seen the final result of that...

AYOTTE:

Here's the problem. There's a real urgency here, we've got an issue with Russia, and you've made your recommendations, we admire your service, you said let's make sure we don't take any options off the table -- this committee over a year ago, plus, as a whole on a bipartisan basis said let's provide lethal support so Ukrainians can defend themselves, and it hasn't happened. You haven't even gotten an answer.

So I appreciate -- we look forward to hearing when you submitted this, but I would call on the Administration to support Ukraine and to take up your recommendations and to act with some urgency here on behalf of our friends the Ukrainian people who we've seen Russian blow off the Budapest Memorandum, and we also see their aggression and it's time for us to stand with the people of Ukraine.

I would like to also ask you, in the wake of the November terrorist attack in Paris, to what degree do you believe that ISIS will continue to attempt to infiltrate their refugee flows?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I think that they are doing that today. I think that as you know when we, over a year, maybe even as much as two years ago, when we had refugee flows that were not completely consistent but probably more legitimate refugees fleeing non-responsive governments, ungoverned spaces, civil war, terrorism -- what we have seen growing in the past months and year is that in that flow of refugees we see criminality, terrorism and foreign fighters.

I know that doesn't sound like a distinction but I see a distinction in the latter, too. SO this criminality, the terrorists and the returning foreign fighters are clearly a daily part of the refugee flow now.

AYOTTE:

So this is a real risk, obviously, both to Europe and ourselves as we look at this refugee issue and something we need to be very careful about in terms of screening and also making sure, especially with the number of refugees flowing both into Europe and also some of them coming here, that we're very careful about, would you agree with that?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I think we need to be careful about all the flows of these refugees, yes ma'am.

AYOTTE:

I would like to ask what specific steps have we taken in European Command to ensure that Moscow doesn't gain a military advantage as a result of its development of ground launched cruise missiles in violation of the INF Treaty. This violation has been something that has been noted many times in this committee many times over the last couple of years.

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, thank you for that question. I think you have heard, actually in testimony before this committee, that Secretary of Defense's plan on how to address that at an unclassified level he lays out four steps. And that's what we're -- five steps -- and that's what we're doing. Again, at a classified level I'd love to have my staff get with yours over those steps.

AYOTTE:

That would be helpful. What I haven't seen though, maybe I'm missing it, I haven't seen us really press Russia or call them out on this in a very strenuous way. Am I missing something?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, we are -- I guess that's a question of degree. We are calling them out and the State Department and others who deal with this in the treaty realm are the first and primary voices now. I would not want to speak for their efforts at this point.

AYOTTE:

I look forward to also hearing more in the classified setting about our response but I continue to remain concerned. Russia does essentially blown off the INF Treaty and what it means for the protection for us and our allies.

(CROSSTALK)

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, we'll have the staffs connect so that the classified piece can be done.

AYOTTE:

Thank you.

MCCAIN:

General, in response to Senator Ayotte's about terrorists in the flow of refugees, logic compels us to assume the risk of attacks on the United States of America or European countries is significantly increased. Is that a conclusion you could draw?

BREEDLOVE:

Chairman, I would take Daesh at their word. They have stated that they intend to attack the West to include the United States and I believe that they will take the opportunities that they can to effect those attacks.

MCCAIN:

And if they're in the flow of refugees the likelihood of attack is significantly increased?

BREEDLOVE:

I think we have to look at every refugee flow with the eye towards this could be that source.

MCCAIN:

Senator Manchin.

MANCHIN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and first of all General Breedlove let me just tell you that of all the professionals that appear before this committee, I think yours is with anticipation and appreciation more than any. We have heard from everybody, trust me. It speaks highly and I hope that you'll reconsider maybe your exiting a little bit later rather than earlier.

That being said, sir, this whole refugee thing is a great concern to the State of West Virginia and my constituents in my state. I know that we're concerned and you said basically that those people -- the refugees, sincerely -- that are migrating because of the danger to them and their families, there are terrorists, there are foreign fighters and

extremists entwined in that group for the purpose of basically wreaking havoc on the rest of Europe and the rest of the world if they can.

Now are the European officials as concerned as what we're seeing? They're speaking out and that's why they're cracking down more, do you think?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, thank you. As to the timing of my exit my wife is sitting behind me so I must be...

MANCHIN:

I wasn't sure if I saw you nudged or get kicked or whatever but...

BREEDLOVE:

We all have bosses and I have a clear one.

Sir, I do believe the Europeans understand and are addressing this issue. Especially, but I would highlight those nations that have come under attack, have shown us that this is a problem and that the problem in one nation can quickly go across a border into another nation.

So I do see all of the things that you would expect of our nations as far as we collaborate, include on intel sharing, policing functions and things to try...

MANCHIN:

Let me ask then, does that lead back into the thought process that there should be a secure, no-fly zone, something of that sort that NATO's going to participate -- all the countries that are concerned? Or participate in that versus basically eliminating the refugees who are really sincerely looking for some stability and peace in their life?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, I've heard this concept discussed in multiple forms. It was a large discussion at this year's Munich Security Conference, in several discussions, so I do know that these are things the Europeans are considering.

MANCHIN:

As you know, politics sometimes get us entwined a little bit more than we should be.

The whole refugee bill that we've been working on, trying to basically make sure that these types of people that are entrenched: the terrorist born fighters and other extremists is really the concerns of West Virginians, could they be coming to this country under the guise of looking for some asylum?

And that's if we can do a better job on that end before they get to this end.

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, as I said, I think that every refugee flow needs to be looked at with an eye towards it could be taken advantage of by those who would seek to do us harm.

MANCHIN:

So they're looking for every avenue they can in order to get here or get wherever they can to wreak havoc. That's known. I mean, intelligence tells us that, correct? Sir, also as far as on the NATO participation, two percent. Are you seeing more and more of our NATO allies stepping up to the plate if you will?

BREEDLOVE:

So senator, thank you for that question and it is the worth discussing. And the numbers that I will give you will be exactly wrong from day to day but they're approximate.

Since Wales, the nations have taken this seriously I think. The numbers that we are using now as we went through our last ministerials is that 16 of our nations have arrested the decline in their budget.

About five of our nations have exceed two percent now. And about seven percent, in my opinion not an official opinion of anyone's. But in my opinion there about seven of the nations which I think have very creditable plans over a creditable amount of time to attempt to get to two percent.

So still work to do. I do not want to over emphasize this in a positive light, but what I do think this indicates is a trend that the actions that our nations have seen in Ukraine, the actions that our nations have seen on NATO's southern border have affected a change in the approach to these budgets.

And if I could just one more thing senator, as important to me as the two percent, is the other modifier that we talked about which is 20 percent of that two percent should be spent on recapitalization, bringing capabilities to our military function. If the two percent is all personnel costs, that does not sustain capability over time.

So the two percent investment and recap is also important -- or the 20 percent investment and recap is also important.

MANCHIN:

My time is running, sir, but I would like to say this. You know, the concerns that people have and I think if you look at them, watch television.

All and the anger that you're seeing in American voters and people participating in the political process, very concerned about the United States of America carrying the load for everybody and NATO being able to maybe call the shots and have so much influence and input, but expected for America to protect the rest of the world.

And that's what you're seeing, the pushback. People in my little state, one of the most patriotic states in the nation is concerned about why we have to carry the heavy load? Why can't other people participate? And what you had recommend, can NATO fulfill that

they go down that mission road, or can they just pick and choose and say listen, we fulfilled our obligation. Here's our two percent.

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, the policing function is really the rest of NATO.

MANCHIN:

That's right.

BREEDLOVE:

Working on each other.

MANCHIN:

Thank you, sir. I appreciate very much you being here.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

It's nice to see you again, General. And I too would like to thank you for your many years of service to this country. It is truly appreciated by the people of the United States.

Last year you spoke about the lack of ISR coverage in the European theater. What percentage of your ISR requirements are currently being fulfilled?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I'll get this number exactly wrong again, but it's a very small percentage. And that is not a -- I mean, I think that is based on where we see -- where our larger ISR enterprise is focused right now.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

If you would have to guess, would you say it's less than five percent? I know and we heard from General Kelly that it was about five percent for his combatant commands. I would think -- you know, my guess is it's quite a bit less.

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I would say it's definitely below 10 percent.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

Is that an improvement over last year? Do you believe that assets are increasingly being devoted to counter the ISIL fight?

