



# TRANSCRIPT

## **Gen. Wolters remarks at the Atlantic Council Competition and Deterrence in Europe event**

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Presenters: Michael Andersson, Director, Atlantic Council Board of Directors; General Jim Jones, Executive Chairman Emeritus, The Atlantic Council, and Former National Security Advisor; General Tod D. Wolters, Commander, U.S. European Command, and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, NATO; Clementine Starling, Deputy Director of Forward Defense, and Resident Fellow, Scowcroft Center Transatlantic Security Initiative

Atlantic Council Commanders Series: Competition and Deterrence in Europe: A Conversation with EUCOM Commander and SACEUR General Tod D. Wolter

MICHAEL ANDERSSON: Good afternoon, and welcome everyone. On behalf of Saab and the Atlantic Council Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, as well as its Forward Defense practice and Transatlantic Security Initiative, I would like to welcome you to this exciting event in our Commanders Series on the topic, "Competition and Deterrence in Europe." General Wolters, thank you so much for joining us today. My name is Michael Andersson, and I'm an executive at Saab, as well as a board director here at the Atlantic Council. When Saab and the Atlantic Council first launched the Commanders Series in 2009, our vision was to establish a flagship speaker's

forum for senior military and defense leaders to discuss the most important security challenges both now and in the future.

This series has been very useful for defense companies like Saab, helping us to better understand challenges and priorities in order for, in order to inform our investments and partnerships, particularly when it comes to research and development, while better preparing ourselves to meet future capability needs. Today's event is the second installment of the Commanders Series in 2021. Just under a month ago, we hosted two guests, the acting secretary of the Army and the chief of staff of the Army. This afternoon, we're delighted to host a guest who holds two very important positions, as both commander of the U.S. European Command and NATO's supreme allied commander Europe, General Tod Wolters.

Wearing these two hats, General Wolters is well-positioned to discuss the future challenges and opportunities for both the United States and its transatlantic partners in the European theater, and he is at a great venue to do so, as the Atlantic Council is the premier think tank on transatlantic affairs. General Wolters, thank you again for spending time with us today. I am looking forward to hearing your insights over the course of the next hour. With that, it is my pleasure to introduce General Jim Jones, who will make a couple of announcements and further introduce our esteemed guests.

General Jones currently serves as executive chairman emeritus of the Atlantic Council and is the founder of the Jones Group International, a leading organization on national security informed policy. Under President Obama, General Jones served as national security advisor to the president and most pertinent to today's conversation, General Jones fully held the same

responsibilities as General Wolters does today, serving as commander of U.S. EUCOM and SACEUR from 2003 to 2006. General Jones, I'm honored that you could join us today. Over to you.

GENERAL JIM JONES: Thank you very much Mike and -- for that introduction and for Saab's generous and long-standing support for the Scowcroft Center and its' forward defense practices Commander Series. It's been a privilege to hear from the many senior defense and military leaders you mentioned over the years. On behalf of the Atlantic Council, I want to echo a warm welcome to our distinguished speaker and the large online audience we have with us here today. We're joined by an individual that I'm fortunate enough to consider to be a dear friend, the commander of the U.S. European Command and NATO's supreme allied commander, Europe, General Tod Wolters.

Tod, thanks very much for joining us today and we certainly look forward to hearing you -- from you -- on your insights. Here at the Atlantic Council, our Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security works and develops sustainable, non-partisan strategies to address the most important security strategies facing the United States and its allies and partners. The center seeks to honor the late General Brent Scowcroft's legacy of service and it embodies his ethos of non-partisan commitment to the cause of security, support for United States leadership and cooperation with allies and partners and dedication to the mentorship of the next generation of leaders. Consistent with that mission, our core conviction in the Scowcroft Center remains as the -- it is only in cooperation with our allies and partners, especially members of the NATO alliance, that we can take advantage of the trends, the technologies and the concepts defining the future of warfare.

As a former supreme allied commander of Europe, I've had to deal with many perplexing threats to the transatlantic community but in my opinion, the challenges of the past somewhat pale in comparison to those of the present and the future. Technological revolution, from artificial intelligence, the hyper sonics to new space-based capabilities, among others, all simultaneously offer incredible potential but also risk fundamentally upsetting an already tenuous European security environment. I would of course be remiss if did not mention the exceptional 30-year, U.S. space strategy recently published by the Scowcroft Center and its forward defense practice and authored by our moderator Clementine Starling and others. The calls for a secure space and leverage in transatlantic alliance in so doing.

And perhaps the most pressing challenge of our time is our strategic competition with countries like Russia and China which is playing out every day in Europe and the information, economic and cyber arenas. So General Wolters, we all look forward to hearing your concrete plans for all these issues over the next hour. Our allies and partners in NATO will be essential to navigating these challenges and the many others we face, and so in advance of next week's NATO Summit where allies will discuss many of these issues as part of our transatlantic security initiative effort to set the stage for the summit, it's my pleasure to welcome General Tod D. Wolters.

As commander of U.S. EUCOM and NATO supreme allied commander Europe, General Wolters wears two very important hats as Mike previously mentioned. As commander of EUCOM, he's responsible for implementing U.S. defense policy in a vast area of focus that spans across Europe to portions of Asia and the Middle East and to the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans.

