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Before the

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

**UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON RUSSIAN  
STRATEGY AND MILITARY OPERATIONS

Thursday, October 8, 2015

Washington, D.C.

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U.S. Senate  
Committee on Armed Services  
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The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators McCain [presiding], Inhofe, Sessions, Wicker, Ayotte, Fischer, Cotton, Rounds, Ernst, Tillis, Sullivan, Lee, Reed, McCaskill, Manchin, Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Donnelly, Hirono, King, and Heinrich.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM ARIZONA

3           Chairman McCain: Well, good morning. The Senate Armed  
4 Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony  
5 on Russian Strategy and Military Operations, obviously a  
6 pretty important time to have this discussion.

7           I'd like to thank our distinguished panel of witnesses  
8 for appearing before us today: General Jack Keane, of the  
9 Institute for the Study of War; General James Jones, of the  
10 Atlantic Council; Ms. Heather Conley, of the Center for  
11 Strategic and International Studies; and Dr. Stephen  
12 Sestanovich, of the Council on Foreign Relations. A very  
13 distinguished panel.

14           Last year, Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and  
15 annexation of Crimea forced a recognition, for anyone who is  
16 not yet convinced, that we're confronting a challenge that  
17 many had assumed was resigned to the history books, a strong  
18 militarily capable Russia that is hostile to our interests  
19 and our values, and seeks to challenge the international  
20 order that American leaders of both parties have sought to  
21 maintain since the end of World War II.

22           Today, Russia continues to destabilize Ukraine and  
23 menace our NATO allies in Europe with aggressive military  
24 behavior. For more than a year, an overwhelming bipartisan  
25 majority in Congress, as well as many of the President's top

1 advisors, have warned that failure to offer greater support  
2 to Ukraine, especially defensive lethal assistance, would  
3 send a message of weakness that would invite the very  
4 aggression we seek to avoid. Unfortunately, this is what  
5 has happened. As the old saying goes, Mr. Putin's appetite  
6 is growing with the eating.

7 Now, in a profound echo of the Cold War, Russia has  
8 intervened militarily in Syria on behalf of the murderous  
9 regime of Bashar al-Assad. Just consider how historically  
10 unprecedented this is. In all of its Soviet and post-Soviet  
11 history, Russia never intervened overtly militarily beyond  
12 its so-called near abroad. Now Vladimir Putin is doing so,  
13 and it has become the latest disastrous turn in the Middle  
14 East as well as another humiliating setback for the United  
15 States.

16 As in past crises, however, the White House is once  
17 again floundering. Just consider: A few weeks ago, the  
18 administration warned Russia not to send its forces to  
19 Syria. Russia did it anyway. The administration then tried  
20 to block Russia's access to airspace en route to Syria. It  
21 failed. The consequence? U.S. defense officials rushed  
22 into talks with Russia's military to, quote, "deconflict" in  
23 Syria. Our Secretary of State called Russia's actions an,  
24 quote, "opportunity to cooperate" because we share, quote,  
25 "fundamental principles." And President Obama acquiesced to

1 his first formal meeting in 2 years with Vladimir Putin,  
2 undermining international efforts, post-Crimea, to isolate  
3 Russia, exactly as Putin desired. And how did Putin  
4 respond? By bombing U.S.-backed opposition groups in Syria.

5 President Obama is fond of saying there is no military  
6 solution to this or any other crisis. This ignores the  
7 reality that there is a major military dimension to the  
8 problem. And it's getting worse each day. It also ignores  
9 history. Most civil wars actually do end when one side wins  
10 and the other side loses. That is Putin's military  
11 solution, and he is now imposing it with Russian airpower in  
12 an anti-American coalition of Syrian, Iranian, Hezbollah  
13 ground forces. We should expect Russian troops to take the  
14 field with them. We should also not be surprised if Putin  
15 expands his anti-American coalition's operations into Iraq,  
16 where they have already established an intelligence  
17 partnership with Baghdad.

18 However this conflict ends, it must not involve  
19 Vladimir Putin shoring up his partners, crushing ours,  
20 destroying our remaining credibility in the Middle East, and  
21 restoring Russia as a major power in this vital region, as  
22 Putin wants. We cannot shy away from confronting Russia in  
23 Syria, as Putin expects. His intervention has raised the  
24 costs and risks of greater U.S. involvement in Syria, but it  
25 has not negated the steps we must take. Indeed, it has made

1 them more necessary, not least because Putin's actions will  
2 influence every aspect of this conflict: the refugee  
3 crisis, the mass atrocities, and the growth of ISIL.

4 As everyone from David Petraeus to Hillary Clinton has  
5 advocated, we must rally an international coalition to  
6 establish enclaves in Syria to protect civilians and our  
7 moderate partners, and do what is necessary to defend them.  
8 If Assad continues to barrel-bomb civilians, we should  
9 destroy his air force's ability to operate. And if Russia  
10 continues to attack our opposition partners, we must impose  
11 greater costs on Russia's interests; for example, by  
12 striking meaningful Syrian regime targets.

13 But, we should not confine our response to Syria. We  
14 must look to impose costs on Russia more broadly, including  
15 the provision of arms to Ukraine, the increase of targeted  
16 sanctions, and steps to deepen Russia's international  
17 isolation.

18 We must also recognize the growing challenge that  
19 Russia poses in other areas and domains. According to  
20 public reports, Russian actors are behind a growing and  
21 increasing blatant campaign of cyberattacks against the  
22 United States, including the recent attack on the Joint  
23 Staff at the Department of Defense. Along the eastern flank  
24 of NATO, Russia is moving back into old military bases it  
25 abandoned long ago and deploying growing numbers of its

1 modernized military forces, especially anti-access and area-  
2 denial weapons designed specifically to counter the United  
3 States in asymmetric ways.

4 Russia's challenge even extends to the Arctic region,  
5 where Russia is involved in a significant military buildup  
6 of its air, ground, and naval forces, and has recently  
7 conducted a series of massive military exercises.

8 These are just some of the reasons why our military  
9 leaders, including the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of  
10 Staff, have recently testified to this committee that Russia  
11 represents the greatest threat to the United -- that the  
12 United States faces. Whether we agree with that assessment  
13 or not, it is a striking wake-up call about the threat  
14 Russia poses. And I believe it requires us to think far  
15 more seriously about an old mission that our defense  
16 establishment has focused less on in recent decades:  
17 deterrence.

18 In response to the challenge that Russia poses in  
19 Europe and in the Middle East and in the Arctic, it is not  
20 that the United States has done nothing. The problem is,  
21 nothing we are doing appears to be deterring Russian  
22 aggression. None of us want a return to the Cold War, but  
23 we need to face the reality that we are dealing with a  
24 Russian ruler who wants exactly that. As such, we must  
25 revisit the question what it'll take to deter the conflict

1 and aggression while confronting a revisionist Russia.

2 We look forward to the thoughts and recommendations  
3 from our distinguished witnesses on these questions.

4 Senator Reed.

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE  
2 ISLAND

3           Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

4           Let me first welcome the witnesses, thank them not only  
5 for their testimony but for their service to the Nation over  
6 so many years and in so many ways.

7           This morning, our hearing focuses on developments in  
8 Russian strategy and military operations which are causing  
9 fundamental shifts in the security environment, not only in  
10 Europe, but in the Middle East, the Arctic, and elsewhere.  
11 The United States and its allies are facing an increasingly  
12 aggressive and revanchist Russia and a Putin regime that is  
13 willing to use all tools at its disposal, including its  
14 military power, to achieve its goals.

15           Putin's goals appear to be, first, regime survival in  
16 the face of Russia's economic, political, and social  
17 decline; second, securing Russia's periphery by pressuring  
18 its neighbors against integrating with the West; and third,  
19 exploiting opportunities to weaken Western unity by dividing  
20 member states within the EU and NATO against each other.  
21 Yet, Russia's provocative and dangerous aggression often  
22 appears opportunistic and potentially harmful for its long-  
23 term interests.

24           Last month, I had the opportunity to visit the Ukraine,  
25 where the nascent democratic government in Kyiv is

1 struggling to defend its sovereignty against aggression from  
2 Russia and Russian-backed separatists. Russia has  
3 demonstrated, in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine, its  
4 willingness to use military force to violate Ukraine's  
5 territorial integrity and intimidate its neighbor. It is  
6 clear that President Putin sees a functioning democratic  
7 westward-oriented Ukraine as a threat to his regime's  
8 survival domestically and to Russia's broader regional  
9 security strategy.

10       Recently, Russia has shifted its tactics in Ukraine  
11 from an emphasis on territorial gains to hybrid warfare and  
12 proxy forces to an expansion of his activities aimed at  
13 destabilizing the Ukrainian government and economy. This  
14 shift in Russian tactics is a result of several factors,  
15 including the determination of the Ukrainian forces and  
16 people to resist Russian aggression, international sanctions  
17 that are proving costly to Russia, the difficulty of  
18 disguising casualties from the Russian people, which is  
19 engendering some opposition within Russia, and, most  
20 recently, a possible desire by President Putin to shift the  
21 focus away from Ukraine and toward the conflict in Syria.  
22 Russian military operations in the Donbas have been a  
23 proving ground for its hybrid warfare technologies, which  
24 continue to evolve with increasing sophistication.

25       The United States needs to be firm in its support of

1 Ukraine, right now, or else the United States and NATO will  
2 have a bigger problem in the future. If Ukraine does not  
3 weather the current crisis, then Russia's aggressive  
4 behavior will be repeated elsewhere, potentially threatening  
5 NATO members. The United States needs to act in concert  
6 with our allies to assist Ukraine. One immediate need is  
7 for the international community to press Russia not to  
8 support the illegitimate local elections called by the  
9 separatists which violate the specific terms of the Minsk  
10 agreement in Ukrainian law. The outcome of the local  
11 elections of the Donbas threaten to further undermine the  
12 prospects for negotiations as part of the Minsk peace  
13 process. I understand that just recently the elections in  
14 the conflict area have been postponed until February. The  
15 United States and its allies and partners must immediately  
16 agree on an approach that supports Ukrainian efforts to hold  
17 elections under Ukrainian law, pressures Russia to uphold  
18 the terms of the Minsk agreements, and makes clear that any  
19 separatist victors in sham elections will not be accepted in  
20 participants -- as participants in future talks under Minsk.

21 The United States and its partners should take other  
22 steps to counter Russian aggression in Ukraine, as well.  
23 Ukraine's need for defensive weapons, including counter-  
24 artillery radars and anti-tank weapons, remains critical.  
25 Other action to help Ukraine include expanding the training

1 in Ukraine of units of the Ministry of Defense, training  
2 Ukrainian forces at facilities outside Ukraine on key  
3 defensive weapon systems should a decision to be made to  
4 transfer those systems, and exploring options for developing  
5 Ukraine's capability to produce domestically much needed  
6 weapons, such as anti-tank weapons and vehicles.

7 In Syria, much as it did in Ukraine, Russia has hidden  
8 its true intentions, using the ruse of joining the fight  
9 against ISIL to provide a cover for Russia's military  
10 intervention to prop up the Assad regime. Russians'  
11 actions, however, increasingly expose their true objectives.  
12 Instead of focusing on targeting ISIL, Russian airstrikes  
13 have predominantly occurred in Homs and Hama, areas  
14 controlled by moderate Syrian forces challenging the Assad  
15 regime. And yesterday, it was reported that Russian ships  
16 in the Caspian Sea launched missiles against a coalition of  
17 Syrian opposition forces that does not include ISIL. Russia  
18 is providing broader enabling support to the Assad regime's  
19 forces against the moderate opposition.

20 These Russian missile attacks and enabling support were  
21 apparently conducted in coordination with a new ground  
22 offensive by the Syrian army, Iran's terrorist proxy,  
23 Hezbollah, and other Iranian-affiliated forces. This  
24 alignment of terrorists and their state sponsors is  
25 alarming.

1           Russia's open military intervention in a conflict well  
2 beyond its borders marks a significant departure from how  
3 Russia has operated in the past and suggests that President  
4 Putin may be attaching particular strategic importance to  
5 Russia's access to bases in the overall relationship with  
6 Syria. And I hope our witnesses will provide their  
7 assessment of the strategic significance of Russia's  
8 decision to deploy its military forces to Syria.

9           Russia's unilateral and belligerent efforts are not  
10 helpful to the efforts of the unified coalition of 60-plus  
11 countries fighting ISIL and create a dangerous risk of  
12 unintended consequences. President Putin has chosen not to  
13 join the international anti-ISIL coalition; instead, Putin  
14 has chosen to align with Iran and Hezbollah to attack Syria  
15 and is seeking to end the brutality of the Assad regime and  
16 establish a better Syria. Russians' actions are likely to  
17 only prolong and further complicate this conflict. Russia  
18 appears to be seeking to keep Bashar Assad in office and  
19 maintain Syria as a client state. In addition, Russia,  
20 Iran, and Iraq have concluded an intelligence-sharing  
21 agreement, and Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi has suggested that  
22 Iraq would welcome Russian airstrikes against ISIL in Iraq,  
23 adding to the concerns over unintended consequences. Once  
24 again, the witnesses' perspective on these issues would be  
25 absolutely critical.

1           Finally, Russia is staking a claim in the Arctic,  
2           expanding its military presence, including coastal defense  
3           in the north to be able to control movements to a northern  
4           passage. Again, this is another area where your comments  
5           would be appreciated.

6           Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

7           And thank the four witnesses.

8           Chairman McCain: Thank you.

9           We'll begin with you, General Keane, since you're the  
10          oldest one here.

11          [Laughter.]

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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.),  
2 CHAIRMAN, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WAR AND FORMER VICE  
3 CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMY

4           General Keane: Thank you, good morning. Chairman  
5 McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the  
6 committee. I'm honored to be back testifying before this  
7 great committee who means so much to our national defense  
8 and security.

9           It's a privilege to be here with my panel colleagues,  
10 particularly General Jones, who I've served with in the  
11 Pentagon and have known for years.

12           Please refer to the maps that you have at your seat,  
13 provided by the Institute of War, which I will reference in  
14 my remarks.

15           As to Russian strategy and military operations in  
16 Syria, establishing an out-of-region airbase in Syria that  
17 is isolated from the heartland of Russia in a war zone is  
18 quite unprecedented, particularly for a non-expeditionary  
19 military. You can see, on the map labeled "Russian  
20 Deployment to Syria," the air-bridges routes over Iran and  
21 Iraq, and a sea-bridge route through the Black Sea.

22           The airbase consists of combat aircraft, helicopters,  
23 drones, logistics, support infrastructure, and a battalion-  
24 plus of armor infantry, artillery, and air defense for  
25 protection of the base. Approximately 2- to 3,000 personnel

1 make up the base, which also houses a joint operations  
2 center consisting of Russian, Syrian, Iranian, and Hezbollah  
3 military personnel, largely now for targeting.

4         While one can only speculate about the reason for this  
5 brazen military aggression, some realities in Syria are  
6 insightful. Look at the map labeled "Control of Terrain in  
7 Syria." As you can see, the regime control area, in orange,  
8 which is now only about 20 percent of Syria. Note the  
9 opposition control area to the north and south, in yellow,  
10 as the regime is quite confined. Particularly in the north,  
11 with the fall of Idlib Province recently, the opposition  
12 force is beginning to encroach on the Alawite coastal  
13 enclave in Latakia Province, which represents Assad's main  
14 political support. Not labeled on the map, in the gray  
15 zone, to the east of Homs and Damascus, in central Syria,  
16 ISIS seized Palmyra City, the famed ancient city, and a  
17 nearby regime airbase, opening up the east-west  
18 transportation corridor from Homs to the Iraq border. Syria  
19 is Russia's foothold in the Middle East, and, as such, the  
20 Tartus Naval Base is a strategic asset. It seems apparent  
21 that Russia believed the Assad regime's survival was in a  
22 more precarious position and needed to be propped up. As  
23 such, if you look at the map labeled "Russian Airstrikes,"  
24 you can see the focus of the airstrikes are against the  
25 opposition forces threatening the regime from the north in



1 Idlib, Hama, and Homs Province. The moderate opposition  
2 forces, many trained by the CIA, and Jabhat al-Nusra, an al-  
3 Qaeda affiliate, are the main focus with ISIS strikes at  
4 Raqqa and near Palmyra are far less significant. Russian  
5 cruise missiles were introduced yesterday, striking 11  
6 targets in northern Syria, northwestern Syria, and  
7 northeastern Syria. The purpose, then, of the airstrikes  
8 are twofold. One is to stop the advance of the opposition  
9 forces threatening the regime. And, two, to begin to set  
10 conditions for a ground counteroffensive to retake lost  
11 territory, with the main effort in the north in southern  
12 Idlib and northern Hama Provinces. The Syrian army began  
13 limited ground operations yesterday in Idlib Province,  
14 obviously supported by Russian airpower. A supporting  
15 effort may also be launched to retake Palmyra and the  
16 military airbase if the regime can generate sufficient  
17 forces.