BREEDLOVE:

So, ma'am, the increase -- it has increased somewhat over last year. And again, I -- in this form I can't speak to the specifics, but there are a few things that we are doing different. But as you remember ma'am the counter ISIL fight is really a CENTCOM fight, and so those assets are truly being allocated to CENTCOM for that rather than EUCOM.

Now what I do know is that once again we are proud to be a good supporting commander. A good percentage of what we are given in EUCOM to do ISR is actually being used along the Turkish border. So it sort of supports both our EUCOM requirements and CENTCOM requirements.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

Correct. And I am referring to the annual airborne ISR requirements.

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, ma'am.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

When you -- I believe you've also mentioned the shortfalls in the number of analysts when it comes to Russia and dealing with Russia and do you still have gaps in that area?

BREEDLOVE:

The short answer ma'am is yes, but there is good news here and I would like to give credit to the intel community. When I first -- when we first started having our issues in Crimea, I went to our two most senior leading intel leaders.

And when I sat down with him and talked about where we were in the height of the Cold War, where we were at the end of the Cold War and where we are now with Russian analysts.

And it is a demonstrative difference. And to, the two directors' great credit, they created what is called bare essentials. And we have turned around an effort to begin to bring analysts back to the Russia problem.

Now that is a good thing, but this will deliver slowly over time. And so yes, we still are challenged with the -- not only the analytical capacity but the physical capacity of being able to look at this problem.

But I want to say one more time, to give credit to the intel community for recognizing the problem and beginning to turn around an approach.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

And as we look at the effectiveness of the ISR it's not -- it is not just the collecting of the information, it is also the analyzing. So with -- I'm happy to hear that you believe that gap is starting to close a little bit and what can we do to help that process move a little quicker?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, could I take advantage of that question to maybe change the answer just a little bit and so -- and explain why it's really worrisome to me and what we need to do in my opinion?

We need to develop what we call indications and warnings so that we can be predictive of what our opponents might do.

Because we are primarily a U.S.-stationed force and U.S. EUCOM forces forward are somewhat less, are smaller than they were in the past. We need to be able to accurately predict when we need to bring forces over to solve a problem before it stops -- starts, to deter it.

And that is based on what we call indications and warning. Indications and warning is based on a solid understanding of the day- to-day intelligence.

We need to understand what is normal so that we can see the spike out of normal that says, wait a minute, we need to deploy the very high readiness joint task force. Or we need to deploy elements of our rapid reaction capability.

So to develop that I&W, we need to first establish a solid base of understanding and that will take more intel capability and ISR than we currently have allocated.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

And to what extent are we sharing information with our NATO allies in order to help really fill that gap as well and how are they contributing? But first, how are we sharing with them?

BREEDLOVE:

We are sharing with them and they are sharing with us. My now -- talking to a little bit as the NATO commander, not the U.S. commander, of our intel function called the NIFC. It's where all the nations come in and put in their intelligence. It is fused and then put back out as a NATO product.

And so we are all sharing into there to try to establish that baseline of understanding that we need. So, we are sharing with them and as you know, our nation has some very good technical capabilities and what our friends bring to the table are others where they have great on the ground capabilities that they share with us and I think we should stop there on that conversation.

(UNKNOWN) [FISCHER]

Thank you, sir.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

KING (?):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple specific questions, General.

In your testimony you unequivocally state that you believe that we should ratify the U.N. Law of the Sea Treaty. Do you believe it's a -- it compromises our national security? Our failure to do so as a compromise to our national security?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, I wouldn't want to put up a price like that on it. I think what I would do is tell you that military people have consistently supported the UNCLOS. And if I could just use a simple vignette of what's happening now in the Arctic as we see the Arctic rim become militarized, especially in a Russian context and then as we see, just like I think, a week - 10 days ago, two weeks ago now, renewed different claims into the Arctic shelves...

KING (?):

And we're not at the table where those claims are being adjudicated.

BREEDLOVE:

That's correct. That's why I would say that sir. We don't -- because we're not a member of them, plus we don't have the standing at the table to address that.

KING (?):

I think I've asked practically every flag officer that's appeared before this committee and gotten the same answer. I hope that Congress will listen to the advice of our military commanders. Last fall I was in Iceland and was struck by the strategic value of that country and toured the old Keflavik airbase.

Should we be rethinking our decision to leave that base and find some way of having a presence there? It's, to me, it's a giant unsinkable aircraft carrier right in the most -- one of the most strategic lanes in the world. Your thoughts?

BREEDLOVE:

So, Senator, as I use the map to explain that GIUK Gap, Greenland, Iceland, U.K. Gap, our ability to project intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and other capabilities from places like Keflavik are very important to us in and we are already renewing some of these conversations.

KING (?):

I hope that will continue, particularly since before the facilities either get reused or deteriorate it's a marvelous facility.

We talked about the Russian economy and I've heard various estimates of, if oil prices stay where they are, 18 months, two years, three years before there's a real collapse. I think you mentioned this or suggested it, I think that's the moment of maximum danger

when Putin's popularity - my understanding is being maintained by his foreign adventurism.

And to the extent of the domestic economy and political situation tightens in the country, he's going to be more likely to be adventurous. I think that creates some real risks for us. Would you concur?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, this is something that we talk about a lot. One of the scenarios that concerns us as the other elements of national power diminishes due to the economy and the military continues to be invested in -- that dynamic is of concern.

KING (?):

What do you make of his -- I think unsettling discussions about nuclear weapons particularly along the NATO line, this idea of escalate to de-escalate? It seems to me this is a change in doctrine that is really disturbing and we should be thinking very seriously about what the implications are.

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I'm on record that I think this is irresponsible discussion. I'll actually call it irresponsible talk.

KING (?):

For them, I hope not.

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir, that's correct. I'm sorry, I should clarify.

And it's not just Mr. Putin, as you know it has been a series of their officials from several levels of ministries, to include informed military -- that the nuclear weapon is considered a normal weapon in the normal escalation of de-escalation matrix of resolving an issue. I have said more than once that I don't think that is responsible by a nuclear power.

KING (?):

Is the NATO Article 5 credible today? Does Russia view NATO particularly in the Baltic States as a credible responder?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, if I could, just a tiny bit of background; I would actually if I was talking about the articles of the Atlantic Treaty, it would start with Article 3. Article 3 essentially says in my Georgia terms, "defense starts at home." In other words, our nations also have to be focused on their own internal defense. I think that I would remark to you that, that has taken a very good turn since Wales and since Crimea.

Then Article 4 is the next step I would talk about. That is where nation's begin to talk about the challenges that they see and that they might be facing a threat. And then,

Article 5 of course is that collective defense article. It is the one that is most talked about but I think the others are equally important.

And I do believe that Mr. Putin understands the difference between a NATO border and non-NATO border when it comes to over- military...

KING (?):

The Ukraine?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir.

But I do not think necessarily that those NATO borders mean that other elements of power will not be used. I think there's an incredible information -- disinformation campaign and other types of pressures, like economic pressures in energy as was mentioned earlier that are being brought on some of our NATO partners and allies.

KING (?):

Very important point. Thank you.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

(UNKNOWN) [ROUNDS]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General, thank you for your services.

I'd like to follow up a little bit with what Senator King has touched on, is that is escalate to de-escalate approach.

I noticed in your written testimony, you talked about the missile defense in Europe and you've identified four phases. The missile defenses that we talked about here, what are they designed to protect against?

BREEDLOVE:

So the current EPAA, European Phase Adaptive Approaches is our American contribution to overall European missile defense. And the essential elements of that are, as you know, four destroyers that have been delivered to Rota with the Aegis system. And then to build two remote Aegis Assure sites, one in Romania and one in Poland and then to couple those with a TPY-2 radar which we have placed in Turkey.

And so the first elements of that are in place, the four destroyers, the TPY-2 in Turkey and the first -- we have just taken delivery of and working towards IOC, the Initial Operating Capability as our site at Deveselu in Romania. And then following, we are now on-time ,on schedule as we begin the process of the Polish site.

And these are aimed at the threat that we see from the Middle East in Iran and others in their missile capabilities in order to defend Europe.

(UNKNOWN) [ROUNDS]

So these would be defensive weapons for both tactical or non-nuclear, as well as nuclear weapons?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, they would defend against any missile because we wouldn't really know. We might have a good guess but we wouldn't really know what kind of missile it is. So these ballistic missiles emanating out of the areas we're concerned about.