As supreme allied commander Europe, General Wolters has the distinct pleasure of leading the military operations of the NATO alliance, a challenging but incredibly important and remarkably rewarding job. A career fighter pilot, General Wolters has fought in operations Desert Storm, Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. General Wolters, we deeply understand the critical role you play, and I thank you for your service. To moderate the conversation, I'm also pleased to introduce Ms. Clementine Starling, who also wears two hats with the Scowcroft Center. Clementine serves as deputy director for foreign defense and is a resident fellow with the Transatlantic Security Initiative, working at the nexus of defense policy in European security.

Before I turn it over to General Wolters for his keynote remarks, I'd like to remind everyone that this event is public and on the record. We encourage our audience to direct any questions to the general by using the Zoom Q&A tab which you can find at the bottom of your screen. Be sure to identify yourself and your affiliation and your questions. We'll be collecting them throughout the event and Clementine will pose some to our guests at the end. We also encourage you to join on Twitter by following the @ACSTHESCOWCROFT and using the hash tags #ForwardDefense and #StrongerWithAllies. So, thank you all for joining the Atlantic Council Board, I know will be a captivating conversation and General Wolters without further ado, over to you and Clementine.

GENERAL TOD WOLTERS: Jim, thanks so much for that kind introduction and it's good to be here with Ms. Starling. Our thanks to the Scowcroft Center Atlantic Council and Saab for putting this together. On behalf of the dedicated men and women sustaining peace across the Euro-

Atlantic region. It's an honor to discuss how USEUCOM and NATO continue to evolve our approaches to competition, crisis and conflict. We're grateful for the technology and those who enable these important events in the midst of a pandemic. We offer condolences to all those impacted by COVID-19. In USEUCOM, we continue working diligently alongside allies and partners to ensure this health crisis doesn't become a security crisis.

Thus far, the team's been successful in vaccine distribution and efficacy continue to bring relief. As you all well know we live in an increasingly complex and contested world, political uncertainty, energy competition and diffusion of disruptive technology are stressing the establish rules-based international order. Threats and challenges seek to take advantage of these conditions through aggressive action using all instruments of national power and unfortunately, they're backed by increasingly capable military forces. Adversaries amplify these malign activities and foster instability with disinformation and challenge our freedom of movement.

For the last eight decades, the U.S. has joined our regional allies and partners to preserve freedom and security on the European continent. Today, Europe and the Euro-Atlantic serve as an exporter of global peace and security. Home to more than 1 billion people, this area represents the cradle of democratic values and is the United States number one trading partner. Our transatlantic bond is and must remain the cornerstone of global security in the 21st century. NATO is our strategic center of gravity and the foundation of deterrence and assurance in Europe. In 2019, the NATO military committee endorsed the NATO military strategy for comprehensive defense and shared response, which frames how the alliance addresses challenges

across all domains with a whole of government, whole of nation, whole of alliance approach.

As a result, in 2020, all 30 NATO defense ministers approved NATO's concept with the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area, which we call DDA. This concept develops alliance planning to achieve strategic and operational intent of the NATO military strategy. DDA unites national, regional and theater wide military efforts to a common purpose. It provides nations with a framework to align respective national military deterrence activities in peacetime and if directed, defend in crisis and conflict. DDA aids the alliance in day to day peacetime activities via the supreme allied commander, Europe's strategic director for AOR management. It also assists in the development of plans to address multiple contingencies in crisis and conflict, which we call SACEUR AOR-wide Strategic Plan or SASP -sasp.

This architecture provides maximum military coherence at the tactical, operational and strategic levels, across all domains in both everyday peacetime competition and if required, through periods of potential crisis and conflict. USEUCOM's theater strategy is closely aligned with NATO and together we compete, deter and prepare to respond to aggression with the full weight of the NATO alliance. We implement this strategy through operations, activities and investments. Right now, sophisticated U.S. Navy ships are sailing with the U.S. Marine Corps F-35 squadron embarked on the UK's newest aircraft carrier, the HMS Queen Elizabeth. Together they're operating alongside maritime support from Norway, Germany, Denmark, Italy and other nations as the Queen Elizabeth completes her maiden deployment.

This truly integrated operation demonstrates deterrence with a capital D. We're also executing our defender series exercises composed of USEUCOM's DEFENDER Europe 21 and NATO's Steadfast Defender 21. 30,000 service members, U.S., allies and partners from all warfare domains demonstrating their ability to lift and shift massive forces over large swaths of territory at speed and at scale, from the Atlantic to the eastern periphery of the European continent. While on station, they're sharpening their responsiveness, resiliency and lethality. The DEFENDER series clearly demonstrates that the alliance is well-trained, committed and ready to preserve peace in Europe. Success in 21st century warfare demands that we evolve to compete in new domains, expanding worldwide cyber capabilities requires us to enhance global cyber defenses and impose cost against malicious disinformation and behavior and we remain laser focused in space.

To support these efforts, NATO's Space Operation Center is located at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Mons, Belgium, and its space center is fully integrated into allied air command at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Maintaining stability with responsible space and cyber activities are vital to USEUCOM and NATO. Resilient, adaptable and combat credible forces are fundamental to the alliance's security. Our strong bilateral, multi-lateral ties with European allies and partners, enable advancement of our shared interest. Our military to military relationships across the Euro-Atlantic area remains strong, signaling the resilience of our collective defense. Europe and the U.S. remain the foundation of a democratic, rules-based, international order, maintaining a capable U.S. presence in Europe strengthens our national security by encouraging peace, unity and cohesion between Europe's individual nations.