18 Even more significant than Russia entering a civil war  
19 is their recent strategic alliance with Iran, which will  
20 impact every country in the region and further diminish U.S.  
21 influence and U.S. interests in the region. Russia has been  
22 leveraging this reality to their own advantage by entering  
23 into arms deals with Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Egypt.  
24 These countries purchasing Russian weapons are not primarily  
25 driven by the desire to have Russian equipment, but by the

1 harsh reality of the changing geopolitical landscape, and  
2 their desire to have a relationship with Russia has leverage  
3 against their strategic enemy: Iran. Russia is also in  
4 preliminary discussions to build nuclear powerplants in  
5 Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and Tunisia. The relationship  
6 with Iran and its proxies matters to Russia because it  
7 provides them greater influence in the Middle East while  
8 also acting as a strategic buffer against radical Islam, a  
9 threat which is of great concern to Russia.

10 Secondly, Russian strategy and military operations in  
11 Ukraine and Europe. Putin has put Russia on a path to be a  
12 world power with global influence. Most historical world  
13 powers have strong economies and strong militaries. Russia  
14 -- the former Soviet Union was never prosperous, but  
15 certainly had a very strong military. Putin was on a path  
16 to do just that again with his military when the economy  
17 tanked. He was able to modernize his nuclear weapons, but  
18 left him with a conventional military that is still no match  
19 to the United States and NATO. But, about a third of his  
20 military are good units with some select excellent  
21 capabilities. This is a land-centric force with good combat  
22 aircraft, bombers, and submarines, and a limited power-  
23 projection navy with only one aircraft carrier.

24 Russia's strategy in Europe, I think, is influenced by  
25 the Napoleonic and Nazi invasions and the strategic buffer

1 that existed in Europe as part of the Warsaw Pact protecting  
2 the heartland of Russia for almost 50 years. These buffer  
3 countries are now a part of NATO, which Putin sees as a  
4 security risk.

5 After Putin lost his political stooge, Yanukovych, who  
6 he thought would stop the Ukraine movement to the West, he  
7 immediately annexed Crimea, correctly believing the  
8 Europeans and Americans would be stunned into compliance,  
9 thus recovering at home from the embarrassment of  
10 Yanukovych's forced departure. Encouraged by their success,  
11 Putin moved on eastern Ukraine, introducing hybrid warfare,  
12 a combination of special operations forces and intelligence  
13 security officers to help create public unrest, then arm and  
14 organize that unrest into fighting units, and, when the host  
15 country army moves to put the movement down, bring in  
16 Russian-disguised conventional military to defeat the army.

17 Russia's use of military force in Ukraine is very  
18 revealing, as it relies heavily on drones to detect  
19 Ukrainian military units, with target information relayed  
20 immediately to artillery batteries and, within a few  
21 minutes, massive artillery is landing on a target, some with  
22 thermobaric shells creating a fire incendiary on the unit  
23 which is quite devastating. As such, the separatists,  
24 supported by Russian military, have consolidated Luhansk and  
25 Donetsk Provinces, but denied the land bridge to Mariupol.

1           The political is more significant, because the Kyiv  
2 government has given up on any formal economic or,  
3 certainly, military alignment with Europe or NATO. Putin  
4 wants the Kyiv to fail and be replaced by a more friendly  
5 Russian government. Putin will continue the pressure. And  
6 see the map labeled "Current Proposed Russian Bases" with  
7 the two new permanent ground force bases that are under  
8 construction across from the Ukrainian border, the --  
9 obviously in Russia -- and the airbase Putin has muscled  
10 into Belarus which is also now under construction.

11           So, what are U.S. options? U.S. strategy should be to  
12 assure our allies and friends, deter Russian aggression,  
13 defeat ISIS, and, long term, as a part of a global alliance,  
14 defeat radical Islam. Putin believes that European and  
15 American leadership is weak. Putin is counting on the U.S.  
16 fear of escalation and fear of confrontation to stop any  
17 thought of retaliation. Historically, aggression unanswered  
18 has led to more aggression.

19           As to Syria options, recognize the anti-ISIS strategy  
20 in Iraq and Syria is failing. We are certain to lose the  
21 war unless there is major and comprehensive change to build  
22 an effective and decisive ground force in Syria while  
23 removing restrictions on the air campaign to dramatically  
24 increase airstrike effectiveness. We need to continue the  
25 U.S. policy to force Assad from power, but let's be

1 realistic. Understand that Russia, as Assad's protector,  
2 will now play the decisive role. Putin has begun a proxy  
3 war with the United States when Russian combat aircraft  
4 struck continuously moderate rebel forces trained by the  
5 Central Intelligence Agency. This was no accident. Targets  
6 were provided by the Syrian regime, and they were accurate.  
7 How can the United States stand by and do nothing?

8 United States military should have been given the  
9 mission to retaliate. Options likely to be considered,  
10 among many others: crater the al-Assad runway, establish  
11 free zones that are, essentially, no-bomb zones as  
12 sanctuaries for refugees and U.S.-backed opposition groups,  
13 strike Assad's helicopter fleet that is barrel-bombing its  
14 own people, just to name a few.

15 Also, advise Russia that the United States and the  
16 coalition will conduct air operations anytime, anywhere in  
17 Syria, and the Russians should stay out of our way if they  
18 want to avoid confrontation. Unfortunately, United States  
19 aircraft are rarely flying now against ISIS targets in  
20 Syria, and focusing their efforts in Iraq.

21 If we continue to wring our hands and continue to be  
22 dominated by fears and opposed to instilling fear, then  
23 Russian aggression will not just advance in the Middle East,  
24 it will, with certainty, escalate in the Baltics and in  
25 eastern Europe.

1           As to Ukraine and Europe's options, recognize further  
2           that Russia is not finished in Ukraine, as the new military  
3           bases across the border suggest. There is still time to  
4           expand the United States military training of Ukraine  
5           battalions, which is an effective program, and provide,  
6           finally, defensive weapons and capabilities that would  
7           definitely make a difference, such as anti-tank missiles,  
8           non-missile air defense to counter the drones, counterfire  
9           radar to detect the artillery, download intelligence from  
10          all source capabilities, et cetera.

11          The Atlantic Resolve, the name for the U.S.-NATO  
12          rotational troop deployments to the Baltics, Poland,  
13          Romania, and Hungary, are helpful but a small deterrence to  
14          Russian aggression. Russian aggression has already begun in  
15          the Baltics -- that is, it's pounding the Russian-speaking  
16          minorities in the Baltics with continuous propaganda to  
17          create unrest and to foment a split with the nation's  
18          majority, coupled with continuous airspace violations that  
19          obviously are harassing the host governments.

20          Department of Defense must reevaluate its stationing  
21          plan for the combatant commands, in view of a revisionist  
22          and aggressive Russia. The Pacific is the largest combatant  
23          command, with over 400,000 troops, while Europe is  
24          considerably smaller and less than adequate, now down to  
25          around 50,000. The assumptions that drove the downsizing of

1 the United States military positions in Europe have  
2 obviously changed, and we need a relook.

3 In conclusion, Russia is clearly challenging U.S.  
4 influence and interests in the Middle East as the dominant  
5 outside regional country while also seeking to challenge  
6 NATO in eastern Europe and possibly NATO's very existence.  
7 Our allies in both regions must be convinced that the United  
8 States stand behind them. Now is the time for a firm hand,  
9 but the United States should not close off communications  
10 with Russia and continue to pursue opportunities where there  
11 is mutual interest.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I look forward to your  
13 questions.

14 [The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

2 Ms. Conley.

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1           STATEMENT OF HEATHER CONLEY, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR  
2 EUROPE, EURASIA, AND THE ARCTIC; DIRECTOR, EUROPE PROGRAM,  
3 CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

4           Ms. Conley: Chairman McCain, Senator Reed, members of  
5 the committee, thank you so much. It is a privilege to  
6 speak to you this morning, as well as join with my fellow  
7 panelists to discuss the evolving nature of Russia's growing  
8 military threat, which geographically stretches from the  
9 Kola Peninsula in the Arctic to the Mediterranean coast of  
10 Syria.

11           In my view, the Kremlin is reconstructing a 21st-  
12 century version of the Iron Curtain. As General Keane  
13 mentioned, they're recreating a strategic buffer which is  
14 designed to achieve a new grand international bargain with  
15 the West, a Yalta 2.0, if you will, that assures a Russian  
16 sphere of influence in Europe and the Middle East. This  
17 curtain, like its 20th-century predecessor, seeks to block  
18 the perceived contagion of democracy and reform while  
19 returning Russia to internationally recognized great-power  
20 status. This curtain is designed to do several things:  
21 deny military access to the West through the construction of  
22 new, and the revitalization of former, Russian military  
23 bases. It is designed to ensure the continuous exercising  
24 of air, land, and sea capabilities at full combat readiness.  
25 It rapidly mobilizes substantial Russian forces in a very

1 short period of time. It's designed to deploy a variety of  
2 hybrid economic and political tactics which are at its  
3 disposal. And, finally, it employs an extremely effective  
4 counter-factual strategic communications campaign.

5 Now, this 21st-century curtain also has a built-in  
6 Kremlin-controlled thermostat. President Putin can turn up  
7 the heat when and where he wants, as he's done in eastern  
8 Ukraine; and when it is needed, he can turn down the heat,  
9 as we're seeing right now. And then he can shift to a  
10 different portion of this curtain, as he is doing in Syria.  
11 The West will continue to react to the Kremlin's actions  
12 rather than proactively shape and deter them.

13 Russia's military modernization in the Arctic is the  
14 perfect example of how this new curtain, or, as I suggest in  
15 a new CSIS report, an "ice curtain," has been constructed.  
16 Russia has held three major military exercises in the Arctic  
17 over the last 24 months. The first exercise was part of a  
18 larger Zapad 2013 military exercise, which focused on  
19 Russia's western military district, and it demonstrated a  
20 more streamlined command structure, more efficient tactical  
21 units, and the ability to deploy a large-scale complex  
22 military operation coordinated with other areas of  
23 operation. This exercise fully demonstrated that Russia has  
24 a much larger spatial definition of its theater of  
25 operations, which extends from the Arctic to the Black Sea.

1           The second exercise, in September of 2014, was the  
2 largest post-Soviet military exercises that we have seen.  
3 It was held in the Russian far east, and it was preceded by  
4 a snap military exercise. Vostok 2014 involved over 100,000  
5 servicemen and demonstrated a complex display of air,  
6 maritime, and land components. And this exercise was partly  
7 conducted on new military bases in the Russian Arctic, New  
8 Siberian Islands, and Wrangel Island, which some believe  
9 simulated an exercise to repel U.S. and NATO forces.

10           And then, finally, in March of this year we saw the  
11 third and most culminating exercise, which was a snap  
12 military exercise in the Arctic which consisted of 45,000  
13 Russian forces, 15 submarines, and 41 warships at full  
14 combat readiness. We did not know that they were going to  
15 do this.

16           So, this extraordinary exercise tempo, the threefold  
17 increase in Russian air incursions over the Arctic, Baltic,  
18 and North Seas over the past 12 months, as well as Russia's  
19 announcement that will -- it will have a total of 14  
20 operational airfields in the Russian Arctic by the end of  
21 this year, 50 airfields by 2020, and a 30-percent increase  
22 in Russian special forces deployed to the Arctic, all  
23 underscore that the Arctic is becoming a major theater of  
24 operations for Russia. The Arctic region has now been  
25 included in Russia's amended military doctrine, as of

1 December of last year, and in its new maritime doctrine,  
2 which was just released in July. And it is under a new  
3 command, the Russian Northern Fleet United Strategic Command  
4 for the Arctic.

5 Now, the conclusions that we draw from Russia's  
6 military behavior is that it is increasingly able to project  
7 significant anti-access, anti-denial capabilities in the  
8 Arctic, the north Atlantic, and, increasingly, the north  
9 Pacific, which demonstrates the ability to rapidly deploy  
10 both conventional and unconventional forces. What is  
11 perhaps the most disturbing has been Russia's focus on  
12 enhancing its nuclear deterrent in the Arctic, where it has  
13 simulated massive retaliatory attacks in the Barents Sea.  
14 Our Norwegian and British allies -- and I know, Senator  
15 McCain, you were recently in the region -- have witnessed a  
16 surge in Russian submarine activity in the north Atlantic.

17 So, let me just very briefly describe the remaining  
18 geographic contours of this 21st-century curtain. The  
19 curtain proceeds from the Arctic, south to the Finnish-  
20 Russian border. Russia has returned to an abandoned  
21 military base 50 kilometers from the Finnish border, where  
22 the 1st Russian Infantry Brigade has arrived with 3,000  
23 soldiers anticipated. The curtain proceeds to the Russian  
24 exclave of Kaliningrad, home of the Russian Baltic Fleet,  
25 where vessels from the fleet have delivered fighter jets and

1 Asconder missile launchers capable of launching both  
2 conventional and nuclear missiles. Russia has recently  
3 installed new S-400 missile batteries and has increased its  
4 force presence.

5 The curtain then transitions from ice to steel on the  
6 Polish-Belarusian border, where President Putin has just  
7 ordered Russian officials to construct, with its Belarusian  
8 counterparts, a new military base in Belarus. This is the  
9 first time a newly constructed military base will be outside  
10 of Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This base  
11 will station SU-27 fighters.

12 The curtain, of course, extends fully to Ukraine, where  
13 Russia has an estimated 29,000 soldiers in occupied Crimea,  
14 a substantially increased Baltic Sea fleet, which it plans  
15 to augment with 30 additional vessels by 2020.

16 The curtain then continues, going, of course, as  
17 General Keane explained, through eastern Ukraine and  
18 extremely capable forces on the Russian-Ukrainian border, in  
19 fact, commencing construction of new installations that will  
20 potentially contain significant munitions ordnance  
21 facilities.

22 Ukraine, of course, we move to Transnistria and  
23 Moldova, where there are 1500 troops -- Russian troops  
24 stationed as peacekeepers. And, of course, from Russia's  
25 invasion of Georgia in 2008, we have Russian military

1 presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. And, in fact, the  
2 Russians have been pushing out this territory. They are 100  
3 kilometers from the main Georgian highway that would divide  
4 Georgia. So, they're increasing their territorial gains.  
5 And, as we've seen extensive -- this curtain continues,  
6 then, to Armenia, where Russia is further augmenting its  
7 forces, and then, as we know, from -- to Syria.

8         So, how can the U.S. and NATO respond to this new  
9 curtain of ice and steel? I'd like to commend the  
10 committee. The National Defense Authorization Act is a  
11 really great point of departure. And I commend the  
12 bipartisan resolve to seek to assess these challenges and  
13 identify critical gaps. For far too long, we've discounted  
14 Russia's military capabilities and did not take their  
15 threats and pronouncements seriously. We can no longer  
16 afford that luxury.

17         But, simply assessing the problem is woefully  
18 insufficient. Painful budget and force-posture decisions  
19 must now be taken. We cannot reset this challenge away, and  
20 we cannot get back to business as usual. The West has  
21 forgotten how to conduct effective deterrence in the Modern  
22 Age against a sophisticated adversary. Deterrence is as  
23 effective as the credibility on which it stands.

24         The United States immediately and positively responded  
25 to requests for U.S. forces to be sent to the Baltic states,

1 Poland, and Romania, when requested last spring without  
2 pondering the decision for months. The strong bipartisan  
3 support for the European Reassurance Initiative was another  
4 important signal of U.S. resolve. This act strengthened  
5 U.S. and NATO's Article 5 credibility, but these actions  
6 were viewed as temporary measures to change President  
7 Putin's behavior in Ukraine. This has not achieved its  
8 objectives, and now we need a more durable deterrence  
9 posture.

10 U.S. and NATO forces, accompanied by significant air  
11 and maritime components, must increase their presence on  
12 NATO's northern and eastern flanks. The U.S. should  
13 seriously consider sending a third combat brigade to Europe  
14 to reinforce both flanks while strongly encouraging our  
15 European allies to increase their force presence, as well.

16 NATO must initiate the pre-positioning of military  
17 equipment in the region, not simply for exercise purposes  
18 only, and immediately address identified shortcomings in  
19 secure communications and infrastructure needs that were  
20 identified during Operation Atlantic Resolve this year, as  
21 well as continue to increase the number of regional  
22 exercise. We must ensure rapid deployability. And that is  
23 where we are lacking.

24 It is time, to echo General Keane's comments, for a  
25 comprehensive review of U.S. force posture in Europe for the

1 next 5 to 10 years. It is for this reason that the outcome  
2 of next year's NATO summit in Warsaw is absolutely critical.  
3 If NATO simply decides to review the decisions it reached at  
4 its last summit, the alliance will have failed to address  
5 its most significant security challenge since the end of the  
6 Cold War. The summit must launch a long-term strategic  
7 adaptation to what will be a long-term and highly  
8 destabilizing challenge.

9 Mr. Chairman, on one final note and a word of caution,  
10 as much as the U.S. and NATO must do more to deter future  
11 Russian military aggression, we must also be fully cognizant  
12 of the devastating impact of Russian influence inside NATO  
13 that inhibit allies from taking collective action against  
14 Russia. As Russia dominates the media, financial, and  
15 energy markets of some of our NATO allies, we will find NATO  
16 collectively less able to respond. This requires as much  
17 policy attention by the U.S. and NATO as it does to  
18 militarily deter the Kremlin.