(UNKNOWN) [ROUNDS]

I noticed that when we talk about our activity and our nuclear deterrence and weapons of mass destruction, was regard to our capability. You're very specific in your statements, talking about them in terms of strategic nuclear forces. I would suspect it is in regard to strategy versus tactical.

Would you think that the Russians at this point view the same approach in terms of strategic versus tactical when we talk about nuclear weapons and the possible deployment of them?

BREEDLOVE:

That's an excellent question that I haven't really thought much about. I will explain why.

I actually look at the problem in a different way. And it was mentioned before, and that is that, if you read the open writings -- completely unclassified writings of Mr. Garasimov all the way up in their organizations, the Russians talk about the -- I wouldn't use the word routine -- but talk about nuclear weapons being a part of that weapons continuum that could be used and is envisioned to be used in order to solve a conflict.

And so, to answer your specific question, I would do it in this way, I think that they see nuclear weapons as a part of a solution if they need it. And so, they don't draw nearly the strong distinctions that you might be describing as it relates to tactical versus strategic.

(UNKNOWN) [ROUNDS]

So if you were to compare our approach with regard to nuclear weapons, we're still in the position of looking at them as strategic in nature. Whereas at the same time, it's very possible that Russia may very well look at them as a tactical weapon.

And my question is is are we prepared to respond in the case that that is their actual, long-term approach. And do we need to reevaluate our capabilities if that is their approach?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, I will not dodge your question, I just don't think that -- that's appropriate for this forum. If I can invite my staff to come sit down with yours and we can give you pretty specific answers to those questions.

(UNKNOWN) [ROUNDS]

Thank you, thank you. I yield back Mr. Chairman. Thank you sir.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

Thank you Mr. Chairman. General, I also add my thanks to you for your service and of course, that of Mrs. Breedlove.

I just wanted to just comment on your position regarding the U.S. not joining and the -- in UNCLOS and why you didn't go so far as to acknowledge that that is a threat to our national security, it clearly disadvantages the United States and our dealings in that parlay world, correct?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am I -- as I am not trying to be evasive. I, just like other military individuals, I support that we need the UNCLOS to be able to address issues that we face today.

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

I agree with you. In your written testimony you mentioned the European faith adaptive approach and you we're asked briefly about that just a little while ago and its capabilities to deepen our missile defense partnerships with NATO.

I know that that we have an initial operating capability in Romania and we are on track to put another site in -- where is it?

BREEDLOVE:

Poland ma'am.

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

In Poland. So, what is Russia's reaction to our development of EPAA sites?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, we need to be very straight-forward. Russia looks at this as a huge problem. They talk about it all the time as being destabilizing et cetera.

Russia believes that these sites challenges their strategic nuclear capability, which they then believes unbalances the nuclear balance with the United States. Russia has been consistently opposed to EPAA in all shapes and forms in Europe.

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

So in response then, has Russia done anything because of the position that they have regarding EPAA sites?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I can not tie any actions directly. I would just offer the following. Russia continues to aggressively recapitalize its nuclear capability. It continues to invest in its strategic nuclear forces.

And as you have had heard mentioned here, most of the world believes they have abrogated the INF Treaty in developing tactical nuclear weapons that are outside of what the INF was this describe for.

I cannot type any of that directly to EPAA, ma'am, and I wouldn't want you to take that inference. But what I would say is that Russia sees the need and value for having a diverse and capable nuclear force and they continue to invest in it.

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

Thank you. You know, you also mentioned that the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance that outlined our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific. It was determined at a time when we thought Russia was a partner, not a threat.

Now that Russia is deemed one of four -- one of our primary threats, what are the implications of -- to that, regarding the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific and can you also talk about some of the challenges of being able to maintain our interest in the Asia-Pacific while also effectively trying to limit Russian aggressive behavior?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am what I would rather not do and what I've refrained from for most of my military career is what we call shooting on someone else's target. So I would not like to address my concerns based on something that's happening in the Pacific Command.

I would just tell you that we do see as you have described, that we have been in a period for two decades of trying to make a partner out of Russia.

And we have approached our strategies, our four sizes, our headquarter size capability and type, all the things in Europe have been adjusted for almost 2 decades for that situation where we would hope that we could go forward together with Russia to create a Europe whole, free, at peace and I personally add, prosperous.

But again, as you have said, what we have seen and in starting probably in 2008, but certainly across the last two years is, we do not have a partner in Russia.

And so we are now ill-placed in Europe as far as our four sizing capability, our headquarter sizing capability and we are having to readdress our planning and other things as well to readdress this issue. And so I would advocate that that understanding of what Russia now represents would require us to think about how we allocate forces.

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

And I think the same goes for our understanding of aggressive behavior from North Korea and China with regard to the Asia-Pacific area, so thank you for not pitting one area of the globe...

BREEDLOVE:

Yes ma'am.

(UNKNOWN) [HIRONO]

... against another.

Thank you, Chairman.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

(UNKNOWN) [ERNST]

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Breedlove, thank you very much for your years of admirable service. I know I appreciate it, all the members of this panel appreciate it and of course all those folks across the country appreciate it as well.

In your written testimony you say the capabilities available for EUCOM force protection are not keeping pace with the number of at-risk locations and people and the magnitude of the threats they face.

You did state that there is a growing mission and we are being stretched very thin. So as much as you can in this open setting, could you provide us with greater insight into the risks you are assuming due to a lack of force protection capabilities? Now you touched upon military intelligence and maybe we need a better understanding of its role and EUCOM.

If you could expand on that and then also specifically, what sort of capabilities do you need to enhance force protection in Europe, not only for our service members, but for those families that are stationed there as well.

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am if you could allow me to hit some generalities.

(UNKNOWN) [ERNST]

Absolutely.

BREEDLOVE:

And again I will offer for my staff to come speak specifics to you. I don't think they would be appropriate here to talk about our vulnerabilities so that our opponents could hear this.

(UNKNOWN) [ERNST]

Yes, thank you.

BREEDLOVE:

But let me assure you first and foremost that the force protection of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines and their families, and those who support us, like civilian entities like (inaudible) and other things that are out there, teachers and others that are buoyed (ph).

These are a keen interest to us as commanders and we work this issue every day.

BREEDLOVE:

And to the point that you mentioned, which I think is very salient for today's discussion, our ability to have the authorities and the capabilities to share widely with our partners and our allies, it is very important and we do this every day. And as you know some of our relationships are better than in others. But part of our requirement is to understand what's going on on the ground, and normally our allies and partners know that better than we do.

So key to our ability is the ability to share these things that we can bring to the table with the things they can bring to the table to put together a holistic picture to be able then to make the adjustments that we need to make. And I would tell you that we are working that aggressively all the time.

And if I could, I would save the rest for a staff to staff discussion.

ERNST:

Absolutely, it is imperative that we do assume certain risks. But there are risks that you should not have to assume, and so I would appreciate additional feedback on that.

Sir, how will the Syrian cease-fire affect Russia's intervention into Syria? And specifically, what impact will it have in your area of operations with respect to Russia's activities in Ukraine, Crimea, Georgia, the Baltics and of course elsewhere in Europe? And I know we have mentioned the migrant flow, but if you could just visit a little bit more about the specific areas, please.

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, as I stated before I think it's important -- or at least I can say that we -- any credible and real genuine approach to bringing a cease-fire that respects and addresses the needs of the Syrian people I think will be welcome and we would support that.

What we see in the mechanization of the cease-fire so far we need to watch and see how it works. We see continuing activity that is ostensibly aimed at the Daesh and al-Muthra, and other deemed terrorist fronts.

So, I think that the real effect of what's happening now -- again, we support it if it's genuine and authentic. But we need to watch it.

I've said before that the actions will speak louder than the words, and we're really early now and we need to see how those actions bear out.

ERNST:

Great, and I am running out of time, but very briefly: a number of these places that I just mentioned -- Ukraine and so forth -- we do have through the National Guard our State Partnership Programs. Yes or no, do you support those programs?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, they really represent almost 24 percent of my outreach to other nations and they are in some cases our very best tool for developing partnership capacity in our nations.

ERNST:

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman and General Breedlove. I certainly share the sentiment of everybody on this committee about appreciation for your service to the country and your family's service to the country. And that we will miss you, and I certainly hope that once you take off your uniform and rejoin civilian life that you will continue to be involved in thinking about how we should be responding to the challenges that we face in Europe.