U.S. service members in Europe continue to generate global peace alongside our allies and partners, effectively competing, deterring attacks from potential aggressors and preparing our allies and partners to respond decisively. We thank the Atlantic Council for 60 years of navigating the economic and political changes in support of a more free, secure and prosperous world. USEUCOM Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and guardians embrace this era of strategic competition and together with our allies and partners, are committed to defending the homeland forward and preserving peace for the 1 billion people living in the Euro-Atlantic region. We are, as all would agree, stronger together. Thank you.

CLEMENTINE STARLING: Thank you so much General Wolters, it's so nice to welcome you here in person at the Atlantic Council and we've adapted because of COVID so we don't have an audience in person today but I'm delighted to welcome our audience at home, and then I'd really encourage everybody to submit their questions by Zoom and we will try to get to as many as possible. But you mentioned in your -- in your opening remarks, COVID, and I want to start there. I mean, in what ways has the pandemic shaped EUCOM and NATO operations and in what ways have you adapted to this new environment?

GEN. WOLTERS: Well, Ms. Starling, that's a great question and one of the subtleties of COVID is the fact that it's served as a forcing function for strategic transparency and alignment, and as we're all familiar with, COVID has presented itself in unique phases. And I typically categorize COVID in the initial phase of PPE supply, that the second phase being that of comprehensive testing and this final phase we hope of, of the implementation

of appropriate vaccination, and nations in the European continent and continents across oceans have been more than willing to share tactics, techniques and procedures, in equipping, in testing and certainly in the implementation of the vaccinations. In all that conversation that occurs at the strategic level to improve the, the placing of PPE and the implementation of testing and what we've had to do for vaccinations has actually forced the nations to be closer.

And from a military perspective, we've discovered unique ways that U.S. DOD and the militaries that represent the 30 nations of the alliance, have been able to support other nations. So, at the end of the day, vigilance remains high, we still have a long ways to go but at the core, this pandemic has not morphed into a security crisis because nations have been willing to work very, very hard at strategic transparency and alignment. The second part of your question Ms. Starling has to do with in the military dimension, what did we actually do with our fielded forces to make sure that we had the appropriate reserve to execute, and we took a look at the population that existed for our military members in the headquarters and in the field.

And we made sure that we took a look at the applicable, operations activities and investments and prioritized which ones as the most important, from most important to lesser important and ensured that it applied to the conditions that existed in the space at the time. And, and we applied the appropriate reductions without ever having to be in a position to where, if there was a needed deterrence event that must occur, we were always able to be enough ahead of the target to be able to continue to effectively deter on continent. I'm very, very proud of our subordinate commanders for their

management of their headquarters, their management of their forces, to ensure that we could continue to effectively deter.

MS. STARLING: So, you speak of deterrence and in your remarks you -- you mentioned the strategic competition that both the U.S. and the NATO allies face with China and Russia, and Secretary Austin recently called for a new approach of integrated deterrence. Really acknowledging that we're facing competition in multiple domains from conventional to hybrid, and so how are allies ensuring that instability doesn't gain a foothold in the Euro-Atlantic region, and especially in areas susceptible to malign influence and emerging hybrid threats?

GEN. WOLTERS: Well, Ms. Starling, we -- we apply what the NATO military strategy's titled. It's comprehensive defense and shared response and -- and an explanation of that title, kind of, helps us steer to what we do to be effective and -- and it is, what -- what must we accomplish in air, land, sea, space and cyber, what must we do whole of government, whole of nation, whole of alliance, what must we do at the tactical level, the operational level and the strategic level. What must we do from a NATO perspective inside of our air of responsibility and outside of our area of responsibility and all that should be connected all the way across the Atlantic Ocean with activities in the United States and Canada, and certainly all the way across the Pacific Ocean with activities that take place in the Indo-Pacific and China.

And Secretary Austin's integrated defense, coincides with everything that I just talked about and he is very, very keen to point out to his U.S. geographic combatant commanders to make sure that we understand, we must operate in all domains and we must operate at the tactical operational

and strategic level. And we must be prepared to take care of deterrence inside of our area of responsibility and also take into account potential second and third order effects that we enact upon inside of our area of responsibility that could play havoc on another region outside of our area of responsibility. And as U.S. geographic combatant commanders are joined at the hip to make sure that every one of the operations and activities and investments that I commit to, that potentially has an impact, for example, on USCENTCOM in the Middle East. I bear the responsibility to ensure that I pre-coordinate with the CENTCOM commander so that when the action takes place, we haven't unnecessarily crippled future deterrence either in Europe or the Middle East. And I -- I -- I think we're continuing to improve in this area, we're making very good gains. For most of our military careers, all of us have considered ourselves (sic) all -- all-domain warriors but we continue to prove to ourselves that we still have a long ways to go. It's -- it's always, always about air, land, sea, space and cyber as well as the information domain and always -- always coordinating outside of your responsibility to make sure that from a global perspective, we are executing integrated deterrence.

MS. STARLING: That's great to hear. Well, where does the line blur between deterrence and competition and -- and how is EUCOM's -- is -- what -- what approach is EUCOM taking to compete on a more routine basis without inadvertently tipping the scales over to conflict?