19 I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 [The prepared statement of Ms. Conley follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Ambassador Sestanovich, welcome.  
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1           STATEMENT OF HON. STEPHEN SESTANOVICH, GEORGE F.  
2   KENNAN SENIOR FELLOW FOR RUSSIAN AND EURASIAN STUDIES,  
3   COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

4           Ambassador Sestanovich: Chairman McCain, Senator Reed,  
5   members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to  
6   join your discussion today.

7           Let me organize just some brief introductory remarks by  
8   picking up on two comments on Russia by General Dunford, the  
9   new distinguished Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who, in his  
10   confirmation testimony to you this summer, described Russian  
11   behavior as "alarming." I completely agree with this. I  
12   also disagree with the other thing he said, which was that  
13   Russia is an existential threat to the United States. And  
14   let me explain why I disagree.

15           First, when we talk about an existential threat, we  
16   mislead ourselves. No matter how alarmed we are by Russia's  
17   current behavior, we use the term "existential threat" only  
18   because of its large strategic nuclear arsenal. And that's  
19   a potential threat whether Russia's relations with us are  
20   good or bad, or whether Russia's behavior is reckless or  
21   wise. Russia has acted recklessly of late, but that has not  
22   really increased the existential threat General Dunford  
23   spoke of.

24           Second, this language misleads Russians. It feeds a  
25   public mood in Russia that honestly borders on national

1 hysteria. These days, Russian officials routinely say  
2 things about the United States that are bizarre and  
3 incomprehensible. Unfortunately, hearing that we see Russia  
4 as an existential threat -- pretty extreme language, after  
5 all -- tells many Russians that our countries are on a  
6 collision course toward war, and that we have accepted that  
7 idea. I urge the members of this committee to take a  
8 different approach, to challenge responsible Russians to see  
9 how strange and counterproductive their country's policies  
10 looks to the outside world, not to make ourselves look  
11 equally strange.

12 Now, I said I agree that Russian behavior is alarming.  
13 It's really alarming. And we need to appreciate that -- not  
14 only that it is alarming, but that it doesn't come out of  
15 nowhere. This is not something that has just happened in  
16 the past year or two.

17 First -- a few quick points on this -- Russian actions  
18 in the Middle East and in Ukraine reflect the doubling and  
19 more of their defense budget in the past 10 years 50-percent  
20 increase just since the end of the financial crisis, in the  
21 past 5 years. This program of modernization is still  
22 unfolding, and the biggest procurement projects are ahead.  
23 As Russia's capabilities have increased, so has its anti-  
24 Western rhetoric. The official military doctrine of Russia  
25 identifies both NATO and the United States as threats to

1 Russia.

2       Secondly, Russian actions reflect the new nationalism  
3 of Russian public opinion. The seizure of Crimea and  
4 continuing attempts to fragment eastern Ukraine have given  
5 this nationalist mood an angrier, more embattled tone.  
6 Russian decisionmakers feel they can count on public support  
7 for more assertive displays of national power. They have to  
8 worry, of course, about casualties. And I think we should  
9 assume that they are just as worried, and maybe more  
10 worried, about casualties in Syria than they have been in  
11 Ukraine. But, so far, that concern has not restrained their  
12 conduct. Putin's popularity is largely intact.

13       Third, Russian actions are a response, as President  
14 Obama and as General Keane has noted, to the weakness of the  
15 Assad regime in Syria, Russia's oldest and now only real  
16 ally in the region. President Putin has made clear, as he  
17 has in Ukraine, that he is prepared to make a significant  
18 military commitment to save embattled clients, no matter how  
19 shaky and illegitimate their position is. And he acts this  
20 way, in part, because circumstances allow it. In Syria,  
21 several years of policy confusion by the United States and  
22 Europe have encouraged him. Had the United States imposed a  
23 no-fly zone in Syria 3 years ago, there would be no Russian  
24 intervention today.

25       Fourth, Secretary Carter may well be right that Russian

1 policy is doomed to fail. I'm -- I think this is entirely  
2 possible. But, in the course of failing, it may do a great  
3 deal of damage, both in Syria and beyond. It should,  
4 therefore, be a goal of the United States and its allies to  
5 limit and eventually reverse Russia's intervention.  
6 Continued confusion, merely calling on Russia to join the  
7 coalition against ISIS, will not achieve this end.

8 Fifth, anyone responsible for the national security of  
9 the United States, like the members of this committee,  
10 should worry about where Russia's reckless behavior will  
11 lead next. There are many areas in which one could expect  
12 troublemaking. We should not, by any means, conclude that  
13 we face an endless, never-cresting wave of Russian activism.  
14 To my mind, what Putin is doing now in Syria probably  
15 reduces the risks of near-term military provocations in  
16 Europe, especially against our NATO allies. If I were a  
17 Baltic Defense Minister, I'd actually be sleeping slightly  
18 better these days.

19 But, we have to remember that most of us have been  
20 wrong in anticipating Russian actions in the past couple of  
21 years. Just when we thought Putin had finally realized he  
22 had acted foolishly, he then acted even more foolishly.  
23 Today, the ingredients of some future confrontation may  
24 already be coming together. After what we've seen of  
25 Russian behavior, we can't afford to be unprepared.

1           Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, let me close as  
2 I began, by urging realism about the problems that Russian  
3 policy creates without making those problems worse than they  
4 have to be. Many Russians understand that President Putin  
5 is damaging his own country's security as well as others.  
6 They should hear from us and from you. They should be able  
7 to speak up against his actions. They should understand  
8 that the United States will protect itself, its allies, and  
9 its interests. They should also understand that there can  
10 be a place for them in this effort if they want it.

11           Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to our  
12 discussion.

13           [The prepared statement of Ambassador Sestanovich  
14 follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: General Jones.  
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1           STATEMENT OF GENERAL JAMES L. JONES, USMC (RET.),  
2 CHAIRMAN, BRENT SCOWCROFT CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY,  
3 ATLANTIC COUNCIL, AND FORMER NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR

4           General Jones: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed,  
5 members of the committee. Thank you for convening this  
6 important hearing at this very challenging and consequential  
7 juncture in America's relations with Russia and in world  
8 affairs, in general.

9           We are all witnessing the most recent and dangerous  
10 developments in Syria, where Mr. Putin, under the guise of  
11 fighting ISIL, is using force to advance his highly cynical  
12 campaign to prop up Bashar al-Assad. This action is merely  
13 the latest in a pattern of behavior emanating from Moscow  
14 that we had hoped ended with the Cold War. Unfortunately,  
15 as I came to learn during my tenure as National Security  
16 Advisor, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was an outcome  
17 that was neither cheered nor welcomed nor accepted by the  
18 current Russian President.

19           I've submitted a full written statement covering three  
20 areas that will hopefully be of help to the committee. The  
21 first is my view of Mr. Putin's primary motivations and  
22 goals. The second regards his strategy. And the third  
23 addresses some thoughts regarding what the United States and  
24 our allies could consider doing in response.

25           Mr. Chairman, in 2009, as National Security Advisor, I



1 attended a breakfast meeting in Moscow between the then-  
2 Prime Minister Putin and our President. I left that meeting  
3 convinced of three things: first, that Mr. Putin will  
4 always be a product of his upbringing in the KGB; second,  
5 that he believes deeply that Russia was humiliated by the  
6 conclusion of the Cold War, and is wholeheartedly committed  
7 to righting what he sees as an historic injustice, the  
8 collapse of the Soviet Union; third, he clearly believes  
9 that NATO is a great evil and that his interests are best  
10 served by weakening the Transatlantic Alliance and  
11 destabilizing his western periphery.

12         These three views are reflected not only in Russia's  
13 revanchist foreign policy and adventures abroad, but also in  
14 the country's lack of political and economic evolution  
15 during his tenure as President, all quite similar to Cold  
16 War behavior and priorities. During President Medvedev's  
17 tenure, we genuinely hoped that he aimed to integrate Russia  
18 into the Euro-Atlantic ark and was the kind of partner with  
19 whom we could work to achieve common goals. Upon returning  
20 to the presidency, President Putin reversed much of the  
21 progress we made during the Medvedev presidency, and is now  
22 taking Russia down a very different path.

23         The Russian President has proven he remains a cynical  
24 Cold War hero, needing an enemy to make himself look good  
25 and deeply nostalgic for a Moscow-centric sphere of

1 influence. His strategic objective is to reassert Russian  
2 power and prestige on his terms without regard to  
3 international principles and norms. He is willing to use  
4 force to achieve his objectives, including overturning  
5 internationally recognized boundaries and disregarding state  
6 sovereignty illustrated by the illegal annexation of the  
7 Crimea in 2014.

8 Despite an anemic economy debilitated by low oil  
9 prices, cronyism, and corruption, and now in a full  
10 recession, he is nonetheless consolidating his power  
11 effectively. He continues to subvert human rights, clamp  
12 down on media and free expression, fosters an environment of  
13 hostility for what is left of his political opposition, and  
14 takes intentionally stabilizing actions abroad, all the  
15 while operating a robust propaganda machine at home and  
16 abroad to make it appear that he is doing none of those  
17 things.

18 As outlined in my full statement, to pursue his  
19 ambitions he is employing a broad toolkit composed of major  
20 military, energy, and political elements. A very high  
21 priority for Mr. Putin, despite enormous domestic problems,  
22 is strengthening and modernizing the Russian military to  
23 reassert power on the world stage. U.S. military leaders  
24 fear that the extensive new capabilities President Putin is  
25 accumulating are being used to pursue an anti-access area-

1 denial strategy against NATO, particularly in the Baltic Sea  
2 regions from Kaliningrad in the Black Sea region, from  
3 Russia's buildup in the Crimea, now in Syria from its  
4 deployment of anti-aircraft capabilities, and the naval  
5 bombardment from the Caspian.

6       There was growing concern within the alliance that  
7 President Putin is using a series of capability deployments  
8 in these sensitive areas to raise the risk, or perceived  
9 risk, of U.S. or coalition military action in these regions.  
10 We see this in Syria, where Russia's deployments are geared  
11 not towards fighting ISIL, but rather towards protecting the  
12 regime of Assad. I believe that the Russian President's  
13 deployment of combat aircraft and sophisticated air  
14 defenses, which are not needed to fight ISIS, are intended  
15 to deter the U.S.-led coalition from establishing a no-fly  
16 zone in northern Syria.

17       Russian military exercises, some conducted on very  
18 short notice and as discussed by the other witnesses, also  
19 pose a significant cause for concern. Major military  
20 maneuvers in the Arctic, joined with China in naval drills  
21 near our Japanese allies, and held major -- and major  
22 exercises, which included tens of thousands of troops, on  
23 NATO's eastern flank. Indeed, in March of 2015, Russia held  
24 an exercise intended to simulate the invasion of Denmark and  
25 the Baltic states. In some cases, the guise of training has

1 been used to mask long-term Russian troop deployments, such  
2 as in Syria last month and in eastern Ukraine, where the  
3 U.S. European Command has estimated there may be as many as  
4 12,000 Russian troops. Russia's use of so-called  
5 "volunteers," or "little green men," which ostensibly offer  
6 Moscow plausible deniability, is another element of the  
7 Kremlin's so-called "hybrid warfare" tactic. We have been  
8 alerted by Moscow that such volunteers may find their way to  
9 Syria very soon. There have also -- we have -- there have  
10 also -- we have also seen the deployment of more aggressive  
11 and more capable Russian naval forces.

12 Finally, there are increasing reports that Russian  
13 military aircraft are violating NATO airspace with their  
14 transponders turned off, raising the risk of civilian  
15 aircraft accidents while violating the sovereignty of our  
16 treaty allies. NATO intercepted some 400 Russian aircraft  
17 flying over Europe in 2014. A number suggest that 2015 will  
18 exceed that total. And, of course, just this week, Russia  
19 violated the sovereign airspace of our Turkish allies.

20 There is another weapon that Mr. Putin has been  
21 utilizing to satisfy his ambitions for quite some time, and  
22 that is energy, energy by seeking to maintain European  
23 dependence on Russian gas and use it as a lever to -- for  
24 manipulation. The members of this committee understand that  
25 Mr. Putin's incursion in the Crimea is, among other things,

1 about exercising political power through the control of  
2 energy and about brandishing the threat of energy scarcity  
3 to intimidate and manipulate vulnerable populations.  
4 Fortunately, Europe is now awakening to the threat and is  
5 investing in redundancies, gas storage hubs, and  
6 interconnectors that reduce Russia's ability to hold  
7 countries hostage.

8         Thirdly, President Putin is working hard to sow  
9 division within the western alliance and undercut the  
10 cohesion of the Euro-Atlantic ark of economic and security  
11 cooperation. He has built links to European party leaders  
12 on the far right and far left in order to foster close  
13 relationships at the political and financial levels, and  
14 made a habit of sustaining old and corrupt alliances, such  
15 as with Syrian President Assad. Just this week, President  
16 Assad noted the importance of the Russia, Iran, Iraq  
17 alliance that's sustaining his regime.

18         So, before us is emerging one of the premier strategic  
19 challenges of the post-Cold War period, and that is doing  
20 what we can do to counter President Putin's retrograde  
21 ambitions in favor of the peaceful and progressive order of  
22 the transatlantic community that the world had envisioned at  
23 the opening of the 21st century.

24         In the face of the strategic environment I've  
25 described, I believe the United States should lead the

1 alliance in developing a three-pronged approach that  
2 includes economic, political, and security components:

3 First, in the economic realm, to underline Mr. Putin's  
4 use of energy as a political weapon, the U.S. should support  
5 the European Union's development of an energy,  
6 telecommunications, and transportation infrastructure  
7 corridor along a north-south axis from the Baltic to the  
8 Adriatic. My full statement provides greater details on  
9 this major strategic initiative, and I ask permission to  
10 submit for the record a comprehensive plan for doing so.

11 Chairman McCain: Without objection.

12 General Jones: I have a copy of the plan right here.

13 Chairman McCain: Without objection.

14 General Jones: There is much we can do, and must do,  
15 to support the development of this critical infrastructure  
16 to complete Europe and counter Mr. Putin's use of energy as  
17 a weapon. So, I would ask your permission, Mr. Chairman, to  
18 make the report a part of the hearing record.

19 Chairman McCain: Without objection.

20 General Jones: Thank you.

21 I recommend the Transatlantic Trade and Investment  
22 Partnership to promote transatlantic growth, prosperity, and  
23 security making the alliance resilient and certainly more  
24 unified. And we should maintain U.S./EU sanctions imposed  
25 in response to Russia's illegal actions in the Ukraine.

1 These sanctions may not have altered Putin's strategic  
2 calculus in the Ukraine, but they have raised a cost to his  
3 actions and left Russia partially economically isolated.

4 Secondly, politically, a central tenet of U.S. strategy  
5 for countering Russia should be to strengthen transatlantic  
6 solidarity and cooperation. American leadership in this  
7 effort will be crucial in fostering a common vision for the  
8 alliance in the face of new and more challenging operating  
9 environments. This should be accompanied by a comprehensive  
10 public diplomacy campaign spotlighting the values that make  
11 the transatlantic community unique and conducive to human  
12 development: free and open markets, respect for human  
13 rights and democratic governance, respect for the rule of  
14 law -- values that stand today in stark contrast to Mr.  
15 Putin's Russia.

16 Part of that effort must be to reaffirm NATO's open-  
17 door policy. At next year's summit in Warsaw, NATO should  
18 admit Montenegro, assuming it has met all political and  
19 military commitments. Doing so would counter Russia's  
20 growing influence in the Balkans and send a powerful signal  
21 that the vision of a united Europe whole and free remains  
22 viable. A similar effort should be made by Washington to  
23 unlock the tragic political conflict within the alliance  
24 that has prevented Macedonia from taking its rightful place  
25 as a NATO member.

1           Third, the security mission. We must enhance NATO  
2 force presence in an eastern Europe to include American  
3 forces. This will be controversial, because some allies now  
4 fear provoking Russia, which will require careful diplomacy.  
5 Given Russia's aggressive exercises and troop positioning on  
6 NATO's eastern flank, I believe we run a greater risk of  
7 conflict by not increasing NATO's presence in central and  
8 eastern Europe. NATO, Mr. Chairman, must become more  
9 proactive, more agile within the alliance in order to  
10 prevent future conflict. I applaud the efforts of the  
11 United States Congress to fund the President's \$1 billion  
12 initiative to enhance the presence of U.S. rotational  
13 forces, air policing, and infrastructure in central eastern  
14 and southeast Europe. This appropriation should continue,  
15 given the ongoing Russian threat to our allies, but U.S.  
16 political leaders should also press our allies to continue  
17 their own contributions to NATO's readiness action plan.  
18 The next summit in Warsaw will be critical to the future of  
19 the alliance.