I want to go back to the testimony that you gave about NATO and where we are with our NATO partners in building their defense capabilities. And I wonder if you could talk about what you hope to see coming out of the upcoming Warsaw Summit.

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, ma'am, thank you for that. So as we approach Warsaw -- I have said more than once, and I sort of said it poorly in my opening statement -- that it's really the road through Warsaw, not the road to Warsaw.

In other words, I believe that NATO will have to continue to adapt across time. What I believe is most important is that we continue the regime of increasing the readiness and the responsiveness of the entire NATO force structure. You saw at Wales, we made adaptation to the NRF and we built the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force.

We increased the readiness of all of the NRF Designated Forces and their capabilities. But that is not enough. We need to look and address the entire force structure and that's why the investment regime that we talked about before is importantly overall 2 percent. But also, inside of that 2 percent the 20 percent recapitalization investment.

I believe what would deter Mr. Putin in the endgame if he looks at a NATO that is more fit to purpose. More ready, more responsive, and a strong transatlantic alliance with Canada and U.S. on the other side of the alliance. I think these are all very important.

I do see recognition of this in our NATO allies and partners.

SHAHEEN:

There has been a lot of -- I don't want to say controversy yet -- but potential for controversy over Great Britain's looking at exiting the E.U. And while they would still be a member of NATO, do you see a referendum that would take Great Britain out of the E.U. as having an impact on the security in Europe and the potential for an impact on NATO?

BREEDLOVE:

Ma'am, I'm struggled to be qualified to make that judgment. I'm being very honest with you. I would say this, that the U.K. remains a staunch part of NATO and there's no discussion either way about that.

And the U.K. is one of our great leaders in doing things that we do inside of NATO: providing forces, providing leadership. And they, and five to six other nations, are those very highly, technically capable nations that are incredibly important to some of the exquisite missions that we have to do in NATO.

And so I remain completely confident in the U.K. as a functioning, contributing and leading partner in NATO.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you, I certainly hope that that continues to be the case regardless of the outcome of that referendum.

I wonder -- one of the things that NATO is working with the E.U. on right now is the challenge of the migrants that are coming into Europe, and they have agreed to undertake a mission to help combat the criminal networks and the traffickers that are bringing those migrants across the Aegean from Turkey.

Can you talk a little bit about how this operation is expected to work and what we think the chances for success are?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, ma'am, and another small point of pride: the Minister's asked us to do this at our last Ministerial, and the responsiveness of the NATO force and the positioning and the way that we plan and use our standing naval -- or NATO Maritime Groups -- we were able to respond within 48 hours and have ships on station to begin the mission.

BREEDLOVE:

Because the mission is still evolving, my headquarters and I have put out two directives to begin the mission and now NATO is refining what it looks like. But just very quickly, we are there to increase the surveillance, monitoring and view of what's going on the ocean, not to be a policing function, but to connect then to the Turkish coast guard and the Greek coast guard who are policing functions and (inaudible) actionable information so that they can bring the policing function.

So we're adding that capability to extend their eyes and ears and do the point-out of problems so that they can do the policing functions associated. Of course, the NATO ships, if they observe bad things on the ocean, they are still bound by the Law of the Sea and they will react appropriately.

Turkey has agreed -- now I know we're still doing some negotiations -- but Turkey has agreed in principle to receive any of these migrants that are picked up by our NATO ships in this operation.

SHAHEEN:

So they would go to Turkey not to Greece.

BREEDLOVE:

That's correct ma'am. That's the understanding today.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you very much, my time is up.

MCCAIN:

(OFF-MIKE)

(UNKNOWN) [LEE]

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Breedlove, for your service to our country, thank you for being with us here today.

I want to start by just reiterating a concern expressed by my colleague Senator Manchin. It worries me that the U.S. accounts for about three fourths of NATO funding even though the European members have an even larger combined economy and population, and that defense spending in European countries has decreased by 28 percent since 1990. Meanwhile just over the last 12 years Russia has increased its defense budget by over 100 percent.

This worries me a little bit especially given that -- I think there are some additional uncertainties that come into this. A lot of President Obama's request to quadruple funding for the European Reassurance Initiative in fiscal year 2017 worries me -- among other things -- what this could say about the willingness of our European allies to increase and modernize their own defense systems.

On that note, given the fact that he does want to quadruple the funding for the European Reassurance Initiative, to \$3.4 billion. The Russian government is obviously not going to be taking this announcement happily and the objective of this spending is of course to reassure our European allies that we're committed to their defense and we're committed to doing what we can do to try to deter any further Russian aggression. But I'd like to ask you, what are the chances that this increased spending might have the opposite effect? That the Russian government might use increased spending levels in this area

both as propaganda and as a public relations excuse to increase Russia's own military buildup along its western border or activity in Eastern Europe.

How are you addressing the potential that we could in one way or another unwittingly, unintentionally be catalyzing an arms race on the Russian border with Eastern Europe?

BREEDLOVE:

Thank you. It's a complicated question. I'll see if I can dissect it just a little. So the front end of the question about the concern of our investment of our NATO nations -- clearly we are focused on all of the nations' addressing their individual requirements as we discussed earlier. Article III of the Atlantic Treaty is essentially, in my words, defense begins at home. In other words, nations are required to prepare for their own defense.

The numbers I use, sir, are probably exactly wrong. They fluctuate a little bit, but here are the numbers that are pretty widely accepted. Since Wales, 16 of our nations have stopped their decline in defense spending. Five of the nations have at this moment -- are investing two percent or better.

Now my personal opinion, not that of our government or others, is there's about seven of the nations that I think have a very creditable internal plan to reach two percent within a creditable amount of time. That Wales -- the decree said in 10 years. I think that a shorter timeframe would be more appropriate.

(UNKNOWN) [LEE]

Seventeen nations?

BREEDLOVE:

Seven.

(UNKNOWN) [LEE]

Seven nations would get their...

BREEDLOVE:

So what we see there -- again, this is not to be overly optimistic, but I'm just reporting what we see now is that the nations have taken notice and are beginning to address the issues.

To this latter half of your question, which is the Russian reaction to ERI, everything we do in Europe the Russians react to. Everything we do in Europe they use as a part of their propaganda campaign. Every small exercise, every big exercise, every investment, when we fly a couple of bombers in an exercise it gets big notice. As you have seen they have a steady flow of aircraft into our area.

I do not want to belittle what you're concerned about. The opposite effect of propaganda -- sir, they are already talking about ERI in their propaganda efforts to discredit what we're trying to do. I would offer you my opinion, which will sound a bit strident, but I believe that Russia is on a path right now to recapitalize, reinvest in its military and it's

moving forward in that effort and it will use things as an opportunity to label them as a reaction, but I believe they are on a scheduled plan and they're executing their approach to recapitalization, reinvestment, reinvigorating and probably most disturbingly, to use their military as you have seen them use it in Crimea, Donbass (ph). Very few talk about they reset the line recently and violated Georgian territory again by moving the line about 1,600 meters south in South Ossetia to cover an energy transmission point.

Now you see what's going on in Syria. Sir I think they're on a schedule and they're going to execute that schedule. They'll use whatever they can to address the propaganda piece to talk about it.

(UNKNOWN) [LEE]

Thank you very much, sir. I see my time's expired. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Senator Donnelly.

DONNELLY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you don't mind I was going to defer to Senator Kaine for the moment and then go next.

MCCAIN:

I mind.

KAINE:

Thank you.

(LAUGHTER)

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, General Breedlove.

I echo the comments. You've addressed most of my questions but one area we've spent a lot of time on in this committee at the edges of is a concern about the nation's cyber doctrine. When is a cyber attack an act of war, when is it of a lesser magnitude, what should our response be, do we have a deterrence doctrine? If we do do we publicize it, if we don't publicize it does it really deter?

I'm kind of curious about Article V in Collective Self-Defense. If you could talk about NATO-level discussions on this question of when a cyber attack of a NATO ally would potentially trigger an Article V common defense obligation.

BREEDLOVE:

Again, Senator, I would love to offer some folks to come talk to you about it in a classified break (ph). But there are things that can be said here that are pertinent to your question.