GEN. WOLTERS: Yes. That, Ms. Starling, that -- that line that exists between deterrence and competition, well you could probably ask 1,000 people and get a 1,000 different responses, but you are so correct. It is very, very blurred, but the first thing that I want to mention is that what we do in deterrence impacts how well we compete. And we are very, very satisfied in

generating peace in the European continent and if we can keep what we are doing at the military level, in the areas of competition and deterrence, we're -- we're very happy with that. And as -- and as this audience well knows, what -- what happens, our potential foes against us have a tendency in this area of competition and deterrence over the gray zone or activities just to the left of kinetic conflict, all pretty closely related. That they have a tendency to not tell the truth and -- and they can get away with -- with doing so but -- but we at NATO, we in the United States support our democratic values and -- and we must tell the truth. So, we -- we've learned that in this competition phase, in order to stay to the left of crisis, that we have to apply the same rigor and architecture that we've previously applied in the areas of crisis and conflict. In -- in military jargon, we -- we typically refer to the competition phase as Phase I and we typically refer the crisis phase as Phase II and we typically refer to the conflict phase as Phase III, and the seams that exist between those phases and those phrases is -- is all very, very blurred. And what we've discovered is that, we need to be as precise with -- with keen architecture, gauging our return on investment in the competition phase as we have in previous years in the crisis and conflict phase. So that every single operation, activity and investment that you've embraced has a deterrence/competition return on investment, so that we can continue to communicate to our senior civilian leadership why we're doing what -- why we're doing what we're doing and why it's important to continue to do what we're doing to keep the peace and generate more peace.

So that we can continue to put the appropriate resources in the appropriate place to generate more peace across Europe, and my -- my sense is we're -- we're making great improvements with this. In -- in NATO and in SHAPE, which I command, we've -- we've constructed as I mentioned

in my opening comments a NATO military strategy. We then constructed a concept for the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area. We are now in the process of constructing a SACEUR AOR-wide Strategic Plan. That -- that unites what NATO headquarters does, what- -- what SHAPE does, my forces and what the nations do. And once all those plans are solidified below the strategic plan, to the regional plans, to the domain plans, we'll be in a much better position to take a look at where we are and where we're going in the future, and go back to the nations and have a -- a more coherent conversation about future military requirements that adequately allow us to win in competition and do what needs to be done to continue to secure the peace in Europe. And I'm -- I'm super excited about the gains that we're making, I'm super excited about the cooperation from NATO headquarters and the cooperation from the nations and -- and nations are beginning to really understand the importance of discipline and rigor and precision in this gray zone area or this competition -- competition area or this deterrence area. But all the activities to the left of crisis we're getting much better at, to make sure that we can continue to generate peace.

MS. STARLING: You -- you just shadowed a little bit about the DDA -- which was really great to hear more about and next week obviously is the NATO Summit and the NATO secretary general, who we actually hosted here on Monday at the Atlantic Council and he will bring his NATO 2030 concepts to -- to the summit. Can you speak to how the DDA fits into the NATO 2030 concept and how those in concert with each other are helping NATO deter and defend in this era of strategic competition?

GEN. WOLTERS: I -- I -- I would say that the -- the DDA fits hand and glove with the NATO 2030 initiatives. Secretary General Stoltenberg is keen

to point out that -- that NATO needs to be politically stronger and military stronger in the future, and everything that we are doing for the concept for the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area is trying to improve our strategic transparency alignment and our military activities. But to -- to better work alongside political activities and informational activities and economic activities, in the European continent to generate more peace and -- and DDA is very, very aware that senior civilian leadership is responsible for the military activity that takes place on behalf of NATO. And -- and having our politically aligned perfectly with our military's a goal that all of us, through the duration of all our careers have -- have always sought after. It's -- it's difficult but -- but the secretary's initiative for NATO 2030 and DDA are perfectly aligned. And our sense is as we continue to -- to march forward, as the days and the weeks and the months go by, we find ourselves with far better strategic alignment and transparency as a result of the NATO 2030 initiative, and the fact that DDA is aligned with it.

MS. STARLING: So, you've mentioned China quite a bit and understandably and -- and NATO is set to develop a new strategic concept following -- following the summit. And so, I -- I wanted to ask you, I think China is meant to feature as part of this new strategic concept. It's been a while since NATO has updated it and do you see the U.S. and its allies are aligned on China and is there alignment and what role does NATO have to play in competition with China in the future and what would you like to see come out of this strategic concept on this issue in particular?

GEN. WOLTERS: Great question and I know the secretary general made some keen remarks on this several days ago. The -- the first thing I would relay is that the concept for the deterrence and defense of the Euro-

Atlantic area talks about what we do as a NATO military, in all domains from a whole of government, whole of nation, whole alliance perspective inside of our area of responsibility and outside of our area of responsibility. And many times, when we get outside of our area of responsibility, we -- we happen to go one place very, very fast and that's China. As -- as a result of the activities that we continue to see in the European continent, as a result of economic investments in seaports, aerial pods and 5G activity, and our goal is to make sure that the -- the NATO equipment and the NATO force elements of the future are safe and secure and interoperable. And as many know with the infusion of 5G on behalf of China, that is not the case and -- and I think our campaign inside of NATO to discuss with nations some of the challenges that they may face with respect to steering towards China with support for 5G, with regards to the campaign momentum in getting nations to understand the right place to go versus the wrong place to go. We're -- we're seeing some trending as far as contracts are concerned that show us that from a 5G perspective, many of the European nations are -- are looking away from China and more towards other vendors that -- that are often more secure systems, that are more NATO interoperable, but that's -- that's just -- that's just one area. The second piece goes back to my discussion about integrated deterrence and your question in respect to Secretary Austin. We -- we have to make sure that any activity that -- that we see with respect to the European continent and China is -- is understood by our USINDOPACOM partners, and any actions that we take we -- we have to take a look at the potential second and third order effects that could impact the U.S. relationship with the INDOPACOM U.S. command, in their AOR on the other side of the globe. So, I -- I will tell this group that I'm -- I'm very, very comfortable with NATO's new-found vigilance with respect to China. I've always been very comfortable with the -- the U.S.' take with respect to China activity in the European continent