20           I've offered additional suggestions in my full  
21 statement. They include making resilience a core task of  
22 NATO to complement the NATO's -- the alliance's current core  
23 task of collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis  
24 management, enhancing NATO's cybersecurity capabilities and  
25 responsibilities, empowering the Supreme Allied Commander to



1 conduct rapid troop deployment in response to Russia's  
2 reliance on strategic surprise and hybrid warfare, and  
3 providing robust and well-targeted assistance to the  
4 Ukraine.

5 I support the administration's recent decisions on  
6 long-range counter-battery radars to Ukraine. I believe we  
7 should take additional measures, such as providing the anti-  
8 tank missiles, communications, and intelligence support,  
9 training in counter-electronic warfare capabilities that  
10 have been requested by Kyiv and are in the 2016 NDAA.

11 With the committee's permission, I would like to submit  
12 two items for the hearing record containing proposals by the  
13 Atlantic Council for steps the U.S. Government could  
14 consider in responding to President Putin's actions to  
15 assist our friends and allies in eastern Europe.

16 Mr. Chairman, Senator Reed, and members of the  
17 committee, let me close by saying that we have all been  
18 deeply disappointed by Russia's actions in Syria, the  
19 Ukraine, and in eastern Europe, and the negative effect  
20 these actions have had on our bilateral relationship. I  
21 believe these actions merit careful considerations of the  
22 tough response that all of us have outlined.

23 Having said that, President Putin will not be in power  
24 forever. There will be a Russia beyond him. The U.S. and  
25 our allies should continue to make clear to the Russian

1 people that we believe that Russia has its rightful place in  
2 a united Europe whole and free and at peace, provided that  
3 Russia is willing to respect the sovereignty and the free  
4 will of its neighbors, demonstrate a commitment to democracy  
5 and human rights, and respect the rules of the road in the  
6 international system.

7 Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me the opportunity  
8 to testify before you today, and I look forward to answering  
9 any questions you may have.

10 [The prepared statement of General Jones follows:]

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1 Chairman McCain: Well, I thank you.

2 And I thank the witnesses.

3 After the Russian general knocked on the door of our  
4 embassy to notify us that we had an hour notice that Russian  
5 airstrikes would begin in Syria, the President said he  
6 wasn't going to engage in a proxy war. Secretary Kerry said  
7 this was an opportunity. And our Secretary of Defense said  
8 that this was, quote, "unprofessional." And, in response --  
9 and, of course, deconfliction is our hot -- top priority.  
10 Obviously, that hasn't happened. And now we're -- the  
11 United States is rerouting its flights to avoid Russian  
12 warplanes, not the opposite.

13 I'm curious what kind of signal that sends. And, far  
14 more importantly, this cruise missile strike, I think, has  
15 dimensions and significance that may be, in a short time,  
16 lost on us, because I think it is a seminal event when a  
17 country launches cruise missiles from 900 miles away on a  
18 target that -- on targets that are the people that we have  
19 supported, trained, and equipped, and sent in to fight.

20 So, I guess my question is -- two. One, what is the  
21 overall significance of this latest Russian escalation? And  
22 what does it -- signal does it send to anybody that we would  
23 train, equip, and send into combat that we're going to sit  
24 by and watch them slaughtered by the Russians?

25 General Keane?

1           General Keane: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, the introduction  
2 of the cruise missiles is a -- is testimony to the loss of  
3 precision-guided munitions and missile technology advantage  
4 that we've had for 25 years. For some time now, the Chinese  
5 missile development strategy, the Iranian missile  
6 development strategy, and what Russia is doing also with  
7 missiles and precision-guided munitions, have literally  
8 caught up to the technological advantage that we've had.  
9 And certainly this is the first manifestation of it. We are  
10 the country that used cruise missiles on our adversaries,  
11 and certainly Russians have had this capability, and they're  
12 obviously using it. So, we have to understand that, that  
13 that technological advantage that we've had is gone. And  
14 it's in countries that we're in competition with; that is,  
15 Iran, China, and Russia.

16           In terms of the provocation, you know, I'm absolutely  
17 convinced that Russia -- you know, the psychological bully  
18 that they are with a national chip on their shoulder since  
19 the collapse of the Soviet Union in '91, I believe they are  
20 absolutely convinced they can have their way with us. And  
21 this campaign that they're doing in Syria was certainly  
22 calculated with that thought in mind. When you think about  
23 it, this is -- as I said in my opening line, it's  
24 unprecedented for them to move this distance, establish an  
25 airbase in another country that, for their purposes, is

1 isolated and vulnerable, from a military perspective. But,  
2 they established this base with confidence that they will be  
3 able to control the airspace that they want to use, that the  
4 United States will not impede any of their air operations  
5 and their support for ground operations. And they  
6 calculated that, and I -- and it turned out to be the case.

7 Not only have they done that, but much as we're doing  
8 in China, who is building airbases in archipelagos in the  
9 South China Sea, as opposed to flying over those bases and  
10 -- because they're international waters, we're avoiding  
11 them. So, right now, air operations in Iraq is avoidance  
12 operations. We have an enemy, called ISIS, but we're now --  
13 that enemy, called ISIS in Syria, because of Russian control  
14 of the airspace and desire to fly wherever they want, when  
15 they want, we're avoiding that. And what we should have  
16 said right from the outset is that, "We're going to fly our  
17 airplanes wherever we want, when we want, and what you  
18 should do" --

19 Chairman McCain: And what's your --

20 General Keane: -- "is avoid that, or else face  
21 confrontation," and put our foot down.

22 Chairman McCain: And what --

23 General Keane: And we're doing the opposite. And I  
24 think they recognize that.

25 Chairman McCain: And what is your response when, as I

1 received just last night from -- on one of the television  
2 shows, "That means you want war with Russia, Senator  
3 McCain." Do you want war with Russia, General Keane?

4 General Keane: Of course not. But, I think there are  
5 prudent actions that you can take to discourage an ally. If  
6 we -- the other calculation that Russia has made, and it's  
7 been manifested as a result of the red line in Syria, the  
8 annexation of Crimea, the movement into Ukraine, and a sort  
9 of deniability that he gives his adversaries by the kinds of  
10 deceptive ways he uses military force -- I mean, I believe  
11 his calculation -- and it's a correct one -- is that we get  
12 paralyzed by the fear of escalation and by the fear of  
13 confrontation. And he understands that. And he uses that  
14 to his advantage. And he's going to continue to do it.

15 And I'm absolutely convinced -- I disagree with the  
16 Ambassador -- I don't believe the Syria operation in any  
17 way, shape, or form will hold him back for exerting his  
18 national interests in the Baltics and eastern Europe and  
19 breaking down the strategic buffer that he clearly wants to  
20 have. And he will use this -- I'm convinced of it -- as a  
21 platform and foundation for more aggression against that  
22 buffer in eastern Europe. And he --

23 Chairman McCain: Ms. Conley.

24 General Keane: -- will do it because he knows he can  
25 and because he knows he will get away with it.

1 Chairman McCain: Ms. Conley.

2 Ms. Conley: I think President Putin has now clearly  
3 said that there will be no international regime change,  
4 based on his understanding of the Libya operation in 2011,  
5 where the U.N. Security Council basically, in his view, gave  
6 a green light to changing regime. He is a status quo power,  
7 and the power he is the most concerned about, as Ambassador  
8 Sestanovich said, is his own power and maintaining his own  
9 power. But, that also projects to other powers. And so, I  
10 think right now this is his strongest message.

11 He is also sending a clear message to President Obama  
12 that he is not a regional power, he is a global power, and  
13 he has extensive reach. And I think, again, the cruise  
14 missiles demonstrate.

15 We're also seeing where Russia's military modernization  
16 and its significant increases in its defense spending has  
17 paid off. It can move quickly, and it does have  
18 sophisticated weaponry that it can use. And I think we're  
19 seeing that. And for countries that are quite interested in  
20 purchasing Russian equipment, this is also a benefit of  
21 seeing the level of sophistication that it has and will be  
22 willing to sell.

23 Mr. Putin acknowledges strength, and he exploits  
24 weakness. And our Syrian policy has been a demonstration of  
25 lack of resolve and weakness, of which he has been able to

1 exploit. Now, there -- in some ways, in talking to some of  
2 my Polish and central European colleagues, you know, they're  
3 advocating, "Please, send two Russian divisions to Syria.  
4 Get the heat off of my border and bog Syria -- bog the  
5 Russians down in Syria." But, this -- he can move very  
6 quickly, and he can turn the temperature up when he needs,  
7 and temperature down. And this is where we are constantly  
8 reacting to his agenda. We're getting out of his way. We  
9 have not set a strategic framework to say, "These are what  
10 our rules" --

11 And I would just finally say, last year President  
12 Putin, in his address to the Valdai Discussion Club, his  
13 speech was entitled "The World Order: New Rules or a Game  
14 Without Rules?" His rules. This is Putin's rules. And  
15 he's making us work with his game. And I think we have to  
16 return to our rules, which were established at the end of  
17 the second World War, international legal norms. And that's  
18 what we have to get back to.

19 Chairman McCain: Ambassador?

20 Ambassador Sestanovich: Thank you, Senator.

21 You know, I think General Keane is right about  
22 something very important, and that is, this is a kind of  
23 situation that we didn't face in the Cold War. Because, in  
24 the Cold War, there was a kind of constraint on Russian --  
25 Soviet activity, because they -- as you say, General --



1     feared escalation.  Since the Cold War, American use of  
2     military power has actually been almost entirely free of a  
3     fear of Russian interference.  And what Putin has done is  
4     change that.  He's said, "You cannot act independently  
5     anymore without worrying about my actions."  And he's been  
6     the first mover in this case.  I don't think the difference  
7     is so much a technological one as a political one.  He has  
8     backfooted us by taking the first action and saying, "You  
9     deconflict with me."  Obviously, our preference would be for  
10    him to think he had to deconflict with us.  So, that --

11           Chairman McCain:  Classic example of this is the air  
12    operations.

13           Ambassador Sestanovich:  That is a very big change.  We  
14    now are being told by the Russians, "We're going to be free  
15    to act independently without being checked by you."  That's  
16    -- that is not only something we haven't experienced since  
17    the end of the Cold War, it really is a change, even from  
18    the Cold War itself.

19           But, I think we should not forget what some of our  
20    advantages are here.  I think our discussion has been very  
21    bilateral, as though it's us against the Russians,  
22    forgetting --

23           Chairman McCain:  Could I -- I'm way --

24           Ambassador Sestanovich:  Yeah.

25           Chairman McCain:  -- over my time.

1 Ambassador Sestanovich: Yeah.

2 Chairman McCain: If you could --

3 Ambassador Sestanovich: I just want to -- I -- let me  
4 finish the thought.

5 Chairman McCain: Okay, sure.

6 Ambassador Sestanovich: We have, in Europe and in the  
7 Middle East, an array of states that want to work with us,  
8 and who, working with us, can actually check the Russians  
9 and limit this kind of independent action. One of the big  
10 things about our passive Syria policy over the past several  
11 years is that we've not done anything in the way of  
12 coalition management to create a block of states that would  
13 keep the Russians out.

14 Chairman McCain: Thank you.

15 General Jones, could you hold your answer? Because I'm  
16 way over time, and --

17 Senator Reed: No, go ahead.

18 Chairman McCain: All right, please go ahead, General  
19 Jones.

20 General Jones: Very quickly.

21 I think we've been off balance in Syria since Assad  
22 violated the red lines and used chemical and biological  
23 weapons on his own people. The penalty for that should have  
24 been quick and decisive. Many people advocated -- I was one  
25 of them -- that a no-fly zone and a safety zone for refugees

1 be created in Syria. And it went along with international  
2 cooperation.

3 I think where we are now is that Putin is basically  
4 offering a trade, "Assad stays in power and then we'll take  
5 care of ISIL." And I think that's really what it boils down  
6 to. I think we should consider really elevating NATO in  
7 this, an emergency meeting of the North Atlantic Council, to  
8 shore up and demonstrate the alliance's resolve, not only  
9 for eastern Europe, but also in the current Middle Eastern  
10 problem.

11 Thank you.

12 Chairman McCain: Senator Reed.

13 Senator Reed: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

14 General Jones, in your testimony, you touched very, I  
15 think, insightfully on the whole issue of energy policy. We  
16 have a very contentious and confrontational Russia right now  
17 at \$50 a barrel in oil. If it swings back to \$100 a barrel,  
18 we could be in real dire straits. So, that raises a huge  
19 issue, which I don't think that we're going to settle here  
20 at this panel, but we should be thinking strategically, in  
21 terms of, How do we, in the world market, maintain a lower  
22 price of oil? Because that's what, basically, will take  
23 away a lot of his ability to be confrontational. Is that  
24 fair?

25 General Jones: Senator Reed, I really believe in this

1 and the fact that the United States still does not have a  
2 strategic energy policy, I -- there isn't one that I can  
3 find anywhere that's written, either classified or  
4 unclassified. This is a -- an asset in our quiver that is  
5 incredible, in terms of future potential. And the sooner, I  
6 think, that we understand that energy security is a vital  
7 part of our toolkit, in terms of deciding what we're going  
8 to do and not going to do in the rest of the world, I don't  
9 think we fully grasp how the energy situation has changed  
10 the power balance in the world.

11 Mr. Putin relied on that. He -- it's now -- he's paid  
12 an economic price for it. I think there are ways in which,  
13 with U.S. leadership, particularly with Europe, that we can  
14 continue to help our friends and allies wean themselves off  
15 of their dependence on Russian energy, which is -- will  
16 continue to create his economic isolation.

17 Senator Reed: Let me ask you another question, General  
18 Jones. As the National Security Advisor, I assume you  
19 wrestled with this issue, which is: Many of the proposals,  
20 in terms of countering the Assad regime, would require overt  
21 attacks against Assad's forces. Do we have the legal  
22 authority to do that? Most of what we've done, legally, has  
23 been under the AUMF, which has been in effect for more than  
24 a decade. But, do -- are there legal problems that the  
25 President would confront if he, in fact, decided he was

1 going to take more dramatic action?

2 General Jones: In direct confrontation --

3 Senator Reed: With Syria.

4 General Jones: I'm sure there are.

5 Senator Reed: Yeah.

6 General Jones: I'm sure there are.

7 Senator Reed: So, the --

8 General Jones: But, those -- but, that's -- that

9 doesn't mean we shouldn't confront them and resolve them.

10 Senator Reed: I absolutely --

11 General Jones: Yeah.

12 Senator Reed: -- agree.

13 General Jones: Right.

14 Senator Reed: I think that, in many cases, the debates

15 -- assumes that these are policy issues alone, that they can

16 be done by decision --

17 General Jones: Right.

18 Senator Reed: -- immediately, where, in fact, there

19 are -- I think we have to be very careful. I know Senator

20 McCain has been extraordinarily eloquent about the issues

21 involving legal authorities and they can use -- when we can

22 use them, how do they constrain us, how do they enable us.

23 But, let me thank you.

24 I'll -- finally, and I will ask for a quick response,

25 and I'll ask the Ambassador and then I'll -- anyone else

1 wants to chime in. The decisive ability to change the facts  
2 on the ground in Syria is somehow ground forces, in my view.  
3 I don't think airpower alone, by any side, is going to  
4 decisively sort of settle the issue. When it comes to the  
5 Russian engagement, they have several options, but the three  
6 primary options would be to rely on the Syrian forces that  
7 are there with their air support; second, to use Russian  
8 advisors, command-and-control apparatus, but not troops,  
9 with their airpower; and a third would be, as -- there's  
10 been some suggestions of Russian formations, et cetera.

11 Mr. Ambassador, just your comments on those options.  
12 Would they be used? Is there something we're missing?

13 Ambassador Sestanovich: Senator, to work through those  
14 in exactly the order you suggest, hoping not to get to  
15 number three, but for Russian officials already to be  
16 mentioning volunteers suggests to me we should worry that  
17 that's already entrain, and that their analysis is, they  
18 can't succeed without it. If that's what it takes to  
19 succeed, I think there could be some deployments, and maybe  
20 not too far down the road.

21 Senator Reed: Any other comments by the panelists?  
22 Ms. Conley? General Keane?

23 General Keane: Yeah. I think they're going to wait a  
24 little bit. They know full well that IRGC is with Syrian  
25 army units. They know that the IRGC is leading, in some

1 cases, the local militia, but, in all cases, advising them.  
2 And they also know that there's about 7,000 Hezbollah and  
3 about 3,000 Iraqi Shi'a militia that are being returned from  
4 Iraq. They were there in greater numbers at one time or  
5 another. Russian doesn't -- Russia doesn't have a clue  
6 whether this ground force is going to be effective or not.  
7 And I think they're going to wait to see if they have to  
8 inject something. And then if they do, I think they would  
9 go through an escalation of advisors and other things before  
10 they would actually put direct combats.

11 Listen, Putin is no fool, here. He's got Afghanistan  
12 in his rearview mirror, 10 years -- a 10-year commitment  
13 that really hurt his country and lost confidence of his  
14 people in the national decision authority, et cetera. So, I  
15 think they will be guarded about their introduction of  
16 significant combat forces.