When I came to NATO about three years ago, NATO was in a very nascent place as it relates to cyber activity and how they would react to cyber. I must tell you in an unqualified way that has changed. As you know, we have come under cyber attack. We're under cyber attack every day, so the nations have very much understood that there are 28 doors into our alliance, and if we have a few that are massive and well-formed, and a few that are wide open, we have an issue.

SO we have had a better understanding of the collective requirement to address this challenge, and I think I'll stop there on that piece.

I would -- I would offer to you is to have your MLA, maybe the next time you're in Europe, take you through Tallinn, Estonia, and see the center of excellence there. It is an incredibly well-functioning place. It is putting out usable tools and capabilities to our alliance, and it's making a difference. You would be able to see a little bit first hand if you were to visit that in Tallinn.

KAINE:

I would love to do that and I think this is a topic the Committee I'm sure will be spending a lot more time on generally, cyber doctrine.

The second thing I'm really interested in U.S. activities to train the militaries of foreign nations in terms of building up a NATO capacity. Certainly it's a budgetary question but also the U.S. -- we do some of our best work on the training side and in particular since 2010 you've had a Black Sea rotational force which has been a marine component attached to EUCOM which has some other responsibilities too, crisis response.

But a lot of their work has been training the militaries especially in southeastern portion of the EUCOM geography. Describe a little bit the utility of the Black Sea rotational force in its six years of existence.

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, if I could I'd really like to open that up even a little bit bigger. I'll just use the work that the 173rd Sky Soldiers have just finished up in Ukraine and handed off to another unit there. I would tell you that your United States forces, all of them, Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine are doing some incredible things training our allies and partners in Europe, and the BSRF is an incredible example of that.

The nations that the BSRF reciprocally works with of course, Romania, Bulgaria, are incredibly appreciative of what they do and they are benefiting because we see the troops that they train, serving alongside of us in Afghanistan and other places and they are capable, and a lot of times come with zero caveats. And work and serve right alongside our folks.

Let me just throw out a couple of other examples. The Marine work and now beginning some of the Army work in Georgia. Some of the finest soldiers that serve with us in Afghanistan and Kosovo and other places come from Georgia. At one point Georgia was...

KAINE:

I think they're in the Kurdish region and northern Iraq as well, some of the Georgians...

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, sir, they're serving alongside our NATO partners and allies in many places. And as I mentioned, we have just finished a very successful series of training opportunities in Yavoriv in Ukraine where we trained the National Guard forces, not exactly similar to our National Guard forces.

But we just finished that iteration and now we are beginning to train the Ministry of Defense forces in the operative and this is an incredibly successful program and the forces that we have been training have been doing very well as they then move forward. And I know you're aware as well sir, we just finished our first iteration of training Ukrainians SOF.

We're just starting the second class again. I just spoke to the ambassador now about four hours ago about some of things going on in Ukraine and he is very complementary of both the work in Yavoriv and the work with Asoft (ph).

So, there are multiple examples: Georgia, Romania, Ukraine, Vesurf (ph). These are these are all very successful and in our allies and partners are producing soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who are serving alongside us in some tough places.

KAINE:

Thank you.

BREEDLOVE:

I hope I was encouraging there because this is a good news story.

KAINE:

I think it's a small portion of the DOD budget that we devote to training foreign militaries, whether it's overseas or bringing foreign military leaders here. But in terms of bang for the buck, it's one of the best expenses we make. Thank you general. Thank you Mr. Chair.

MCCAIN:

Senator Graham. Oh, I'm sorry. Senator Cotton. I'm sorry.

COTTON:

Thank you. General, thank you very much for your many years of service to our country. I want to return to something to which you alluded briefly in your testimony here and for

the House Armed Services Committee and about which the chairman asked you, said that Vladimir Putin is weaponizing immigration in Syria. Could you explain a little bit more what you mean by that concept?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, thank you for the question. I think I have to step back a little bit in the conflict to start first with Bashar al-Assad, because this story builds from that point. And that is that what we have seen is the Assad regime using weaponry that has almost zero military utility. Again, as a fire pilot, I understand the ballistics of a weapon. I've delivered a lot of them myself.

And the ballistics of barrel bomb does not lend itself to military utility. What it lends itself to is terrorizing populations, getting them on the move, getting them on the road and making them someone else's problem. And what we have seen is that continue into this weekend, that style of approach by the Assad regime.

And then I would also say that what we see in our Russian counterparts in Syria is the use of a lot of very indiscriminate weapons. And the percentage of precision weaponry used is very low and it's hard to tell from what they're doing on their targets what their real intent are, but what we do see is that it is causing a lot of flow of people out of the stricken areas, getting them on the road and getting them into someone else's hair.

Our ally Turkey, over 2 million. They're taking care of in Jordan. Half of that in Lebanon, a huge number. So what we have seen is not only the flow into Europe and other places caused by these efforts, but an intense flow into the neighboring nations. And so I am -- I have used that word. I used that because I cannot see the military utility of some of the actions being taken by these individuals in the complex.

COTTON:

Most of these migrants and refugees are Sunni Arabs from Syria?

BREEDLOVE:

I can't say that because there are -- we do see a pretty large migration flow still from Afghanistan and from other places.

COTTON:

But from Syria?

BREEDLOVE:

From Syria? I don't want to hazard a guess there's sir. I'll get you an answer to that.

COTTON:

But while there may not be military application, it would be a convenient political development if Bashar al-Assad, who represents a minority sect in Syria were to ethnically cleanse much of his country of Sunni Arabs, which have been a historic source of resistance to his rule, destabilizing Jordan and Turkey, two key U.S. allies on

its border as well as destabilizing much of Europe and the Balkans in eastern and central Europe.

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir.

COTTON:

Is it a long-term goal of Vladimir Putin to ultimately divide the European Union and NATO?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir I said that in my written testimony and I think I actually said it in my opening statement as well. I do believe that one of the primary goals of Mr. Putin is to find a division in NATO and find a division in the European Union.

COTTON:

And we often speculate about the possibility of hybrid warfare as it's called in one of the Baltic countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. That would be a very high-risk maneuver. You're thinking about it from Vladimir Putin's standpoint right?

BREEDLOVE:

So I believe Mr. Putin, as I said, does understand Article V and understands what a NATO border is as it relates to conventional force. But I do not believe that he feels unnecessarily restrained in using the other tools of national power: diplomatic, informational, economic in these areas.

COTTON:

If you look at the political controversy that this flow of migrants and refugees has created over the last year in Europe, from Vladimir Putin's standpoint it might appear that this is a much lower risk way to divide Europe against itself than that kind of risk of invading a NATO country correct?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir I can't make that judgment for Mr. Putin, but what we have seen is that this is bringing great pressure on the nations of Europe.

COTTON:

What do you think is going to happen as winter turns to spring and we see more migrants and refugees. Just in the last week to 10 days we've seen that these grab (ph) countries meet with the Balkans, excluding Greece from this meeting in discussions about shutting the Macedonian-Greek border and therefore cutting off the land bridge for refugees and migrants going into Austria and Germany.

Yet Chancellor Merkel has just said that she remains committed to keeping her borders entirely open. What's the endgame here for you?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, first, for the first part of your question, I was just in the Balkans in the last -- about two weeks ago, visiting everyone from Montenegro to Serbia actually. And on all of their minds is the concern of what happens in the spring.

Also what happens in the dynamics if some nations close borders and others don't, it could shift the pattern through nations that are even less capable of addressing these flows. And so this remains a big concern for the nations of the area

COTTON:

Thank you, General. My time has expired but I do think it's always important to remember that as troublesome as these flows of migrants and refugees are, it is merely a symptom and the ultimate disease is the Syrian civil war. And the U.S. administration bears real responsibility for that phase.

MCCAIN:

Senator Donnelly.

DONNELLY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And General, thank you for all your service to our country.

DONNELLY:

When you were here before, when you were kind enough to appear before us, one of the subjects we talked about was Russian incursions into areas that they traditionally have not been Russians being intercepted along Britain's south coast, and that in order to avoid conflict rather than going head on with them, sometimes we have worked to move them out but have not gone into greater conflict with them.

Is this continuing a-pace that has a greater rate as it was before? And how long do you think this will continue and what message does it send to Putin that he can continue to do these things?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, thank you. We did talk about that and yes, we have seen the Russian Federation aircraft in places that we have not seen them before and that still continues today. But I need to be intellectually honest. I would tell you that it has decreased a little bit. I think that's primarily because there's a great focus right now on Syria, assets are dedicated to Syria and other things. I'm not sure that we wouldn't see that go back up after a Syrian conflict that may just be a question of capacity and focus et cetera. We need to be honest in our reporting of this. It's dipped a little as we've seen Syria pick up.