and -- and we will obviously continue to exercise pre-vigilance in those areas. We -- we seek to enforce good order and discipline in international seas and international airspace. And as long as the investments that we see don't put us on a collision course with violating our ability to access international waters and international airspace, we're tracking in the current direction. And with this renewed NATO interest with respect to activities that take place in China, I -- I believe we're on the right track.

MS. STARLING: I -- I want to brief a little bit to capability developments and -- and investments by allies. Russia recently announced plans to pull 20 million units and in the nation's west and -- and Secretary General Stoltenberg has noted that Russian capability is really requiring NATO allies to modernize and ensure that -- that we have military readiness. So as a NATO SACEUR, I wanted to get your views on this. What modernization and readiness priorities must NATO devote most attention and resources to and how are allies need to current capability requirements and -- and are they sufficient to ensure that we have a combat credible force?

GEN. WOLTERS: That's -- that's probably my favorite question and -- and I -- I will tell you that, it -- it is my job to take the resources that we possess in NATO and -- and the nations that support us, allies and partners, and organize them in a matter to be most effective in 21st century deterrence and defense. So the -- the documents, the NATO military strategy, a concept for the deterrence and defense of the Euro-Atlantic area is SACEUR AOR-wide Strategic Plan and the plans that exist beneath it will allow us to develop a -- a set of requirements at the national level and the NATO level, that -- that better serve the interest of generating peace in competition crisis and conflict from this point forward. And having an opportunity to be able to go to nations

and have deep, precise discussions about future capabilities and what conditions that we need to set in the environment to more effectively deter and defend is exactly the path that we're on, and -- and one that is so beneficial in this particular area. Potential adversaries against us will -- will always test new equipment and they'll advertise that they bought 50 more of this and 1,000 more of that and -- and I'm not overly interested in talking about potential enemies of us, what I'm very interested in is talking about our readiness. And I would be a lousy commander if I ever sat here and told you that our posture is perfect and our speed is perfect, it's not. And it starts with speed and posture. We have to have the right force elements and they have to be prepared to take the first punch, and they have to be aligned appropriately with activities that best serve crisis, competition and conflict.

And the three large salvos that we focus on from a NATO military perspective are, what do we have in indications and warnings, what do we have in command and control and how is our mission command. And for indications and warnings, we have to make sure that we can continue to see the environment, to be in a position to take the first credible action, and that involves hardware, software, positioning of forces, deciding where it is you want to look and when and realizing that you'll never have enough hardware and software to have the, kind of, indications and warnings umbrella it gives you, perfect returns on the environment. But you have to improve every single day in indications and warnings if you want to effectively deter.

The second piece of this is command and control. How quickly can you see something and communicate it to a force and how quickly can that force take action and communicate it back to the headquarters, so that we can understand what the next step is. So, the seams that exist between

indications and warnings and command and control are critical for deterrence. They're critical for crisis. They're critical for conflict. And the last piece of this is the mission command piece, which is how well equipped is the youngest private to take those orders that he or she is just achieved from higher headquarters and execute. And that involves a ready force, and when we talk about ready in -- in the NATO military organizations, we talk about resiliency, responsiveness and lethality. And that's why we're keen to conduct our exercises, that evaluate our capabilities to be more resilient tomorrow than we were today, more responsive and more lethal.

And -- and that involves nations training hard with us and being willing to train hard and having trust and confidence in the force elements and in the hardware and software that they're fielding, and the fact that those -- those forces and those hardware and software are actually generating peace on continent, and that is happening. Are we as fast as I want us to be? No. Are we perfectly postured? No. But with each passing day, we're a little bit faster and our posture is improving and with each passing day, week and month, our IMWs are improving, our command and controls is improving and our mission command from a readiness perspective is getting better, because nations are willing to increase their spending and -- and this gets into the 2 percent world, and I know we had discussions with Secretary General Stoltenberg for the -- for the last seven years. But the non-U.S. NATO nations have -- have increased spending over the course of that seven-year period, and we want to continue that campaign momentum with respect to spending on defense. Because it ultimately allows us to be in a position to improve our speed and our posture, our IMW, our C2 and our mission command.

MS. STARLING: Terrific, it's compelling to talk about this. I want to talk a little bit about technological competition with China because that's a big driver and a strategic priority for the U.S., and when the emergence of disruptive technology and you mentioned this in your opening remarks, you know, with AI, directive energy, space capabilities. How do NATO allies need to modernize their forces and to be -- to really take advantage of these emerging capabilities but also to be able to deter those that -- that competitors and -- may have? and are we in a position to close that technological gap with China or is that gap widening? And as allies modernize individually, how do we ensure that we maintain interoperability among NATO allies?