17 Senator Reed: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe.

20 Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21 I'd -- first of all, I really appreciate the very blunt  
22 answers we're getting here. And we've been getting them in  
23 this committee for quite a while now. We had -- not just  
24 General Dunford, but others -- Clapper -- coming in and  
25 making statements that I think are really pretty courageous

1 and talking about the seriousness that we're facing right  
2 now.

3 When the Ambassador mentioned -- and I was prepared to  
4 ask this question before, because I'm reading from the  
5 Council of Foreign Relations now that you had disagreed with  
6 General Dunford in this respect. And I noticed three  
7 nervous people while you were saying that. I'd like to have  
8 each one respond as to whether or not you agree with the  
9 statement of General Dunford, in terms of the existential  
10 seriousness of this.

11 Chairman McCain: Ladies first.

12 Ms. Conley: Thank you. Well, I -- what I understood  
13 is, General Dunford's statement was that Russia is the only  
14 power that can wipe the United States off the planet with  
15 its nuclear arsenal.

16 Senator Inhofe: Let me interrupt you to --

17 Ms. Conley: Yeah.

18 Senator Inhofe: -- say what he said to this committee.  
19 It was -- and this is a quote -- he said, "Russia presents  
20 the greatest threat to our national security."

21 Ms. Conley: And I think, based on their ability and as  
22 well as the focus that we have seen over the last several  
23 years on strengthening and modernizing their nuclear  
24 strategic deterrent and their nuclear submarine forces. And  
25 I think, also, because we have seen, over the last several



1 years, beginning in 2008 with the Russian invasion of  
2 Georgia, that the Kremlin is fully able and willing to use  
3 military means to accomplish its political objectives. It  
4 is not -- you know, it does not believe it will be  
5 prevented. Now, that's within its own neighborhood.

6 So, I think that is why the Chairman of the Joint  
7 Chiefs of Staff is very concerned about Russian activities  
8 and aggression and their willingness to use their --

9 Senator Inhofe: And you --

10 Ms. Conley: -- force.

11 Senator Inhofe: -- you agree with him.

12 Ms. Conley: I do agree with him. And I think  
13 yesterday's display of the cruise missiles reinforces  
14 exactly what General Dunford was saying.

15 Senator Inhofe: Do you agree, General Jones?

16 General Jones: I do agree with that.

17 Senator Inhofe: Let me tell you a concern that I had.  
18 This was in yesterday's Politico. It was talking about --  
19 Captain Jeff Davis told reporters the United States has a  
20 good awareness about the skies over -- has begun routing --  
21 rerouting its airstrikes so they'll pass clear of the  
22 Russians. He said that we have taken some actions to ensure  
23 the safe separation of aircraft.

24 I look at that, that they are dictating what we're  
25 doing with our aircraft in making those determinations while

1 we're sitting back and doing what is the most effective way  
2 to respond to them. Do you -- am I wrong?

3 General Keane: Well, it certainly appears that way.  
4 And, listen, we have full visibility of the airspace and  
5 also these airfields that are in Syria. We have very  
6 sophisticated radars for this purpose. Actually, a little  
7 bit better than the Russians. And we can actually track an  
8 airplane taking off from any airfield in Syria, and follow  
9 that airplane. So, we have positive control, in the sense  
10 of where are the Russian airplanes and what are -- where are  
11 our airplanes? So, the idea that, to avoid some kind of air  
12 conflict, that we would stop or curtail our operations  
13 against ISIS, which we've said we were going to defeat,  
14 makes no sense to me.

15 Senator Inhofe: Have you ever seen this in your long  
16 career in the military before? Of us responding --

17 General Keane: No, I have not. I can't recall  
18 anything like it.

19 Senator Inhofe: Yeah.

20 Just briefly on the Ukraine situation, do you think  
21 that this lull that we're experiencing right now might be  
22 due to the fact that they are -- as we've pointed out, the  
23 military is strong, but they're in a weakened position,  
24 financially, economically, that maybe they can't -- they're  
25 not able to do it? And the reason I'm asking that -- I was

1 over there when they had their parliamentary elections, and  
2 they -- for the first time in 96 years, there's not one  
3 Communist in their Parliament. And I think that's very  
4 significant, and I would look for him to stop the lull and  
5 get back in. Do you think that the lull is going to last a  
6 while? Or do you think --

7 General Keane: You're talking about in Russian  
8 military modernization?

9 Senator Inhofe: Uh-huh.

10 General Keane: Yeah.

11 Senator Inhofe: No. No, I'm talking about what's  
12 happening right now with the aggressive nature of Putin in  
13 the Ukraine. It's slowed down a little bit now. Do you  
14 think that it's because they don't --

15 General Keane: Yes. I -- my sense of it is, that is  
16 just a pause.

17 Senator Inhofe: Yeah.

18 General Keane: You know, politically, I believe he  
19 achieved what he wanted, and that is this government that  
20 was anti-Russian, to a sense, has turned its head away from  
21 the thought that it would be economically integrated into  
22 Europe or militarily integrated. He sort of -- he has  
23 accomplished that. But, the fact that he's building those  
24 two bases there, Senator, tells you that he has not given up  
25 on --

1 Senator Inhofe: Yeah

2 General Keane: -- more activity in eastern Ukraine.

3 Senator Inhofe: Yeah. Yeah.

4 Lastly, the -- you made the comment, Ms. Conley, that  
5 -- and, as you know, we -- as all of you know, we just  
6 passed our defense authorization bill. There's been a veto  
7 threat on parts of this. And this very much concerns us.  
8 You had said something to -- during your statement. I don't  
9 think it was in your public -- your published statement.  
10 But, you said you are very supportive of what we're trying  
11 to do with NDAA. Would you be specific as to what is really  
12 in there that you approve of and that you are enthusiastic  
13 about?

14 Ms. Conley: Thank you, Senator.

15 And, just to your previous question, I think Mr. Putin  
16 is dialing it down in Ukraine because he would like the  
17 European Union to lift sanctions, and they have to make that  
18 decision in the next couple of months. So, I think he's  
19 trying to reduce that --

20 Senator Inhofe: NDAA.

21 Ms. Conley: On the NDAA, specifically, there is an  
22 amendment that speaks about looking at the Arctic and seeing  
23 the strategic picture of the Arctic, assessing and making  
24 those assessments of what the capability gaps are. I think  
25 it is time -- we have studied this issue, and there are pile

1 and piles of studies, but we now have to look at this region  
2 more strategically. And within the NDAA, there is a  
3 specific discussion about how to look at the Arctic. I  
4 think it's also -- in the NDAA, there's also discussion  
5 about Poland and east -- and looking at increasing our force  
6 posture. These are exactly the strong signals that we need  
7 to send, and I thank the committee for their thoughtfulness  
8 on trying to get at this problem.

9 Senator Inhofe: Yeah, well, it's -- help us get it  
10 through.

11 Thank you.

12 Chairman McCain: Senator King.

13 Senator King: Thank you, to the panel. This has been  
14 very thought-provoking and very helpful.

15 I do -- I share your concerns about the Arctic and  
16 what's going on there strategically. I'm going to defer to  
17 my colleague from Alaska, who I -- will -- am quite  
18 confident will discuss that issue in some detail.

19 Senator Sullivan: You're correct.

20 [Laughter.]

21 Senator King: I've -- yeah, I'm a mindreader. I don't  
22 --

23 Let's talk about Syria for a minute. It seems to me,  
24 if you boil it down to its most essential element, Putin  
25 wants Assad in more than we want him out. He's willing to

1 make a commitment that we haven't been willing to make over  
2 the past 2 or 3 years. Our policy has been a -- benign  
3 neglect is too strong a term, but it's been a kind of -- go  
4 slow, hope that momentum would eventually push him out. And  
5 apparently there was some progress being made this summer,  
6 and Putin decided he was going to reverse that. And we're  
7 faced with a decision of, How important is it for us to get  
8 rid of Assad? And is it worth risking a war?

9 I have this historical dilemma of whether this is the  
10 Sudetenland of 1938 or Sarajevo in 1914. I'm not sure it's  
11 worth starting World War III over Assad. The Archduke is  
12 long forgotten, and, at some point, Assad will be, as well.  
13 But, that's the strategic dilemma, is, What is our real  
14 interest?

15 Now, I do think -- and, General Keane, you mentioned --  
16 I think it was very significant -- that Russia does have a  
17 legitimate serious fear about ISIL and about Islamic  
18 jihadism. Perhaps that's an opportunity for us to make  
19 common cause with them, just as we did on the chemical  
20 weapons issue. And countries ultimately only act in their  
21 own interest. And this is a place where we do have a  
22 coincidence of interest, and perhaps that's an area that we  
23 can focus upon, separate from the issue of Assad.

24 Finally, Ms. Conley, I was fascinated by your  
25 discussion of Iron Curtain 2.0. It seems to me what we're

1 talking about here today is Containment 2.0. We're talking  
2 about a strategy of, What do we do with Russia? Is it  
3 expansionist or is it -- is this historic Russian paranoia,  
4 going back to Napoleon and Hitler, and feelings of threat  
5 from the West? Are they trying to build a defensive  
6 perimeter, or are they -- do they want to ultimately control  
7 France and England and the United States? How do you --  
8 what is it they want?

9 General Jones: I'll take a stab at that. The -- I  
10 think, deep in the -- as I mentioned in my remarks, deep in  
11 Mr. Putin's thought process is, he wants to correct what he  
12 sees as a -- an injustice with regard to the -- how the Cold  
13 War ended. He wants his borders and --

14 Senator King: But, does that mean he wants to take  
15 control of --

16 General Jones: No.

17 Senator King: -- Poland again, for example?

18 General Jones: No. But, I think that it does mean  
19 that he will push his borders away from Russia. He wants a  
20 -- he wants peripheral states, as much as possible. And  
21 he's consumed -- I honestly believe he's consumed by this  
22 idea that we are his natural enemies. I mean, he -- he is  
23 the type -- he -- I define his leadership as a negative type  
24 of leadership, in the sense that people like him need an  
25 enemy to make themselves look good. And it's like the --

1           Senator King: Well, clearly that's what he's doing  
2 politically.

3           General Jones: Exactly. And --

4           Senator King: Take the people's mind off the lousy  
5 Russian --

6           General Jones: Exactly.

7           Senator King: -- economy.

8           General Jones: So -- but, he's been successful,  
9 because we -- he's moving faster than we can act, than we've  
10 acted. NATO, General Breedlove, has done some very  
11 innovative things, within certain constraints that he faces,  
12 in terms of the organization and how NATO makes decisions.  
13 But, I think Mr. Putin will pay attention when he sees  
14 decisive action. Now, what form that's going to take, we're  
15 going to have to wait and see. But, he's -- I -- he's going  
16 to continue to do this -- to exhibit this kind of behavior  
17 until he's confronted with a --

18           Senator King: I've always thought of Russian foreign  
19 policy as like a thief in a hotel that tries every door  
20 until he finds one that's open. And, as long as their doors  
21 are closed, as long as NATO exists and is vigorous and  
22 represents a line, that's the policy that I think you're  
23 recommending.

24           General Jones: Exactly. But, he has not seen that  
25 yet, so until we demonstrate that -- and American leadership



1 is absolutely essential in creating the conditions that will  
2 show that all doors are securely locked and that he can't --

3 Senator King: But, I think it's awfully important, as  
4 you pointed out, the first -- it was interesting, your first  
5 point was economic.

6 General Jones: Exactly.

7 Senator King: That was what ultimately brought about  
8 the decline of the Soviet Union, and that also is what can  
9 undermine this new expansion.

10 General Jones: Exactly.

11 Ms. Conley: Senator King, I think every great power  
12 must have a sphere of influence, and Mr. Putin is doing it  
13 by force.

14 Regarding NATO, he would seek to undermine -- if he can  
15 put a -- you know, just a -- run a train through NATO  
16 credibility, that's the best thing he could do. He wants  
17 NATO to collapse. How do you get to a new bargain is if --  
18 you know, the Warsaw Pact disintegrated, NATO survived. The  
19 only way you get to a new European security architecture,  
20 and the only way you get this grand bargain, where, "This is  
21 yours and I'll let you keep that," is, you have to undermine  
22 the credibility of the NATO alliance. So, if he can divide  
23 the alliance, if he can put -- if he can provoke a  
24 government for taking actions that other NATO allies won't  
25 support because -- sort of the Georgia scenario -- you

1 provoke until there's an action, and then you blame the  
2 victim for doing that. That's the Ukraine scenario, as  
3 well. This divides the alliance. He believes that there's  
4 a civilizational challenge here, that the great Russian  
5 civilization has to fight against the decadence of the West.

6 And so, there is a slight ideological component to  
7 this, so it's not about invading Poland. It's so eroding  
8 America and NATO's credibility that it just sort of  
9 dissolves on its own. And therefore, Russia can exert its  
10 own influence and its own power, and it's demonstrating that  
11 it, in itself, is a superior model of development.

12 General Keane: You know, piling onto that, I totally  
13 agree. This is not the occupation of his strategic buffer  
14 on his border. The burden of that, you know, is something  
15 that he doesn't want. This is about fragmenting the NATO  
16 alliance. I clearly think it's a strategic issue for them.  
17 I think they're going to probe to see how they can best do  
18 that, politically and militarily. They already know that  
19 Portugal, Spain, and Canadians are doubtful participants. I  
20 think they're going to -- they will use the Baltics, likely  
21 as the best vehicle because of the Russian minority  
22 population there. You have -- you've got to believe there's  
23 people like Jim and myself that are sitting around Putin and  
24 throwing the question on the table, "Will Angela Merkel  
25 really respond to an incursion in the Baltics with the

1 little green men and put her infantry in there to thrust  
2 them out?" I mean, that's -- I don't know the answer to  
3 that. And just the fact that that question is there gives  
4 them some leverage. So, I think that's what this is really  
5 about.

6 The second thing, in reference to, How could we  
7 cooperate with Russia? -- I thought we had a lost  
8 opportunity, post-9/11, because of Russia's experience with  
9 radical Islam. Putin was the first guy that called the  
10 President of the United States, you know, based on what  
11 happened here. And this is someplace where we could truly  
12 work to cooperate. They have huge experience with radical  
13 Islam. They obviously have great concerns about it. We've  
14 been involved in it now for 15 years ourselves. We actually  
15 were involved in it years before that, but we never  
16 responded.

17 So, this is an area where I believe we need a global  
18 alliance to deal with it, and I think this is an area where  
19 the United States and Russia could exercise some leadership  
20 together to put together that alliance.

21 Senator King: And I believe Russia is prepared to do  
22 that. At least they've indicated over the summer that they  
23 are.

24 Thank you very much.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 Chairman McCain: Ambassador, do you want to chime in  
2 here? You --

3 Ambassador Sestanovich: Let me just add one thing to  
4 this picture of Putin's view of Europe, because I do think  
5 he imagines that he can, with a combination of assets, be  
6 the dominant power in Europe, because, above all, Europe is  
7 divided, unable to act in a way that just -- he has  
8 expressed his contempt for. But, I don't think we should  
9 underestimate the lessons that he's learned over the past  
10 couple of years. He has been surprised by the way in which  
11 the United States and Europe have responded to the Ukraine  
12 crisis. He expected this to go much more easily for him.  
13 And it has been a chastening experience.

14 Chairman McCain: Wow. I don't think the Ukrainians  
15 believe that.

16 Senator Wicker.

17 Senator Wicker: General Keane, to what extent did this  
18 surprise action by Russia in Syria represent an intelligence  
19 failure?

20 General Keane: Well, I don't know, myself, what we do  
21 know and what the President has been told. Just seeing the  
22 reaction, certainly, of the National Command Authority, it  
23 appears, by every indication, that, you know, we didn't have  
24 much forewarning of this, you know, other than when he  
25 started to deceptively bring his airplanes in. You know, he

1 flew his fighters in underneath his large cargo aircraft so  
2 they wouldn't be picked up on radar, and then he was -- it  
3 was obvious that he was constructing something at the base.  
4 I think the first signs that I believe we knew something  
5 were physical signs that something was changing at the  
6 airbase. I don't know that for a fact, because I'm not  
7 privileged to have those classified briefings anymore.

8 Senator Wicker: Not -- General Jones, it's not  
9 comforting about our intelligence capability there, is it?

10 General Jones: I think we were surprised by that.

11 Senator Wicker: Thank you very much.

12 Let me say that, as outrageous as Mr. Putin's actions  
13 have been in Syria, there's one thing you can say for him.  
14 He's standing by his only friend in the region. And so, let  
15 me ask you this, General Keane. To the extent that Mr.  
16 Putin and the people around him are looking at the Baltic  
17 states, what signals are they looking for about the  
18 decisions this administration is about to make with regard  
19 to Afghanistan? And what will that say about our resolve to  
20 stand by people who've taken our side in very important  
21 areas of the world?