I would just like to say that I wouldn't question the words you used but our responses to these things in these unconventional places have not been that we yield, but we do what is professionally correct in those responses in those spaces.

DONNELLY:

OK. What is your worst scenario in regards to Russia? What are the things that when you begin a day you go, "This would be the worst case that could happen"?

(CROSSTALK)

BREEDLOVE:

I would really love to do that in a classified sense. I would tell you that we see a force that is becoming more capable, more fully qualified. We see a force that is being used routinely in ways that we haven't seen in years. I have been pretty straightforward that what we see now in Eastern Europe that force is again a tool used to change internationally recognized borders.

Russia continues to occupy the Ukrainian Peninsula of Crimea. Force was used to go across the international border of Ukraine in the Donbass and some of those forces remain. My concern, sir, in an unclassified setting is that we see a force that is once again being used in ways we thought were over in Europe.

DONNELLY:

It has appeared -- and I don't know if this is the exact way to describe it -- but it is almost as if Putin and Russia has talked about their nuclear arsenal in a fairly casual way. When you look at this, what do you think we should make of it? One of the things that's been discussed is as our conventional strike munitions and conventional strike ability increases they use this as an effort to try to balance against it.

What is your view of how fast and loose they actually are in this area?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I have remarked more than once publicly and in testimony that I think this is irresponsible talk, or irresponsible behavior, the way that nukes are talked about. And they are talked about from the relatively junior military levels right up to the most senior members of the Russian Federation leadership, and none of us in the West believe that this is responsible behavior in the way that nukes are discussed.

What do we do about it? First, we don't engage in that kind of discussion. Second, I think what's really important to me is that we retain a creditable, capable, nuclear force, and that the world sees that force as being creditable and capable.

And to your other question that our increasing capabilities as it relates to precision, conventional attack and other things, this is one of the reasons that we hear these discussions. If a situation is not going well the other side discusses that nukes could be used to escalate, to de-escalate et cetera. But I do not think that we should dampen our ability to use our conventional force in the way that we have used it in the past.

DONNELLY:

Thank you.

My time is up. I just want to ask you do you think that Vladimir Putin believes that Article V would be enforced, that all of the different members would come to the other's defense if he took action in one of the NATO countries?

BREEDLOVE:

I believe he absolutely understands what Article V means in relation to a NATO boundary and I would say Senator that the nations of NATO at the Wales summit were very demonstrative, very quick, about the absolute commitment to the Article V collective defense.

DONNELLY:

Thank you, and thank you so much for your service to the country.

MCCAIN:

Senator Graham.

GRAHAM:

Thank you, General.

You've done a really good job in your position here. It's 2016. Is it fair to say that Russia has successfully dismembered the Ukraine?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I think that -- I'm not sure I would use those terms but the way I would characterize it is Russia is right now holding the levers to bring great pressure and to adjust the way things happen in Kiev. And by fielding a force in the Donbass that will give him those levers into the future.

GRAHAM:

If you don't like dismembered, what word would you use?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I think he is now able to exert great influence on what happens in Ukraine.

GRAHAM:

To the Ukrainian people's detriment and to our detriment?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir I believe that the Ukrainian people voted for a different agenda when they elected Mr. Poroshenko and Mr. Yatsenyuk.

GRAHAM:

So it's 2016. Do you agree with me that Russia has intervened on the side of Assad in a significant capacity?

BREEDLOVE:

I do believe Senator, and I've said it before that I believe that the main effort of the Russian forces in Syria are to support the Assad regime.

GRAHAM:

The Russians have been bombing people we've trained in Syria, is that correct?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, sir.

GRAHAM:

Are the sanctions against Russia working?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator I think that the combination of economic pressure, the drop in the fuel prices and the sanctions that are on Russia -- that combination of those has had effect.

GRAHAM:

Are they working? Are they changing Russian behavior?

BREEDLOVE:

Some months ago, or maybe a month or so ago, I would have answered no. I think today in a classified sense I could come to you and say there are a few things we are beginning to see happen.

GRAHAM:

I'd like to have that briefing because my answer would be no. I don't see them changing in a positive way at all. Maybe we should do this in a classified setting. What are we not doing that we could do that would change Russian behavior? Do you want to talk about that in a classified setting?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir I would love to do that.

GRAHAM:

OK. Let's talk about Turkey. Are you familiar with the Syrian Defense Forces?

BREEDLOVE:

I am sir.

GRAHAM:

What percentage of that force is Kurdish?

BREEDLOVE:

That question I simply do not know and I'll have to get you an answer to that.

GRAHAM:

Is it fair to say that Turkey has a problem with what we're doing inside of Syria with the Kurds?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I do believe that we have disagreements with our great ally over some of the approaches we take with the Kurdish forces in North Syria.

GRAHAM:

Do you see any scenario where the Syrian Defense Forces in their current construct could take Raqqa away from ISIL?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir if I could ask you to ask that of the CENTCOM Commander I think he would be better placed to answer that.

GRAHAM:

OK. From a NATO perspective, in terms of Afghanistan, do you believe that NATO nations will follow whatever we do in terms of troops in 2017?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I do believe that NATO nations are willing to follow our lead and actually, I can't speak for those nations but several have intimated that they would stay if required to get the mission done.

GRAHAM:

Would you recommend against going to 1,000 U.S. personnel in 2017 in Afghanistan, given what you know about Afghanistan?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, what I have said is that I believe that we need to accomplish the mission we're there doing now, and that until we see that mission accomplished we need to stay ...

GRAHAM:

Have we accomplished that mission?

BREEDLOVE:

Not yet sir.

GRAHAM:

The counter-terrorism is the mission that we're trying to accomplish to stop an attack on the homeland, is that correct?

BREEDLOVE:

Counter-terrorism is an important part of that, yes sir.

GRAHAM:

OK. During your time in the military, have you seen more threats to America than before?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir I think we are in one of the toughest situations that we've faced in decades right now.

GRAHAM:

Do you think it's smart for Congress, in light of what you just said, to re-impose sequestration next year?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, allow me to speak to the European Command and my mission. I have said that sequestration would be very tough on our ability to accomplish our mission.

GRAHAM:

Do you think it's a signal we want to send our NATO allies that says we tell them to up their spending, we cut ours?

BREEDLOVE:

I think it's important for us to lead, sir.

GRAHAM:

What kind of a signal would it send to Russia?

BREEDLOVE:

I think they are watching exactly what we do with our modernization programs and our presence programs and our employment overseas and it's important that we sustain the appropriate presence and capability forward.

GRAHAM:

Thank you for your service.

MCCAIN:

Senator Tillis.

TILLIS:

Thank you Mr. Chair. General, thank you for being here. A quick question that's really to follow up on questions Senator Lee and Cotton touched on.

The divided West is a great threat for you in doing your job. One of the things you mentioned is that sanctions seem to be having some effect. Do you believe that they're prepared to renew those sanctions, going into summer and your discussion with our partners?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I learned a long time ago as the supreme allied commander of NATO that I can't speak for the nations, so I would defer on that question. I think that would be much -- I would be on shaky ground as a military man to speak to the political positions of the nation. I'm sorry to dodge your question but that's a realistic answer, I think.

TILLIS:

What's your personal recommendation? Do you think that it's a tool that you hope that all the sanctions go back into place? Rather than speculate on the positions, are you an advocate for continuing the renewal of the sanctions?

BREEDLOVE:

I am, sir.

The way I look at this, it's one of our tools. As I have spoke about today, I think that our opponents use all of the major tools of a nation's power. We use a simple model called, "DIME -- Diplomatic Informational Military and Economic." The economic piece is what you're talking about.

Our opponents use all of those tools to bring great pressure on nations and we should not take any of those tools off of the table.

TILLIS:

Thank you, General.

Do you think that or could you talk about the linkage of Putin's plan in Ukraine with respect to Syria? Is there is some sort of strategic linkage there? Can you describe that if there is?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, yes.

I do not think that Mr. Putin nor the leaders of the small group of the Russian Federation do anything in isolation. I think all of these things are connected., as I've answered other of your colleagues today.