GEN. WOLTERS: That's a great question and it -- it forces me when you say a lot about China to -- to, kind of, go back to my -- my -- my protective cubby hole and -- and go back to how important readiness is, and -- and how important democratic values are. There -- there is a tendency to -- to run to the shiniest object and there's a tendency to say things that may not be true. We don't do that in NATO. We don't do that in the U.S., we -- we stick to our democratic values, and we focus very, very hard on the readiness of our forces and our allies and partners forces. And at the foundation of achieving success in this area, when you talk about what do you have to do vis-a-vis China, it is important to remember you -- you have to continue to focus on your readiness in all domains, air, land, sea, space and cyber. As you probably noted, I -- I mentioned some initiatives that are ongoing in space and in cyber with respect to NATO, and -- and those initiatives are for the purpose of gaining an advantage in those domains but those initiatives are for the purpose of improving our speed and posture once again in all domains, which -- which we must do to comprehensively defend. And with our basic NATO military strategy of comprehensive defense and shared response, when we

finally get to a point to where we've established the appropriate NATO and national requirements in air, land, sea, space and cyber from a whole of government, whole of nation, whole of alliance perspective, we'll -- we'll be far better aligned to take advantage of our skill sets from a technological development standpoint in all domains. Fit to make sure that we can maintain and sustain a competitive advantage against any potential foe, so that's the recipe book for what we would do with respect to your comments on China. But most of what I just addressed has to do with our forces making the appropriate gains in all domain. And it goes back to Secretary Austin's point about integrated deterrence, so we're -- we're on the right track. I -- I feel in the military dimension, we have tremendous campaign momentum and as we embrace NATO 2030, that's exactly where the SECGEN wants us to go.

MS. STARLING: Sir, I want to weave in some audience questions, we're getting quite a few. We have a question here from Christopher Woody, who's an editor at Business Insider, and he's asking a question related to military mobility. You talk about the importance of posture and speed. Is it getting kit to where it needs to go, getting people to where they need to be and to project force in a potential contingency is critical. And we actually at the Atlantic Council wrote a report on the importance of improving military mobility in Europe, so he asks -- he actually credits you saying it's one of the thoughts that keeps you up at night, improving EUCOM's ability to move hardware into and around Europe. He asks, what have you done since then to improve that ability and what do you think there is left to do?

GEN. WOLTERS: One example, since 2016 is the implementation of Army pre-positioned stockpiles and the Air Force's deployable airbase systems, putting those kits in spots across Europe to where when you

eventually bring over soldiers and you bring over airmen from the continent of the United States, they can immediately hit the deck running and grab their kit and go to their reporting position and if trained properly, being in position to where at that very second, they can shoot, move and communicate with success against any potential foe. And we practice that in our exercises and -- we just completed a DEFENDER Europe 21 series of exercises that focuses on mission task from joint forcible entries, to integrated air and missile defense, the live fire exercises to a command post exercise. The start of that DEFENDER Europe 21 exercise was a test of moving U.S. soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and guardians from the east coast of the United States into Europe, to their potential battle positions and demonstrating to us how fast they can get there, what problems they countered along the way and how ready were they once they got to their location. And in the middle of all this was a logistics challenge, and -- and our logisticians are magicians, we've discovered recently in NATO that we needed to set up a better architecture to coherently govern the overall strategic, logistic challenges that we face when you move large units from the east coast of the United States to the eastern periphery of Europe. And this organization is called the Joint Support Enabling Command and its -- its single function is to make sure that from cradle to grave, that they track all the challenges and facilitate the flow from the east coast of the United States to the battle positions for training exercises in the eastern periphery of Europe, and track how well we've done. Fortunately, we've been able to embrace these types of exercises since 2016 with -- with greater refinement starting in 2017, '18 and '19 to the present, to -- to see whether we're improving at speed and we're improving in our readiness once the soldier, sailor and airmen gets to their fighting position. And -- and the return that we have so far for -- for DEFENDER Europe 21 is, we're getting better despite COVID, despite the

challenges, because of a headquarters that gives clear direction and guidance and we go to one source for comprehensive logistics and we take logistics very, very seriously. We're -- we're improving our ability to increase our posture once we get the forces where they need to be, but more importantly or as importantly, getting those folks there at speed. So that you're in a position to fortify quicker. And this -- this is -- this is basic deterrence activity, it's -- it's -- it's exercises that -- that demonstrate basic skills that are needed for warfare and -- and we will continue to heavily invest in NATO operations activities and investments to improve the overall readiness of the force. It's just as important to be lethal in air, land, sea, space and cyber as it is to be lethal in logistics, and the creation of a an appropriate headquarters to do so has been a big plus for all of us at NATO, as well as helping our U.S. partners get over the Atlantic and onto the European soil as quickly as possible.

MS. STARLING: Really, really important aspect to hear more about it from you. We have another question here from Frank Wolfe who is an Air Force reporter at Defense Daily. He asks, how do you see the role of airpower evolving in the European theater and what thoughts do you have on future airpower needs including the part played by the U.S. next generation air dominance family of systems and the European future combat air systems?