22 General Keane: Yeah. That's a great question. I  
23 think this is one of Putin's major points that he's making  
24 strategically, is that he's -- he will stand by his friends  
25 and his allies, and he's willing to put muscle to that to

1 accomplish that. And I think -- I suspect Putin was  
2 somewhat in disbelief to watch America abandon Mubarak in  
3 Egypt, to watch America abandon Iraq, to watch America  
4 retreat from Yemen, and to watch America retreat from Libya.  
5 And he has a different playbook entirely from that. And  
6 here comes Afghanistan, as you just mentioned. I think  
7 we're going to make this decision: a force level that will  
8 not be that effective in helping to maintain security and  
9 stability in Afghanistan and will further put the country at  
10 risk. That will be read by Putin as another sign of America  
11 arbitrarily making decisions about the conditions of a war  
12 zone and, because we no longer want to be in it, moving away  
13 from it despite those conditions. Certainly, our allies  
14 have all seen this track record of retreat and withdrawal,  
15 and obviously it has to give them concerns.

16         You know as well as I do that anybody that talks to  
17 people in the Middle East region -- there is not a country  
18 in the Middle East who we have a relationship with who has  
19 -- who doesn't have doubts about America, in terms of its  
20 reliability and its trustworthiness to back them up in times  
21 of peril. That is a fact, and it's indisputable. I haven't  
22 talked to a Baltic leader, but I'm certain they have some  
23 issues with it. I also know, though, that they truly  
24 appreciate the forward positioning of troops and airpower in  
25 their country, because that is a positive sign.

1           Senator Wicker: General Jones, those are pretty strong  
2 words by General Keane. Would you care to follow up on  
3 those?

4           General Jones: I don't think there's any doubt that,  
5 in the areas that we deal with, particularly in the Middle  
6 East, that our reliability factor has suffered a serious  
7 blow over the last few years. Wasn't intended that way. I  
8 -- you know, I thought that the announcement of a pivot  
9 towards Asia was a mistake to announce it that way, because  
10 when you pivot toward something, you're pivoting away from  
11 something, and the Arabs took it quite differently than  
12 what, perhaps, we intended.

13          Senator Wicker: You know, I don't remember being a  
14 part of that decision as a Member of Congress for the last  
15 21 years.

16          Let me see if I can sneak a question in for Ms. Conley.  
17 It seems to me, as an advocate -- as a strong advocate of  
18 Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, that the Russians have  
19 been eating our lunch lately when it comes to the  
20 information war. How important is this? And do you agree  
21 with my assessment?

22          Ms. Conley: Senator, I fully agree with your  
23 assessment. Unfortunately, the tools that were successful  
24 during the Cold War -- Radio Free Europe, Voice of America  
25 -- are no longer the tools that are going to be able to

1 penetrate an incredibly and sophisticated strategic  
2 communications campaign. I was in Bulgaria, 3 weeks ago,  
3 where Russian oligarchs and firms have basically purchased  
4 every media outlet in Bulgaria. There is no ability to  
5 penetrate that. And they're not listening to Voice of  
6 America. When you go into eastern Estonia, to Narva, they  
7 are only listening to Russian media, and they're given a  
8 completely different universe that they're living in. We  
9 have seen the efficiency of Russian trolls and tweeting  
10 incorrect information that's happening in the United States  
11 that can, you know, cause concern. We are not able, at this  
12 moment, to counter this campaign, but we need to employ a  
13 much more effective strategy.

14 I don't know if it's government propaganda, but I think  
15 it's a very sophisticated plan that works with social media  
16 outlets, those that are still open in Russia, although  
17 they're very few, and they're blocked repeatedly. But, we  
18 must work much harder at focusing on European public  
19 opinion, which is quite negative, as well as in Russia.

20 But, this is the great challenge of our time, and we  
21 really don't have an effective answer.

22 Senator Wicker: Thank you.

23 Chairman McCain: Senator Cotton.

24 Senator Cotton: Thank you.

25 I want to return to a point that General Keane was



1 discussing earlier. The Pentagon confirmed, yesterday, that  
2 American pilots are now being told to alter their routes to  
3 get out of the way of Russian aircraft. In your long  
4 career, you said you can't recall a time in which that's  
5 happened. Does that apply to the entire military? Can you  
6 recall a time in which any American troop has ever been told  
7 to change his action to avoid an enemy?

8 General Keane: I don't have a direct reference for it.  
9 There probably is something along those lines, but I don't  
10 -- in modern warfare, since the United States has had global  
11 responsibility, I don't have a reference for it.

12 Senator Cotton: General Jones, you have a long and  
13 distinguished career, as well. Can you recall a time in  
14 which -- told American troops to avoid an enemy?

15 General Jones: No.

16 Senator Cotton: I certainly haven't served as long as  
17 you two have, but I can't recall receiving or giving such an  
18 order, either. America doesn't avoid our enemies.

19 General Keane, you also said that Vladimir Putin is no  
20 dummy. He recalls the experience of Afghanistan when they  
21 lost thousands of lives and it made the Soviet leadership  
22 very unpopular with the Russian people. The key part of --  
23 one key part of Afghanistan was U.S. active intervention in  
24 providing billions of dollars worth of weapons and support  
25 to various Afghan fighting forces. Is that correct?

1           General Keane:  Yes, most definitely.

2           Senator Cotton:  Is there any reason to think that  
3 Vladimir Putin is going to repeat the experience in Syria  
4 that the Soviet Union had in Afghanistan if there's not that  
5 kind of peer competitor there to help check through active  
6 intervention?

7           General Keane:  The -- in reference to what -- what  
8 actions are you speaking to that he would take?

9           Senator Cotton:  I am actually speaking of U.S.  
10 actions.  We all know what Ronald Reagan did in Afghanistan  
11 in the Cold War.  Is Vladimir Putin apt to face the same  
12 kind of quagmire that Soviets faced in Afghanistan in the --  
13 given the complete lack of action of the United States in  
14 Syria?

15          General Keane:  Yeah, right.  The -- clearly, what we  
16 have done in Syria, one, on the side to support the  
17 opposition forces, in my judgment, from the beginning, has  
18 been totally and completely inadequate.  And we have had  
19 very competent people on President Obama's national security  
20 team that were advocating a much more robust strategy, as  
21 far back as 2012.  Others advocating it before that.  And  
22 the administration has never moved.  What they did move is  
23 covertly dealing with the CIA-trained force to provide them  
24 with some weapons capability.  But, that is not sufficient,  
25 and we -- despite all of that -- think of this -- despite

1 all of that, because of the weaknesses of the Syrian regime  
2 -- that army's down to about 120,000 from 220-plus,  
3 desertions, broken equipment, using one or two aircraft a  
4 day -- one or two aircraft a month, morale low, many of the  
5 conscripts that they should be bringing into the service are  
6 the young men that are fleeing into Europe as part of the  
7 refugees -- so, there's real problems there. Despite our  
8 faulty programs, the opposition forces, to include the al-  
9 Qaeda, have been able to put this regime still in jeopardy  
10 for the second time. And, unfortunately, what's going to  
11 take place now, I think, is, Putin is going to be successful  
12 in supporting the Syrian -- to push back on many of these  
13 gains. And I don't think we're going to do anything more  
14 than what we are doing to help the opposition forces. Those  
15 decisions have been made. I don't believe the President's  
16 going to take any action, you know, to protect them, which  
17 he could, by establishing free zones for them, and certainly  
18 some other actions that he could take to protect them, as I  
19 mentioned in my statement.

20 So, I think we are where we are, in terms of U.S.  
21 support. And, as it pertains to the rest of Syria, we don't  
22 have a strategy to defeat ISIS in Syria. It doesn't exist.

23 Senator Cotton: I, regrettably, agree about our policy  
24 in Syria.

25 Ambassador Sestanovich, in your statement, point five,

1 you say that, "We should all worry about where Russia's  
2 reckless behavior will lead next. Most of us have been  
3 wrong in anticipating Russian actions in the past couple of  
4 years." I would agree with that, as well. So, I would have  
5 a question for the panel about the future, given what  
6 General Keane just said.

7 My son has reached the age at which we play a game  
8 commonly known as "Peek-a-boo." In my household, I refer to  
9 it as "Surprised-by-Putin." It's amusing when a 5-month-old  
10 is repeatedly surprised by the same action over and over  
11 again in close succession. It's very dangerous when a  
12 President is. So, what's the next surprise that Vladimir  
13 Putin is going to spring on the United States in the West?

14 Ambassador Sestanovich: Tough question, Senator.

15 I think we may discover, as some of the other panelists  
16 have said, that there's another round of Russian policy in  
17 Ukraine. I think right now they're unsure of how to handle  
18 this crisis, but they have not written off their investment  
19 there. I would certainly pay attention to that.

20 If you ask about crises in the Middle East emanating  
21 from Syria, you know, I'd look to the spillover to other  
22 countries that have been very worried about what is going to  
23 happen and have not gotten a lot of help from us. The fact  
24 that Turkish airspace was violated over the weekend is a  
25 warning by the Russians, but it's not the only way in which

1 this could spill over. Syria, unfortunately, has got a lot  
2 of neighbors in the Middle East, and Russian policy is going  
3 to prolong this civil war.

4 I'd just put one little extra piece on the board for  
5 you to look at if you have General Keane's maps in front of  
6 you. One country that is not on the map here is Azerbaijan.  
7 Azerbaijan is the country off whose coast the Russians fired  
8 those cruise missiles. It's been able to sustain its  
9 independence over a long period of time, but it's in play.  
10 It's not the only -- it's not the biggest prize here. It's  
11 not the -- it's not likely to be sucked into the war. But,  
12 the Russians move on a lot of different fronts, and their  
13 aim is, as many of the panelists have said, to restore  
14 influence over other countries of the former Soviet Union.  
15 Watch that space.

16 Chairman McCain: Senator Ayotte.

17 Senator Ayotte: Thank you, Chairman.

18 I want to thank all of you for being here today.

19 General Keane, you said that aggression unanswered, you  
20 fear, leads to more aggression.

21 And, General Jones, I believe you talked about how we  
22 need to increase our NATO presence in eastern Europe, among  
23 many of the things that you discussed, and that there's a  
24 greater risk by not increasing U.S.-NATO presence, versus  
25 those who want to say, "Let's not incite Russia." If you

1 look at what we -- what has happened without us, I guess,  
2 doing anything to incite Russia, it's been pretty  
3 astounding.

4 So, with the tremendous military experience between  
5 both of you -- General Keane, General Jones -- I mean, it's  
6 incredible what you've done for the country -- I wanted to  
7 ask you -- if we stay the course, if we stay where we are,  
8 which is, as I see it, really no response, that we are  
9 letting them kind of take their course as to what they're  
10 doing both in Ukraine, where, yes, we have economic  
11 sanctions, but we certainly haven't provided any military  
12 support for the Ukrainians -- if we don't increase NATO  
13 presence, if we don't take some actions and we let Russia  
14 pretty much own the airspace in these areas, what do you  
15 think -- what is the thing that worries you most and keeps  
16 you up at night, that if we stay the course of where we are  
17 now, which seems to be letting the Russians take whatever  
18 action they want to take at any time?

19 General Jones: I think it's possibly the beginning of  
20 the end of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I think  
21 it's that serious. We just can't sit back and let this  
22 happen.

23 In 2004 or '05, we started withdrawing a lot of our  
24 forces from Europe. Some of us had some serious discussions  
25 with the then-Secretary of Defense about the tradeoff of

1 doing that. Our belief, when I was in Europe, was that,  
2 yes, you could reduce some of the infrastructure and some of  
3 the forces, but it should be balanced by rotational forces  
4 elsewhere in eastern Europe, particularly in Bulgaria and  
5 Romania, where we -- where those countries helped build  
6 bases that would accommodate rotational forces, and then,  
7 because of the demands on our troop strengths in Iraq and  
8 Afghanistan, they were never really used. Happily, now we  
9 are starting to see those bases being used. And I would  
10 strongly suggest that -- you know, the old adage "a virtual  
11 presence is actual absence" is absolutely correct. And we  
12 need to bolster our presence, and NATO needs to show itself  
13 as an alliance of 28 countries that really adheres to what  
14 it says and what it's for. And it should become more  
15 proactive as a way of dissuading other engagements. Sitting  
16 back and being reactive and then debating it for 6 months,  
17 hoping for 100-percent consensus among 28 countries, is not  
18 a formula for success with Vladimir Putin.

19 Senator Ayotte: General Keane?

20 General Keane: Yes. Clearly, the United States has  
21 been the dominant country in the Middle East that's outside  
22 the region -- our own self-interests, obviously -- economic,  
23 stability and security of the region. And we've been  
24 willing to take action to ensure that stability and  
25 security.

1           Enter Russia. Russia, with this alliance with Iran,  
2 cannot be understated, in terms of its strategic  
3 significance. It's going to have profound impact on the  
4 region. Every country in the region will be impacted by it  
5 and will be making adjustments to the new geopolitical  
6 landscape that Iran and Russia are creating for us. These  
7 are allies of ours that are being impacted by it. Why?  
8 Because of their concern about their strategic enemy: Iran.  
9 And, as a result of that, they have to leverage their  
10 relationship with Russia. So, our influence -- listen,  
11 we're still a major player in the Middle East. I'm not  
12 suggesting we're not. But, I am suggesting we have  
13 diminished, in the last number of years. And with this  
14 alliance, this will be an accelerant to actually reduce our  
15 influence more considerably. So, that's number one.

16           Number -- you're going to make a comment?

17           Senator Ayotte: Well, I actually also wanted you to  
18 speak -- in the context of this alliance between Iran and  
19 Russia, how does this deal play into it? Does it play into  
20 it at all?

21           General Keane: Well, obviously Russia supported the  
22 deal as much as the United States did. They saw it in their  
23 interest to do so. Certainly, Iran's behavior for the last  
24 35 years should have been on the table as a condition for  
25 the deal, but it was removed.



1           The other thing -- I totally agree with General Jones  
2 -- I think, strategically, it -- the objective in Europe is  
3 the NATO alliance. And I think we're likely to see its  
4 unraveling, to be frank about it. Have you seen these  
5 surveys that they published about European countries, their  
6 willingness to defend themselves, and a majority of the  
7 people are unwilling to do that? What does that tell you?  
8 Much less collectively come to the aid of another country  
9 that is burdened by Russian aggression. The --  
10 strategically, he will break that alliance, and he's not  
11 going to have to take much military action to do it, in my  
12 judgment. And that is going to be a tragedy.

13           This requires U.S. leadership. And I think Jim laid  
14 out some careful points that we could exercise  
15 strategically, but we have to lead, and we have to have the  
16 resolve to do that.

17           General Jones: Could I just piggyback on that?

18           I just want to emphasize the fact that, although we're  
19 talking about NATO as a military alliance, there is a  
20 military component to what we can do to restore NATO, but  
21 the economic strategy is also very important, and the  
22 political strategy. So, I think it's three things that have  
23 to come together to have a -- an effective strategy to deal  
24 with the -- Mr. Putin's Russia as it is today.

25           Senator Ayotte: Thank you.

1 Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly.

2 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 And thanks, to all the witnesses.

4 General Keane, I'd like to ask you this, first, but,  
5 you know, throw it open to everybody. So, we lead, and we  
6 put in no-fly zones, and we tell them, "End the barrel  
7 bombs," and that, "If you do, we'll crater the runways."  
8 What do you think Putin's response will be? And it's -- you  
9 know, there's obviously no guarantees, but, you know, How do  
10 you think that will -- where do you think he goes then?

11 General Keane: I don't know. He has a range of  
12 options. Obviously, he can escalate right along with us if  
13 he chooses to. But, I think it's that. It -- when you  
14 focus on that, in terms of "What is his escalation  
15 response?" -- is the thing that paralyzed us from taking  
16 action. I mean, I think -- I do believe there's prudent  
17 things, you know, that can be done.

18 Senator Donnelly: Do those seem -- they seem like  
19 prudent -- you know, we've been talking about a no-fly zone  
20 for a while here, ending the barrel bombs, which the  
21 Chairman has talked about repeatedly. Those seem like  
22 prudent steps to take, to me.

23 General Keane: Yeah, they're not easy, though, and  
24 let's --

25 Senator Donnelly: Right.

1           General Keane: Let me tell you why. Obviously, with  
2 Putin's airpower there, and enforcing a no-fly/no-bomb zone  
3 is more challenging now. In the south, it -- and to enforce  
4 a no-fly zone, you actually have to have someone on the  
5 ground to also protect that zone from infiltration from the  
6 regime or, actually, Jabhat al-Nusra. So, in the south, we  
7 can put together a -- I prefer to call it a free zone, where  
8 the moderates would be protected there, and we would be able  
9 to bring refugees in as a sanctuary. And the reason for  
10 that is, we have an effective ground force there in the Free  
11 Syrian Army. In the north, where we truly want to do it,  
12 and where the Turks have interest in it as well, it's much  
13 more challenging. And this is the reason. We don't have  
14 the density of moderate forces there that we have in the  
15 south. And Jabhat al-Nusra would likely infiltrate it or  
16 overtly attack it.