I think that one of the major goals or two of the major goals of Mr. Putin, is to bring disillusion to either NATO or to the European Union, preferably both. If Mr. Putin can find a way to fracture those alliance organization, it makes it much easier for him to accomplish his larger goals in Europe at that point.

So I do think that any of these operations of Mr. Putin from Syria to the Arctic are disassociated. I believe that they are all brought in a broad sense.

TILLIS:

General, in your written testimony, you commented that our current force posture has been based on Russia as a strategic partner. I think you described it as, "hugging the

bear." That's obviously not working, so what concrete steps do we need to take to change our force posture in Europe to be able to deter Russia more effectively?

BREEDLOVE:

Thank you sir.

So if I could very briefly on NATO, I think that what NATO needs to do, I described earlier as bringing the entire force of NATO to an increased readiness and responsiveness. In Wales, we focused on the NRF, the VJTF, and some of the smaller forces and we're deliver that. But now, we need to bring focus across all of the force to bring readiness and responsiveness up.

In a U.S. context, as I described in my opening statement, I think it's a sort of three step approach. It would take me about half a minute to lay that out.

First and foremost, our forward position forces are incredibly important and permanently forward station forces are the optimum. But in understanding the environment that we're in, we then look at two other steps to address forward presence.

One is, we look at and are as a part of ERI is pre-positioning forward materials that we can rapidly fall in to rapidly increase our posture. And then the second piece, is the those heel to toe fully funded rotational forces that use the pre-positioning or come over to -- we have presence and exercises. So that's sort of the step two basket.

The step three basket, is a little tougher to describe but in shorthand, it is that we need to be able rapidly reinforce. That sounds very straightforward, it is not. Remember that Russia has created a very dense patter of A2AD, Anti-Access Area Denial. We need to be investing in those capabilities and capacities that allow us to enter into an A2AD environment and be able to reinforce.

And then some of the investments of European Reassurance Initiatives are on the ground, such as improving rail-beds, railroads, improving our ports and our airfields again. So that once we puncture the A2AD, we can rapidly address our issues.

So it's a three step approach, look at our forward station forces, look at our rotating forces and pre-position materials, and then ensure that we can rapidly reinforce. That's the framework in which I'm trying to drive the conversation with my leadership.

TILLIS:

Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MCCAIN:

Senator Sullivan?

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, General, I want to thank you once again for your service. I want to thank your wife. I know that you've committed decades to serving our country, I think you've done it in an outstanding manner, particular to your current billet.

I want to follow up on Senator King's question and some ways ask similar to what Senator Graham did.

It's 2016, do you think it's safe to say that Russia has successfully militarized the Arctic?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I do believe that we see a pattern there that concerns many of our nations and partners. As you know, we share the Arctic with our other NATO allies, Canada and then six other allies and partners of NATO. Each are concerned with what they see happening in the Arctic -- where we see the creation of intelligence and surveillance capabilities, weaponization such as surface-to-air missiles, coastal defense cruise missiles, et cetera, et cetera.

SULLIVAN:

Four new BCTs, a new Arctic Command, 13 new air- fields?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir.

SULLIVAN. Well, isn't it safe to say that Russia has successfully militarized the Arctic?

BREEDLOVE:

They have certainly increased their capability and capacity there.

SULLIVAN:

Can you describe a little bit, you and I have talked it about it, but really how massive the last year the two different Arctic military exercises were? I mean, these were huge. And maybe you can't talk about it in this setting, but I'll ask the questions anyways, whether or not we were even aware that they were going to happen?

When you move tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of aircrafts, and dozens of ships; normally that's something the United States military has a inkling about. It seems in this case they did it and we were pretty unaware. Can you talk about that a little bit?

BREEDLOVE:

I would like to have my staff work with yours on some more classified answers to fully flesh this out. But what I would say is, I agree with you that we have seen some very demonstrative exercises and in certain ways, they did absolutely surprise us.

BREEDLOVE:

One of the things that's surprised us, is how one of those exercise did morph into a larger exercise in the Western Military District. So that we saw a very large, what I

would call, strategically focused exercise. Not that an exercise in the Arctic alone is not strategic, but we saw it morph into a bigger exercise.

SULLIVAN:

And when Vladimir Putin does those kinds of things as you mentioned before, that's not normally -- there is usually something to that, correct?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I -- as I said before, I think he's taken a very strategic approach to everything he does.

SULLIVAN:

Let me ask another question. You know Secretary Carter, General Dunford, they've all mentioned -- we've talked about the Arctic in front of this committee.

I -- we're late to the game. If you look at the DOD's Arctic strategy, it's pretty much a joke. It is 13 pages, six of which are pictures, mentions climate change five times and mentions Russia solely in a footnote.

So I think we provided proper oversight here and in a bipartisan way, move forward on requiring the secretary of defense to put forward a no kidding, real strategy and an operations plan for the Arctic.

We've got a commitment from Secretary Carter and General Dunford to make sure that is a very robust open plan for the Arctic. Can I get your commitment that we would have the EUCOM's participation in that as well? I think it's going to be important.

BREEDLOVE:

Absolutely senator and as importantly, NATO is beginning to take forward (ph) to this as well.

SULLIVAN:

Great. Let me ask more specific questions.

You know, as Russia's building up, you've been in Alaska recently. You're aware that the our Department of Defense is looking at building down in the Arctic, getting ready the only airborne brigade combat team in the Arctic, the Asia-Pacific, the only mountain-trained Arctic, DCT and the entire U.S. military. That's the 425.

You talked about a permanently forward presence. You talked about rapid reinforcement capability, this is a unit that uniquely can do all of those things and fight in the Arctic.

To his credit General Milley has taken a look at this and he made some comments last week that he thinks it may be given the situation with regard to Russia, with regard to Korea, that the Army should reverse this decision, what I think is a strategically shortsighted decision.

Admiral Harris and General Scaparrotti last week were supportive of that decision by General Milley to keep the 425. Do you think -- do you support that decision by General Milley and what you think that that does to show Vladimir Putin resolve. That, hey, wait a minute. Things have changed.

They are rapidly building up the Arctic. We have the CRI initiative. But we also need forces out east and the easiest way to keep American resolve is to just keep our best Arctic warriors in place. Do you support what General Milley is doing? How do you think Vladimir Putin would view keeping that 425?

Which, by the way, as you know, the Russians watch them train all the time. They do an airborne jump, the Russians do an airborne jump. They are very, very aware of this unit and its capability. Can you comment on those questions?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator I think it's important that we keep this capability and that we maintain its currency and continually address its capability to do its mission.

I think Mr. Putin understands physics and the physics are that those forces in the north, across the pole, are as close if not closer than many other forces we have in our inventory.

And so the speed and response of that set of forces and capabilities are very important and I think Mr. Putin understands it.

SULLIVAN:

So do you support with General Milley?

BREEDLOVE:

We need to keep these capabilities, sir.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Senator Wicker.

WICKER:

Thank you very much and thank you general. I've been in and out. But let me ask you about -- let me get back to Ukraine and then maybe touch on the refugee crisis too.

We've got these frozen conflicts throughout the region. Moldova, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh -- in your judgment, is Ukraine now to be added to that list of frozen conflicts or is it -- is the situation a little too kinetic there for us to know?

BREEDLOVE:

Senator thank you and please don't take this as any sort of disagreement, but I really don't like the term frozen conflicts. Almost none of the...

WICKER:

But it is a term that's widely used...

BREEDLOVE:

Yes sir, absolutely. No, that's where I was going. It is a term that is widely used but I would like to point out that most of these are still hot and people are dying in some of these places. There are four or five of them.

Georgia, as I mentioned earlier, the Russians recently moved the line in South Ossetia, another 1600 meters to the south and it took over a major energy transmission point. And they're going to carve out...

WICKER:

What were the casualties there?

BREEDLOVE:

That was done bloodless. They simply moved the line. The -- in Nagorno-Karabakh we routinely have days where soldiers are injured or and occasionally killed there.

Transnistria, we haven't seen any actual injuries, but we have seen the reinforcement refitting and strengthening of that garrison in Transnistria.

South Ossetia, Kossi (ph) is still (inaudible). And now I believe that Ukraine is in a position where the Russians would like to maintain the capability to continue to put military pressure on Kiev via that conflict. But it is anything but frozen.

As I've said yesterday, about 71 engagements in the last 24 hours in that area and over 450 engagements in that area over the last week.

WICKER:

What term would you prefer that we use?