GEN. WOLTERS: Well, the first thing I'll mention is the -- the next generation air dominance is referred to as sixth generation and we -- we have initiatives in the United States, initiatives in Germany, initiatives in the United Kingdom and initiatives in France. On the edge to edge system or sixth generation system and it's important to make sure that those nations have the degree of strategic and alignment transparency as they go forward, and they look at what resources do we need to field to have success with sixth

generation capability. And those activities are ongoing and -- and I'm very excited about what is happening in that dimension, and I -- I -- I can just say for the rest of it, this -- this phrase called strategic transparency and alignment, it sounds corny but it -- it's a must. To avoid duplication, to ensure that you deliver the appropriate effect in the environment and -- and I believe that the transparency and alignment that is taking place today at the strategic operational and tactical levels are as sound as they ever have been. And I -- I would just say for -- for the totality of this subject, it's imperative that -- that we go in that direction. As far as the aviation needs are concerned, we're in the process of gaining more fifth generation capability and that is happening as we speak. We will probably be in a position in Europe with a number of F-35s that we possess by approximately 2030 to have 450 F-35s. That's a tremendous capability and -- and if I were a potential foe against NATO or Europe, I wouldn't like to hear that and I'm very, very excited about the advancement of the F-35. It's -- it's performance in the air domain has been magnificent, where it contributes in the main salvos of success, indications and warnings, command and control, mission command, the F-35 contributions on all three salvos are -- are splendid. And with each passing day, we're finding better ways to unite nations that possess F-35s to improve our speed and posture in the air domain, and we want to continue on the right path that we're on. And I -- I'm firmly convinced with the strategic transparency and alignment that is taking place with the next generation air defense system and with future combat aviation systems, and with the advances that we're making in F-35, fifth generation activity and the alignment and transparency that nations are giving to each other, to -- to share ideas and thoughts about how to better employ the F-35, we're -- we're traversing in the right direction. I'm very pleased.



MS. STARLING: So, just to pivot slightly, there are so many different topics that -- that are being raised and I want to get to in the time that we have, and two topics increasingly being linked across the globe are the Arctic and the climate challenge. From the GIUK gap really to the North Pole, we are seeing increased activity from both China and Russia in the region. How are the U.S. and NATO adapting to -- to that Russian and Chinese activity and is this region becoming more strategically important?

GEN. WOLTERS: Well, I think it has been important, I -- I think it will continue to gain in prominence, the first concern that I've had for several years is what is the military architecture with respect to the Arctic that is in place to ensure that we're able to give clear directs and guidance from the U.S. perspective and from a NATO perspective, with respect to activities to promote traversing in international seas and international skies in the vicinity of the Arctic. And we've made significant improvements, as you know there's an Arctic council, and as you know with the DDA and the NATO military strategy and the SACEUR AOR-wide Strategic Plan, all three of those documents address the Arctic for comprehensive defense and shared response and they have annexes to take us to a point to where we take into account some of the adjudications that we'll have to make from a climate change. From a U.S. perspective, all of the U.S. military services have actually produced plans for the Arctic, which -- which is a significant improvement from 2019 to the present and U.S. DOD has also produced a plan. We've established executive agency in the DOD military chain and above, so we're able to give out a clear direction and guidance and superimpose an architecture on top of the Arctic to make sure that -- that we improve in those three salvos that I talked about before. And we're going to make sure that in the future, our IMW gets better, our C2 improves and our

mission command improves. And that means you have to conduct operations, activities and investments in the Arctic, in all domains, with as many players as you can possibly get that can contribute. Analyze what took place and look for after action reports to find ways to get better in the future and that is actually taking place with many of the services in NATO and in the U.S. bearing down some of the exercises that we have in the vicinity of -- of Norway. And I'm also pleased to report that because of the renewed architecture and the renewed plans that exist in the Arctic, many of the NATO nations are leading in a bilats and multi-lats with other nations to make sure that they can tackle some of the problems that they're seeing. As we mentioned the Arctic, the -- the goal is to take a look at the increased activity and -- and make sure that from a commerce and military perspective, we are protecting the rights of citizens for safe passage from an international waters and international airspace perspective. And when -- and when those -- those rights are infringed upon by Russia and China, we have to make sure that there's a understandable presence that exist in the Arctic that allows us to tell potential foes against us that this is a deterrence activity to make sure that we can have free speech, if you will in the Arctic community. And what we'll probably see as -- as ice continues to melt and commercial activities continues to grow, the -- the amount of operations activities and investments in the future will continue to grow. And as we talk about melting ice, we have to be smart about where we're going from climate change, and as -- as a military commander in 2021, my first concern when somebody talks about climate change has to do with individuals having to move from one location to the other, as a result of changing weather patterns. So that -- that -- that culminates in the migrant activity that -- that brings with it potential trouble if the vigilance isn't correct with respect to the movement. So, we have to anticipate where that occurs. We have to make sure that we continue to

respect our democratic values, and we have to make sure that international airspace and waters, people are afforded the opportunity for -- for safe passage. So those -- those will all -- all be challenges that we have to face in the future and the last part of climate change has to do with melting ice, if you will, and -- and growing height of -- of sea waters. And that's a reality, I think most of us have read studies that by 2075 and 2020 -- 2100, we'll be in a position to where sea levels will rise to a certain degree that -- that impacts the -- the current seawalls that exist at NATO military bases that serve also as ports. And we're in a position to where somebody tells me in 2075 that the -- the increase in the sea level will be at three feet and the seawall that exist at Base X with Port Y is only two and half feet, we don't want to wait until 2050 to try to solve that problem. So, we -- we are -- we are getting at those problems with the implementation of coherent plans. We have a better architecture on top of Arctic activity, which allows us to give clear direction and guidance to nations from a requirements standpoint, to make sure that we can get out in front of some -- of some of the climate change activities that we'll have to embrace. And certainly, get out in front of making sure that -- that when -- when you're supposed to be traveling international waters in the international seas, you're allowed to do so.