17           Senator Donnelly: Well, maybe a better term on my part  
18 would have been a safe zone, where they don't get barrel-  
19 bombed from the sky, where things like that --

20           General Keane: Well, that's what I call a free zone.  
21 But, we -- the south, I think we can achieve it. In the  
22 north, it's challenging, and I'm not confident that we would  
23 have the same results. And it certainly risks escalation.

24           Senator Donnelly: Do you -- I'm sorry.

25           Ambassador Sestanovich: I'll give you a -- I'll give

1 you a firmer answer, actually, than General Keane. I think  
2 if you get -- if you have -- if you convey that the United  
3 States and its allies in the region are going to take  
4 serious military action, you will get a serious Russian  
5 diplomatic response. That is, for the first time, Putin  
6 will start saying, "You know, we need to talk about the  
7 future of the Syrian regime" in a way that has not been true  
8 until now. I think the Russians have not felt that they  
9 have to take seriously what we say about the future of  
10 Syria, because we're not playing.

11 If you want to play in this game, you have to be  
12 prepared to put some assets on the table. And I don't think  
13 we can expect to affect the political equation until the  
14 Russians think that there's a -- that the military risks to  
15 them are greater than they calculate.

16 Senator Donnelly: And do you think if there is that  
17 pushback and then you combine it with time and you combine  
18 it with \$40-a-barrel oil, is there a window for Putin to be  
19 doing these things where in -- 2 years from now, if we push  
20 back during that time, and hold firm, that, at some point,  
21 he just says, "Enough," you know, "We'll try to cooperate  
22 and get this done together"? Because at some point he looks  
23 at -- do you think he sees financial difficulties down the  
24 road for him, as well?

25 General?

1           General Keane: Oh, yes, absolutely. I mean, his  
2 financial reserves are depleting rather dramatically. If  
3 the economy stays the way it is, certainly that's going to  
4 have some -- you know, some impact on him. But, I still  
5 believe that Putin's view is much larger than just a couple  
6 of years, in terms of what he portends, strategically, for  
7 himself.

8           But, let me just add to your other point. If we  
9 establish free zones, you know, for moderate opposition  
10 forces, but also sanctuaries for refugees, that gets world-  
11 opinion support rather dramatically. If Putin is going to  
12 attack that, then world opinion is definitely against him.  
13 You take this issue right off the table, in terms of why  
14 he's in Syria. And if you're doing that, and contributing  
15 to the migration that's taken place by your aggressive  
16 military actions, then world opinion will have some rather,  
17 I think, significant impact on him.

18           General Jones: If I could, it's -- we have a model in  
19 1991 in Iraq, where we not only partitioned the north and  
20 the south, but we cratered the runways, we were able to get  
21 Saddam's air force completely grounded. But, what we also  
22 did was, by creating those zones, particularly in the north,  
23 we avoided a significant refugee problem. And I think that  
24 a mistake was made, back on the redline days, when we didn't  
25 do that as a response to his using chemical weapons. I

1 believe that Europe would not have been suffering the  
2 refugee problem that they have now, and I think -- I  
3 completely agree with General Keane that, if you tie it to  
4 the safety of -- and security of innocent civilians, and you  
5 take -- make it a big enough chunk in the country -- I think  
6 that that is a powerful argument to do that. And I agree  
7 that it's harder in the north and that that's something we  
8 should look at in the south.

9 Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Chairman McCain: Both -- you agree, Ms. Conley and  
11 Ambassador, with that assessment?

12 Ambassador Sestanovich: I certainly do. And I think  
13 you'd see some impact in Putin's behavior sooner than 2  
14 years from now. Putin doesn't fold his tent lightly, and  
15 he's not going to admit quickly that this entire operation  
16 has been a fiasco for him. But, if there's pushback, he  
17 will not necessarily just continue plunging forward.

18 Senator Donnelly: Wasn't thinking that he'd wait 2  
19 years, but, in his mind, at all points, you'd have to think  
20 is, "What's my currency balance at the moment?" as well.

21 Chairman McCain: Ms. Conley?

22 Ms. Conley: Well, in many ways, though, a lot of this  
23 adventurism is because the domestic situation is continuing  
24 to deteriorate. Russian inflation is very high. He's  
25 having to tell the oligarchs that they can't quite get as

1 much funding. And they're in desperate straits. The  
2 sanctions and the low energy prices have had impact.

3 But, remember, he's created the national narrative that  
4 he's -- Russia is encircled by enemies. And he controls the  
5 media space, and he's created a warlike environment. So, I  
6 think there's probably a little more longevity here, even if  
7 the economic situation continues to fundamentally  
8 deteriorate. I think his vulnerability, as we saw in  
9 Ukraine, is casualties. So, if you do make the military  
10 cost higher, that he can't cover up -- and they've done a  
11 masterful job of suppressing -- even the mothers of Russian  
12 soldiers are now foreign agents because they were talking  
13 about the disappearance of their sons in Ukraine. That is a  
14 vulnerability. But, his control over his media space is --  
15 so, this can go on for a long time. But, we can make the  
16 calculation -- the risk higher for him. And I think, if he  
17 does run into strength, he responds to that strength and  
18 adjusts.

19 I recall -- and, Senator McCain, you know this much  
20 better. This was during the Russia-Georgian conflict when  
21 we had to fly back -- Georgian soldiers back to Georgia.  
22 And, you know, a C-5A coming in, and it's, you know, "Don't  
23 do this." And we said, "Get out of our way." And they  
24 responded to that. But, we have to be very strong in what  
25 we're going to do. And I know you remember those days very

1 well.

2 Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst.

3 Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 Thank you, Ms. Conley and gentlemen, for being here  
5 today, and your service to our country.

6 For General Jones and General Keane, last week I had  
7 voiced my concerns regarding the new intelligence-sharing  
8 agreement between Iraq, Russia, Iran, and Assad's Syria.  
9 And, like all events in Iraq, it seems, according to Deputy  
10 Secretary of Defense Robert Work, this agreement caught the  
11 administration by surprise. You know, hello. However, I'm  
12 not surprised, considering the Iranian influence in Iraq  
13 seems to have really eclipsed our own as the Iraqi  
14 government continues on its trajectory towards a very  
15 sectarian, noninclusive government and our administration  
16 has a lack of decisiveness in that region when it comes to  
17 fighting ISIS.

18 So, considering the efforts of all of our men and women  
19 in uniform and the billions of American taxpayer dollars  
20 that have been put into Iraq, supporting the Iraqi people  
21 and the Iraqi government, I am troubled that the Iraqi  
22 government has entered into this information-sharing  
23 agreement. And they did this without consultation to the  
24 United States. So, I do think this puts our intelligence  
25 professionals at risk, and our country at a greater risk.



1           And so, if you could maybe talk a little bit about what  
2 those risks might be to the American public and why we  
3 should or should not have -- or why they should or should  
4 have not entered into this information-sharing agreement.

5           General Keane: Well, Congresswoman -- I mean, Senator,  
6 thank you, and thank you for your military service --

7           Senator Ernst: Thank you.

8           General Keane: -- and your leadership.

9           You know, the -- when you think about Iraq, we not only  
10 lack sufficient resources in trying to assist the indigenous  
11 forces there, I also think, politically, we're not doing  
12 nearly what we should have been doing, because you cannot  
13 have success in Iraq without Sunni participation --

14          Senator Ernst: Right.

15          General Keane: -- in a significant way. And it has  
16 cost Maliki's ineptness and -- the nefarious character that  
17 he is, that excluded the Sunnis politically from  
18 participation. And I know everybody knows this answer, but  
19 what are we doing to assist that? You know, one of the  
20 things we -- one of the things we've been advocating is, we  
21 need a three-star military headquarters there, with the  
22 Ambassador, that interacts routinely with Prime Minister  
23 Abadi for political reasons, as well as military reasons,  
24 similar to way Ryan Crocker and General Dave Petraeus did  
25 with Maliki before. And it's not something to be taken

1 lightly, because it is the political decision to include the  
2 Sunnis that becomes the lynchpin for success of the  
3 indigenous force. You're never going to be able to succeed  
4 until their participation is there. You can actually clear  
5 Ramadi. Let's assume we clear Ramadi next week with  
6 predominant Shi'a militia forces and some degree of Iraqi  
7 army. What is going to keep ISIS out of Ramadi is Sunnis,  
8 Sunnis who are armed and trained and have the resolve to  
9 stay there, just as it will be in Mosul.

10 Senator Ernst: So, General --

11 General Keane: That participation is totally dependent  
12 on a political inclusion of the Sunnis. So, the fact that  
13 Abadi is making this deal -- and I think it portends a  
14 statement he's not making publicly, that the United States  
15 is not supporting him in a way that he needs, and the  
16 Iranians are, the Russians will be, and I think he's making  
17 a shift, right before our eyes, without making any public  
18 pronouncements about his loss of confidence in the United  
19 States.

20 Senator Ernst: So, General Keane, basically the lack  
21 of diplomatic participation by our administration, as well  
22 as militarily, has led to this information-sharing  
23 agreement, would you agree?

24 General Keane: I think it has. I mean, Prime Minister  
25 Abadi came to this country for his first visit with the

1 President of the United States, and he left, essentially,  
2 with nothing more than what he already had. And that was  
3 his first visit. He had a shopping list of what he wanted.  
4 Four weeks later, he's in Moscow, and he's cutting an arms  
5 deal with Russia. The deal has already been done. Now, he  
6 doesn't want to buy Russian stuff, he wants American  
7 equipment. He can't even get the American equipment on time  
8 in the numbers he wants for the deals he already has with  
9 the United States. That's how frustrated they are with just  
10 supporting him on the decisions we've already made, much  
11 less additional support.

12 So, if you're facing an enemy that's breathing down on  
13 your country and occupies one-third of your country, and  
14 you're challenged to retake that territory and evict them,  
15 and you're comforted by the fact that the United States is  
16 coming to your aid, but that aid is so shallow -- you can  
17 understand what he's doing. He wants to protect the  
18 sovereignty of his country. And if he -- if Iran's going to  
19 be the helper or if Russian's going to be the helper, he's  
20 probably going to take it.

21 Senator Ernst: He's going to take it.

22 And I'm sorry, I know I'm running out of time, but,  
23 General Jones, if you would comment, just very briefly. Do  
24 you believe that now with this intelligence agreement  
25 sharing arrangement that Iran and Russia will be able to

1 exploit intelligence that we have had and gathered in Iraq?

2 General Jones: Oh, I think that deal is probably not  
3 in our best interest.

4 Senator Ernst: Okay, thank you. That's excellent. I  
5 appreciate it.

6 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 Chairman McCain: Senator Sessions.

8 Senator Sessions: Thank you.

9 This is really a valuable panel. We've got great  
10 witnesses, and have shared with us information about a very  
11 grave foreign policy time in our country. It's unbelievable  
12 that we're drifting without a kind of a strategy to  
13 seriously deal with Russia or the whole Middle East.  
14 Somehow I think a Nixon-Kissinger, we'd be in better shape  
15 today.

16 Ambassador Sestanovich, George Kennan has been  
17 mentioned. I see you're the George Kennan scholar. Do you  
18 think that it is appropriate for the United States at this  
19 time to see -- to take action to establish a more long-term  
20 strategy for the Middle East that would extend over decades,  
21 not just reacting to one event after another, one that our  
22 allies around the world could join with us on?

23 Ambassador Sestanovich: I have the greatest respect  
24 for George Kennan, but, actually, at the time, he was trying  
25 to develop a strategy that would be good even for a couple

1 of years. And if we had a strategy that was good for a  
2 couple of years, we'd be way ahead of where we are now. So,  
3 let's not think decades. Sometimes long-termism can be a  
4 trap. Let's try to think about how to get our act together  
5 in a way that does us some good in the --

6 Senator Sessions: What about --

7 Ambassador Sestanovich: -- short and middle term.

8 But, let me --

9 Senator Sessions: But an --

10 Ambassador Sestanovich: I -- but, if I could answer  
11 your --

12 Senator Sessions: -- agreement to agree on --

13 Ambassador Sestanovich: Yeah. Look, the main thing  
14 that the Russians have always thought about us in relation  
15 to them is that we have allies and that they didn't, and  
16 that they are all by themselves. This, of course, feeds a  
17 lot of insecurity on their part, but it is a genuine  
18 advantage for us. That advantage is at risk of being lost.  
19 I mean, we can squander this huge asset. And so, I would  
20 suggest that the place to start in thinking about a strategy  
21 that will be effective over the next couple of years or the  
22 next couple of decades is how to leverage this advantage  
23 that we have built up over half a century. And it's not --  
24 for reasons that the generals have mentioned, not easy to do  
25 at this point, because there are a lot of doubts about our

1 strategic good sense and our staying power. But, these are  
2 still assets that are latent and can be recovered if we are  
3 at all serious about it.

4 Senator Sessions: Well, General Jones, you were our  
5 Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. You were there for a  
6 long time. I visited you and value your judgment. But, are  
7 you positive we could face the end of NATO? A European  
8 official of great experience said the refugee crisis could  
9 -- is the greatest threat to the EU since World War II. He  
10 was panicked. A person you could trust, a man of judgment.

11 Well, so we're in Estonia and they wanted more American  
12 troops. We had 160- -- 40, I believe, or -- but, I don't  
13 know -- a company, I believe. And so, I asked you all,  
14 Well, how much were they spending on their defense budget?  
15 Little Estonia, right up there next to the border. And, of  
16 course, they were sincerely saying they were going to get to  
17 2 percent. Well, we're at 3.6. Germany's hardly over 1  
18 percent of their defense. And you made that -- General  
19 Jones, you mentioned the poll. That was stunning to me. I  
20 mean, I wondered -- I asked the Estonians, "Why doesn't --  
21 why don't Germany or France put a company in here? It would  
22 be less expensive for them than for us." It's their  
23 backyard. But, apparently, that -- is it a --

24 So, I'm very frustrated about that. I think they're  
25 not carrying their share of the load. I think they need to

1 do it. But, their lack of will is so palpable, it seems to  
2 me that, if we don't lead and don't step up, they're not  
3 going -- they'll just try to negotiate their way and not  
4 take any real serious action.

5 I've gone a bit in circles. Do you have any thoughts  
6 about the problem of Europe's will and how we can help fix  
7 that? And is it hopeful?

8 General Jones: At the NATO summit in 2002, the 19  
9 countries that made up NATO at that time agreed unanimously  
10 that 2 percent of their gross domestic product would be  
11 provided for national defense. That soon became a floor.  
12 And very few of them actually did that, despite the pledges.

13 Ongoing in NATO right now is a reaffirmation of the  
14 fact that we need that -- everybody needs to chip in that 2  
15 percent. And I -- and some countries are actually doing  
16 better. But, the -- to Ms. Conley's admonition that the  
17 next Warsaw summit, next year, is critical, in many  
18 respects, not only in what NATO stands for, what it does,  
19 how it does it, but how it's funded, and the commitments  
20 that NATO members make now, with 28, should be universally  
21 agreed to and should absolutely be supported.

22 But, I do believe that our engagement in this 21st  
23 century is -- got to be different than the 20th-century  
24 engagement. We cannot just have military responses alone  
25 anymore. If you don't tie in economic development,

1 governance, and rule of law in a more comprehensive, whole-  
2 of -- you know, whole-of-nations involvement, and you don't  
3 show people that there's a better future for them at the end  
4 of whatever conflict they're going through, you're going to  
5 lose them, and you're going to create refugees all over the  
6 world. And if you like what's happening in the Middle East  
7 right now, we're going to love what's going to happen in  
8 Africa in another 10 years, when Nigeria collapses or  
9 another big country goes under.

10 So, this is a very difficult, dangerous time, where  
11 weakness is not something that we should show, because  
12 people draw -- people like Mr. Putin will draw the long --  
13 wrong conclusions.

14 Senator Sessions: Thank you.

15 Thank you, Senator McCain. And I appreciate the  
16 comments --

17 Chairman McCain: Senator --

18 Senator Sessions: -- for a zone for people --  
19 refugees. I think that's got to be done.

20 Chairman McCain: Senator from the Arctic.

21 [Laughter.]

22 Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And I want to thank the panel, this really incredible  
24 experience here, but also great insights.

25 Ms. Conley, I want to thank you, particular, not only



1 for your testimony, your outstanding work on the Arctic. As  
2 my friend from Maine said, I am going to focus on the Arctic  
3 here.

4 In terms of the -- you mentioned the NDAA, and I  
5 appreciate you mentioning that, because, you know, what we  
6 are really reacting to, as a Congress, to get serious --  
7 that's a requirement for no plan, actually, for the Arctic  
8 -- was our current Arctic strategy, which you may have seen.  
9 This is DOD product, 13 pages, half of them are pictures.  
10 Climate change is mentioned six times; Russia once, in a  
11 footnote. It's not a serious strategy. So, what we're  
12 trying to do is get serious and have the Department of  
13 Defense get serious on that. So, thank you for mentioning  
14 it.