BREEDLOVE:

We're wrestling with that sir.

WICKER:

OK.

BREEDLOVE:

And I think first in conflicts is good because people recognize it. I'd just like to point out that they're really anything but frozen. They're -- some of them I would call pretty hot.

WICKER:

In your professional military judgment, is the current situation, as it stands in Ukraine, helpful or harmful to Mr. Putin's long-term interests?

BREEDLOVE:

Let me answer the easy question first. The situation in Ukraine is absolutely unhelpful to the people of Ukraine...

WICKER:

Well sir, there's no question about it.

BREEDLOVE:

... as long as their mission is in Kiev. There's no question about that. I think that Mr. Putin very much wants to have a hand in the direction of Ukraine, a hand in being able to regulate their desire to join the West, a desire to keep pressure on the economic and political decisions of Kiev.

And so I think that his interests are to maintain enough pressure and influence in the Donbass to be able to shape that. So I think it is in his interest to be able to pressure Kiev through the tool (ph) of the Donbass.

I'm not sure that I'm ready to answer whether it's in his long-term interests as it relates to his own national concerns. Is that the question you're asking, senator?

WICKER:

Yes.

BREEDLOVE:

Can I get back to you on that?

WICKER:

That would be great. As far as you have observed, is the government, the Ukrainian government, in Kiev working together?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I have seen some very good things and some challenges. I think that there is a great commitment -- I have sat down personally several times with Mr. Poroshenko and with Mr. Yatsenyuk and I do think both of those individuals have the best interest of their nation in the future. I think that there are some pretty tough structural problems that they've had to address and frankly I think their people expect a lot from them.

As I mentioned earlier in this testimony I think that some of the change they need to make is pretty hard to take when they're on a front and militarily engaged, and so they face some pretty tough challenges ahead.

(UNKNOWN)

Thank you very much. Let me -- Mr. Chairman if I might just ask the General briefly -- with regard to the refugee situation. We had a question, I think from Senator Manchin, when I was at the hearing earlier, about the possibility of infiltration and certainly that's a concern.

Would you comment as to the destabilizing effect in the territory of our European allies, of this influx of immigrants and migrants passing through and the prospect for that either increasing or being mitigated somehow?

BREEDLOVE:

The destabilizing effects are multi-faceted. The easiest ones to speak to, as I have described before and I have in my written testimony, that I believe there is criminality, terrorists and foreign fighters in those flows, and those all have their own form of destabilizing effect.

Criminality and just moving of humans and moving of drugs and other things -- those kind of people using the flows to do that. Terrorists who have ill intent in the West. And then just returning foreign fighters who have skills and may not actually be returning with any ill intent but when they get home and they have no economic opportunity and others, what do they eventually do with those skills?

So there is a lot of destabilizing effect of this criminality, terrorism and returning foreign fighters. The other piece, that is I think more widely understood, is just the destabilizing effect economically and straining the social fabric of these nations as these large (OFF-MIKE) flows of people challenge already challenged governments and social systems as they arrive. So I think there's a multi-faceted challenge to the nations of Europe.

(UNKNOWN)

Thank you very much and I appreciate the Chair's indulgence.

MCCAIN:

Senator Sessions.

SESSIONS:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. With regard to the European Union, someone wrote recently that oddly you would think the European Commission in Brussels would be the one that would lead a unified effort to deal with the migrant crisis. But in fact, in essence, rightly or wrongly, legally or otherwise, they're the ones that are blocking the nation-states from taking action that those states would normally take or attempting to block them.

Is that correct?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, being a military officer and not a leader of one of these nations I'm not sure I'm really qualified to say that. But what I would say is that...

SESSIONS:

The rules -- the European rules in the European Union is not making immediate decisions that would facilitate a more effective control. Isn't that correct?

BREEDLOVE:

I believe sir that they could do -- there could be efforts made that could bring more unified pressure.

SESSIONS:

One of the things that I think we all need to understand here is that just because we have a group of nations together that pretend to be an effective leadership, sometimes they undermine the ability of action to actually occur that could be beneficial. Is it still true that a high percentage of these migrants are young males?

BREEDLOVE:

I believe that to be true, Senator.

SESSIONS:

Let me take another subject. Thank you for your great service, you and your wife, and the commitment you've made to the country. You spent almost three years in Europe, you had time at Aviano and Ramstein and other places, so you know the region well. Do the Europeans and NATO -- are they willing to improve and increase their share of funding for the defense of Europe?

You've raised that a number of times. Would you briefly tell us your latest communication as to the region about what they need to do and what achievements have occurred in the last several years, not promises for the future?

BREEDLOVE:

The numbers I've used today once today Senator are not going to be perfect, but the numbers that we see now in Europe follow the following line. About 16 of our nations have stopped the decline of their budgets. Not perfect, but a first step.

SESSIONS:

Worse than not perfect. I mean they've been declining and they're below their commitment of two percent, most of them are they not?

BREEDLOVE:

Five, only five now, sir, are at two percent or better. I would offer to you that I believe there's about seven now that have a realistic plan to attain two percent in a realistic amount of time. SO again, not perfect numbers, but this is an improvement since Wales. I don't want to overstate, but it is an improvement since Wales.

SESSIONS:

Of course we have a real interest in Europe and that they be able to be free and independent and not be vulnerable to encroachment from the Russians, however -- I

have to ask -- the President's request for \$3.4 billion in European Reassurance Initiative -- how much of that has been matched by the Europeans? Do they have any formal commitment to increase their spending for some of the projects?

BREEDLOVE:

Sir, I cannot speak to individual commitments at this time. What I have seen, not from the \$3.4 billion because it hasn't been delivered yet, but thank you for the first two years of ERI. As you know it was about just under a billion the first year and about \$800 million the second year.

The improvements that we have used that to make in the forward nations to railheads, ports and...

SESSIONS:

Let me just -- sir, my time in the road (ph) here, but -- this is very troubling. So a European delegation from Parliament group was here and I asked them to increase their spending and the head of the delegation responded quite frankly. He said, "Senator we agree it's unacceptable that the United States pay 75 percent of the cost of NATO."

So now we have this problem that we need to have some more resources there, and we add \$3.4 billion and these countries aren't even putting in their fair share. I'm wondering do they have a will to survive themselves, and/or are they just gotten in the habit of expecting us to step up to the plate to fund their defense?

It's an unacceptable thing, as a Parliamentarian said. Would you have any final comments on that?

BREEDLOVE:

Well, sir we observed the same thing over the last 20 years when the nations of Europe were trying to treat Russia as a partner they all took a vector which was decreasing budgets. Again I don't want to overstate but what we've seen since Wales is at least a turning in the bow of the ship. It's not perfect yet.

SESSIONS:

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Senator Sullivan has one additional question.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. General, I appreciate your focus on all instruments of American power as part of our strategy. Last week there was a very good article, front page article, in the Wall Street Journal on the importance of the beginning of LNG shipments from the United States, because we are now once again the world's energy superpower in terms of oil and gas production. LNG shipments from the United States

to Europe, to some of the countries we've been talking about. To some of the countries that are at risk of Russian energy blackmail as part of their policies.

How important is that part of our national power as an instrument for the longer term strategy that's toward Russian aggression, and to provide a morale boost to some of these countries over there that feel like they're under the boot of the Russian energy policies? That certainly came out in this article, I don't know if you had the opportunity to read it.

BREEDLOVE:

Senator, I'm not sure I've read that exact article but the concept is absolutely applicable as we have discussed a little bit here today as well. Just like you stated, Russia uses every element and that economic element is both in the terms of pressure on returning payments and calling in loans et cetera, but a huge part of that economic tool that is used, as you correctly state, fuels in all manners are used as a tool.

Restrictions and pricing of those fuels. So anything that we can do to broaden the capability of the nations to be able to deal with that pressure I think is a good possibility, a good process.

SULLIVAN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAIN:

Would it -- General would it be of great concern to us if Russian developed a capability to sever our trans-Atlantic cables?

BREEDLOVE:

Yes, Senator, it -- excuse me, Chairman, it would.

MCCAIN:

Thank you. General we really appreciate your appearances before this Committee but most of all your outstanding leadership and we look forward to seeing you again in the future, but to me you are the very best of what we expect of our military leadership and I thank you. Jack?

REED:

I certainly want to second the Chairman's comments. Very sincerely and very appreciatively.

BREEDLOVE:

Thank you sir.