MS. STARLING: I certainly hope that we -- we hear out of the NATO Summit more on climate security cause it's clearly an issue that NATO allies need to be grappling with together. And one other key issue that obviously will be on agenda as well as Afghanistan and I'd be remiss not to mention Afghanistan, and so NATO this is winding down after really two decades of counter insurgency operations in Afghanistan. And as outlined in the NATO 2030 agenda, is refocusing on global competition and how are U.S. and NATO forces going to integrate the experience and lessons learned from

Afghanistan into the shift towards great power competition? And are there, perhaps applicable lessons from a in regular warfare and warfighting to some of that hybrid warfare that you've discussed and raised in the strategic competition we face today?

GEN. WOLTERS: Well, thanks. I know the secretary general spoke to this very same issue, and -- and as he stated and has been the case for the last 48 hours, we're -- we're about 50 percent complete with the retrograde. And as Secretary General Stoltenberg stated, we -- we will continue to have a diplomatic mission that represents NATO with respect to the -- the -- the officer, the senior civilian coordinator, to make sure that we can continue to provide support, for funding, for what takes place in Afghanistan. And as Secretary General Stoltenberg said, for -- for the last several decades in Afghanistan, we've been able to thwart planners in Afghanistan from committing terrorist activity, from Afghanistan to our soils in Europe and our soil in the United States. And -- and that in itself is -- is a plus, we -- we are still going to find ways to work with Afghanistan from a NATO perspective, and we're in the process of -- of looking at out of country special forces training in certain locations to -- to bring NATO special forces activities out of -- out of Afghanistan, into a remote location probably somewhere in Europe, to -- to improve their tactics, techniques and procedures. In -- in what we do from a soft perspective to make sure that they have the best readiness possible, and -- and those education activities that would occur, most likely on European soil will -- will be managed and worked with by the -- by the OSCR, the senior civilian coordinator that represents NATO in Afghanistan. And we're also going to work very, very hard with the multiple contracts that exist at HKIA Airport, if we do have some NATO nations that elect to remain and work those conditions at HKIA Airport, we will work civilian contracts and make sure that

we can continue to provide support to the Afghanistan via that methodology. So, a lot of work ahead of us, there -- there are still some unknowns out there. The -- the -- the key element of all this is for -- for two decades, we -- we didn't have a plot that occurred in Afghanistan that culminated in a terrorist activity in Europe and the U.S. We -- we want to continue with that track record, and so our -- our support from out of country and the support that USCENTCOM and the United States will continue to apply with respect to "Over the Horizon" activity, will be geared towards that very issue. And we're -- we're still working out many of the details but as -- as of this moment, the retrograde is -- is well coordinated, well synchronized, very orderly and -- and we're -- we're pleased with what's taking place so far.

MS. STARLING: All right. So, we probably have time for one more question and I want to, kind of, lace in one question we received from the audience with the -- with the final one. So, the Department of Defense is currently undergoing its global force posture review, so if you don't mind, I'd like to ask your thoughts on whether you anticipate any changes to force deployments in Europe? And if so, how will that affect planning operations in EUCOM's area of responsibility? And a question that we received from the assuraman in the audience is talking about host nation support and investments that we're seeing from allies like the Baltic states, and she asks what further HNS investments and capabilities are needed to enhance deterrence when hosting our forces? So if you could talk a little bit about posture and -- and the, kind of, forces -- the force and arrangement that you think we might see in Europe in the future? That would be very interesting.

GEN. WOLTERS: It's a great question. I -- I have to giggle because every one of the U.S. geographic combatant commanders is hoping that the

global posture review concludes, that their area needs all the resources. But that's probably not going to happen, and -- and whatever decisions made by Secretary Austin, we'll embrace it as if it's our decision and move out. We -- we are preparing for change, but don't know if it's going to be additive or we'll lose resources. I -- I know what it will do, it -- it will take into account integrated deterrence, it will take into account not just what takes place in Europe but the Middle East, Indo-Pacific, South America, Central America. So, it -- it's a tough challenge set for -- for the U.S. secretary of defense and he's -- he's taking a very, very deliberate view. We -- we're very pleased with the resources that we have. We've been very, very clear about the resources that we need. I have given my best military advice to Secretary Austin. He -- he knows what -- what needs we have over here, over and above the -- the current architecture that exists in place, and he -- he also knows what all the other U.S. combatant commanders needs are and he's -- he's going to have to serve as the global coordinating authority and make that final decision. And we -- we would be naive if we weren't embracing, and -- and preparing plans to -- to lose some or gain some, good military planners always do that. I -- I anticipate that what we have in Europe is -- is probably going to stay but that all depends upon the conclusions of the global posture review, what -- what I will say is because -- because air, land, sea, space and cyber operate at high speeds. Actions that take place in the Pacific impact what takes place in Europe. So, having a U.S. secretary of defense willing to embrace this global posture review is exactly what we need to do, and Secretary Austin is jumping up to 70,000 to 80,000 feet and he's surveying the globe, and he's going to make the right call with respect to U.S. interest and -- and where the resources go. Time will tell.

MS. STARLING: Well sir, we're out of time. I'd like to continue but thank you so much for joining us, and thanks to our audience at home. It's been such a pleasure to hear from you on these important issues.

GEN. WOLTERS: Thank you very much.

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