15 Also, in your testimony, you know, I think it's --  
16 appreciate all the -- you talked about the massive Russian  
17 military buildup, which also includes -- you didn't mention  
18 it in your testimony -- four new brigade combat teams, and,  
19 as you mentioned, a new brigade headquarters for the  
20 military -- Russia -- Arctic military -- 40 icebreakers, and  
21 more to come; some of those are nuclear powered. We have  
22 two. One is broken. So --

23 But, in terms of the three military exercises you  
24 mentioned, they didn't get a lot of press in the United  
25 States. Do you view those as provocative, in terms of what

1 the Russians were doing, Ms. Conley?

2 Ms. Conley: I view the last one, the March 2015,  
3 because it was a snap exercise at full combat readiness. We  
4 need to get the Russians back to the rules that the OSCE --  
5 of transparency, 45-day notification over a certain level --  
6 because this is where misunderstandings and accidents  
7 happen. So, that, to me, was provocative and unprovoked,  
8 although --

9 Senator Sullivan: And we were pretty unaware of that.

10 Ms. Conley: We certainly were unaware of that.

11 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask you -- I'd like the panel  
12 to take a look at this map. It kind of goes through what  
13 you were talking about in your testimony. The red is the  
14 Russians and recent buildups. If you look in the right-hand  
15 corner, though, of that map, there's two blue dots. Those  
16 are two U.S. brigade combat teams. They're the only Arctic-  
17 trained American warriors that we have in the Active Duty  
18 forces. One of them is the 425. It's a brigade combat team  
19 in the Army. It's the only airborne BCT in the entire Asia-  
20 Pacific or the Arctic. The Department of Defense wants to,  
21 essentially, shut that down.

22 So, the Russians are building up dramatically. We're  
23 not even -- you know, there are some people saying, "Hey,  
24 we've got to stand up. We can't be provocative." We're not  
25 even being provocative. We're just folding, in terms of

1 Arctic forces.

2 In light of what the Russians are doing and a theme of  
3 this hearing about signaling -- we've signaled weakness,  
4 Putin exploits weakness, his appetite grows after each meal  
5 -- what do you think Vladimir Putin would think of the  
6 United States removing its only airborne BCT Arctic  
7 capability and really cutting our Arctic forces in half?

8 Ms. Conley: I think, Senator, that they view them very  
9 similar to, as General Jones said, that they viewed our  
10 reductions in Europe. We are leaving. We are leaving the  
11 playing field. I agree with you completely. We do not have  
12 much of a U.S. security architecture in the Arctic, other  
13 than our missile defense at Fort Greely --

14 Senator Sullivan: Right. Do you think that he'll see  
15 this as more weakness and possibly look to exploit it in  
16 other ways?

17 Ms. Conley: Well, I mean, we have told the Russians  
18 that they are our partners in the Arctic, and that would be  
19 true in the case of the Arctic Council. But, on the  
20 military component, we have not fully addressed and  
21 understood the dramatic shifts over the last 12 to 24 months  
22 that have occurred --

23 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

24 Ms. Conley: -- in militarization --

25 Senator Sullivan: But, you think there's a -- we need

1 to relook at that, given what's happening.

2 Ms. Conley: Oh, absolutely. And I said -- it's not  
3 just for the Arctic's sake, although important changes are  
4 happening. We have to look at this at a broader theater.  
5 And that's what the first military exercise signaled --

6 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

7 Ms. Conley: -- that they're integrating theaters. So,  
8 what happens in the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, the Barents  
9 Sea, and the Arctic -- it's a continuation of operations.  
10 So, we have to look at it holistically, not only the land  
11 component, as you rightly note, but also I'm particularly  
12 concerned, and what our allies -- our Norwegian and British  
13 allies are very concerned -- is the maritime component.

14 Senator King was -- the North Atlantic is becoming a much  
15 more active --

16 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

17 Ms. Conley: -- theater in maritime, as well as air.

18 Senator Sullivan: Let me ask -- for General Jones and  
19 General Keane -- you know, I've had the opportunity to train  
20 a lot in cold weather at Bridgeport and up in Alaska. Can  
21 infantry troops, say, based at Camp Pendleton or based at  
22 Fort Benning, go to the Arctic, operate in the mountains in  
23 30-below-zero, in extreme cold, extreme winter climate? Can  
24 they do that easily, or do they -- do you need troops to be  
25 able to acclimatize to that?

1           General Jones:  You need special training, and you need  
2  -- but, to the bigger strategic point:  Since 1945, the  
3  United States has recognized that if you're not present  
4  where you need to be present, and you're absent, you create  
5  a vacuum.  And vacuums are usually filled by people that  
6  don't have the -- don't share your same interests.  And, you  
7  know, I used the term "virtual presence is actual absence,"  
8  but actual absence means you're creating vacuums.  And the  
9  United States, if it desires to be a globally significant  
10 power by the year 2050, needs to think about strategically  
11 what we're going to do to avoid increasing the number of  
12 vacuums that we're creating around the world.

13           Senator Sullivan:  Thank you.

14           General Keane?

15           General Keane:  Yeah, Senator, thanks for your military  
16 service.

17           I spent 4 years in Alaska as a company commander,  
18 paratrooper, jumping all over the place, and, you know, on  
19 different glaciers, et cetera.  It was quite an experience.  
20 Yes, I mean, it -- the acclimatization, the special  
21 equipment, everything that you need to operate in minus-30,  
22 minus-40-degree temperatures routinely, the toughness of the  
23 soldiers themselves to operate in an environment like that,  
24 that's why we have forces there, for that very reason.  
25 Parachute forces have a strategic capability.

1 Senator Sullivan: Yeah.

2 General Keane: And that's why they're a value to us,  
3 to this day. Because you can seize an airfield with them  
4 very quickly and then bring in a lot of other things to help  
5 them out.

6 But, what this -- what is happening here -- and I hope  
7 the other Senators understand -- is, the budget control  
8 authority and sequestration is driving the force structure  
9 of the Army down to World War II -- pre-World War II  
10 numbers. So, the force structure peaked in fighting in Iraq  
11 and Afghanistan at 570-, and we couldn't fight those wars at  
12 this numbers simultaneously. We actually had to do it  
13 sequentially. And that's lost on a lot of people. We're at  
14 490-, going to 450-, and the budget control authority and  
15 sequestration will take the Army to 420-. I was with the  
16 Chief of Staff and his four-stars just the other day,  
17 dealing with this very subject. And the question was asked,  
18 Why are we doing this? And he has no choice but to take  
19 brigades out of his force structure because of what the  
20 budget control authority is doing to him. Now, he does have  
21 the choice which brigades. And there is an argument and a  
22 tradeoff that he's trying to make. This was done in  
23 conjunction with the Pacific theater commander and where he  
24 also wanted his forces, not just the Army. So, that is an  
25 issue.

1           But, let me just say that we have a Democratic  
2   President and a Republican House of Representatives and a  
3   Republican Senate. And both of these entities are  
4   underwriting sequestration and the decapping of military  
5   capabilities and putting this country at a greater security  
6   risk than it needs to. And we've got to stop it. I mean,  
7   we've got to stop this, and stop this freefall of military  
8   capability.

9           Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. -- Mr. Chairman, may  
10   I ask -- indulge one final question? This is an important  
11   topic to me.

12           Strategically, do you think it's a mistake to be taking  
13   our only airborne BCT out of the Arctic, given what we --  
14   this panel has been discussing for the last 3 hours, in  
15   terms of a massive increase with regard to what Putin is  
16   doing and how we are getting rid of the only Arctic warriors  
17   we have? I'll just ask all the members. You can just say  
18   yes or no if you think it's a strategic mistake.

19           Ms. Conley: I think we have to retain the current  
20   assets that we have in theater and look at how we can best  
21   augment to be able to rapidly respond and deploy, if  
22   necessary.

23           Ambassador Sestanovich: General Keane is absolutely  
24   right about the budget.

25           Senator Sullivan: General Jones? General Keane?

1 General Jones: Sorry. I agree with that.

2 General Keane: Yes.

3 Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 Senator Reed [presiding]: Thank you.

6 Senator Hirono, on behalf of the Chairman, let me  
7 recognize you.

8 Senator Hirono: Thank you very much.

9 And I thank all of the panel members.

10 General Keane, thank you for once again pointing out  
11 the importance of taking responsible action to eliminate  
12 sequester on both the defense and nondefense side. This  
13 committee, of all committees, I think, fully understands the  
14 negative impact of sequestration on our military.

15 General Keane, you had mentioned, in response to  
16 Senator Reed's question about whether or not -- some of the  
17 suggested actions that you put into your testimony raises  
18 the issue of whether or not we ought to be having a debate  
19 on a new Authorized Use of Military Force. And I think you  
20 acknowledged that some of the suggestions probably would  
21 warrant that.

22 Do the other panel members also agree? And, if so,  
23 should we not be beginning the debate on a new AUMF with  
24 regard to Syria?

25 Anyone? Do you think we don't need a new AUMF?



1           General Jones:  Yes.

2           Senator Hirono:  We should begin the debate now?  We --  
3 okay.  Because we haven't done that.  And that may be one of  
4 the reasons that we are having such a difficult time, in  
5 terms of our strategy in Syria.

6           In the Financial Times op-ed last Sunday, Dr.  
7 Brzezinski stated that it is time for -- and I'm quoting him  
8 -- "strategic boldness," end quote, calling on the U.S. to  
9 persuade -- to persuade -- so far, persuasion hasn't worked  
10 very well -- persuade Moscow to act with us in stabilizing  
11 Syria and encouraging engagement by China.

12           And I'd like to ask the panel members, you know, What  
13 are your thoughts on a cooperative role between the U.S. and  
14 Russia, realizing that Russia -- Putin is no fool, as one of  
15 you said, that, I think, he is as concerned -- he must have  
16 some concerns about potential for mission creep for them in  
17 Syria, and them getting bogged down.  So, you know, what are  
18 the conditions that would foster a discussion about a  
19 cooperative -- cooperation between the U.S. and Russia, and  
20 the potential role of China in seeking stability in the  
21 Middle East?

22           I ask any of the panel members to --

23           Ambassador Sestanovich:  I did not know what Zbig  
24 Brzezinski meant in that piece about bringing in China, so  
25 you'll have to ask him.  But, I think the answer to your

1 question, more broadly, is an easy one. The United States  
2 is not going to be able to have any meaningful cooperative  
3 -- or discussion with Russia about cooperation unless it has  
4 its own thought-out strategy and is willing to bring some  
5 assets to the discussion, and act on its own if it can't  
6 cooperate. The administration has been very interested in  
7 cooperating, but it has pursued this discussion as though  
8 you could get the Russians to cooperate with you as a  
9 substitute for American action. And I think that has been a  
10 strategic mistake. The only way to really get a serious  
11 discussion with the Russians is to begin by thinking through  
12 what matters to us and what we are prepared to do, and then  
13 telling them. And then you can have a conversation. But,  
14 to just think of cooperation as a substitute for any  
15 independent action is a loser.

16 Senator Hirono: Do the other panelists agree with that  
17 assessment?

18 Ms. Conley: I would just say, I think that moment of  
19 trying to think cooperatively expired a long time ago. And,  
20 to agree with Ambassador Sestanovich, at this point, it's --  
21 we have no strategy at what we're clear about and willing to  
22 enforce. So, the strategic cooperation is whether we go  
23 along with Mr. Putin or whether we don't.

24 General Jones: I would agree that you have to -- you  
25 -- we have to take some action that clearly shows that --

1 that establishes a motivation for President Putin to want to  
2 sit down and talk about it. But, I think that -- I think  
3 there's been too much talk and not enough action on our  
4 side.

5 General Keane: Yeah, I totally agree. You know, Mr.  
6 Brzezinski, in that article, also talked about retaliation  
7 against the regime, as you recall in the article, as a  
8 result of their attacking, you know, our surrogate forces.  
9 And certainly that's an innovative thought. I don't know  
10 what -- the merits of that, in bringing China into it. I do  
11 know that contributing -- that Putin understanding our  
12 resolve and our commitment, judged by our actions and not by  
13 our rhetoric, will make a difference, in terms of pushing  
14 him to more thoughtful diplomatic action. It has the  
15 opportunity to do that. It also has the risk that it will  
16 not result in that. And it could result in military  
17 escalation. But, if that is the only lever that we're  
18 concerned about, is military escalation, it leaves us with  
19 this -- the emptiness of the status quo. And that's where  
20 we are.

21 Senator Hirono: And when you say "action," you're  
22 talking about military action. That's what all of you are  
23 --

24 General Keane: Well, I think we should approach him  
25 with everything that we have, in terms of putting pressure

1 on him, but I do think we're out of time, given the military  
2 aggression that he is using, and he's been using for a  
3 number of years now, that we have to push back on that.

4 Senator Hirono: And --

5 Ambassador Sestanovich: I would just add one -- to the  
6 question about whether it's only military action we're  
7 talking about. I think an effective strategy is going to  
8 have to be one that brings together other countries in the  
9 region. And that's a political process. Those other  
10 countries are going to want to know what we are prepared to  
11 do. But, to begin with, to -- the first kind of cooperation  
12 that has to be established for us to have any credibility in  
13 conversation with the Russians is with our own friends.

14 Senator Hirono: Thank you.

15 Senator Reed: On behalf of the Chairman, Senator  
16 Tillis, please.

17 Senator Tillis: Thank you, Senator Reed.

18 Ambassador Sestanovich, I had a discussion with a  
19 diplomat earlier this week who seemed to share the view that  
20 the Russian incursion is doomed to fail. But, I don't  
21 really understand that. They try to use, as a rationale  
22 behind that, as to some \$200 billion in reserves that they  
23 have to spend. What they're doing right now, relatively  
24 speaking, seems to be low cost. We don't seem to be  
25 discussing other partners that are already active in Syria

1 and in the way of Iran and an Iranian nuclear deal that  
2 promises to free up assets and to allow that economy to  
3 create currency that could become, in my opinion -- I want  
4 to validate this -- a very material part of what Russia  
5 ultimately does in Syria. What are your thoughts on that?

6 Ambassador Sestanovich: Well, I wouldn't say the main  
7 cost that President Putin faces is an economic one or -- and  
8 when people say that he is about -- doomed to fail, I assume  
9 what they really mean is that the civil war will actually  
10 become more intense and that the Assad regime will be short  
11 of the kind of intervention that Putin is surely hoping he  
12 doesn't have to launch -- would be further weakened.

13 Senator Tillis: With -- I think, in terms of high  
14 confidence -- in the chart up there -- in terms of high-  
15 confidence strikes being almost four-to-one for opposition  
16 targets, versus ISIS targets, wouldn't that seem to suggest  
17 that they get that and they're going to do everything they  
18 can to stamp out the opposition to make it less likely that  
19 a credible civil war could break out?

20 Ambassador Sestanovich: Yeah, I think that it's  
21 possible that they will have some near-term advantages -- I  
22 mean, successes.

23 Senator Tillis: And, General Jones, do you have  
24 something to say on that?

25 General Jones: I -- it's a little hard to predict, but

1 I think, in the short term, you're going to see some  
2 tactical successes, but there'll be adjustments on the  
3 battlefield. I'm unconvinced that the victory through  
4 airpower alone is going to achieve success in either Syria  
5 or Iraq.

6 General Keane: The other dimension here is, you cannot  
7 underestimate the resolve of the Syrian people, in terms of  
8 what has happened to them these last 4 years, and their  
9 determination. When you think about it, they went up  
10 against a military machine that has all modern weapons, and  
11 they stood up against it with very little weaponry  
12 themselves. I mean, what has kept this in their fight is  
13 their absolute determination and will to change their  
14 country so that their families and communities can have a  
15 better life. And they're willing to die for it. And that  
16 resolve is still there. So, that is not going away. They  
17 will be able to push back. But, the civil war is not going  
18 away.

19 Senator Tillis: And, to both General Keane and General  
20 Jones, I had another discussion with a diplomat who said  
21 that the White House's passive posture was not really what  
22 they wanted, that they're acting on the recommendations of  
23 the folks in the Pentagon. Does that seem credible to you,  
24 given where you are? Do you believe that the strategy that  
25 we have, which -- erasing red lines and taking a passive

1 position in a number of areas around the globe where we  
2 should be probably showing a little bit more assertion --  
3 does that seem logical that that would be the  
4 recommendations out of the Pentagon to the President?

5 General Keane: Well, first of all -- Jim and I are  
6 very familiar with this -- the Pentagon does not make  
7 policy. National Command Authority makes policy. They  
8 certainly contribute to it. So, that's number one.

9 Senator Tillis: But --

10 General Keane: And I will say this --

11 Senator Tillis: But, General Keane, could you imagine  
12 that they would be making their -- the recommendations -- I  
13 understand where the policy occurs, but they would be --  
14 recommendations that would lead the administration to this  
15 -- the current policy, such as it is?

16 General Keane: What happened here is -- I think is  
17 very different than the process that we're -- that many of  
18 us are used to experience when a President has made a  
19 decision that it's in his national interest to use military  
20 force to accomplish political objectives. He sort of --  
21 that is sort of stated to the Department of Defense, in  
22 terms of what his goals are, and then they would put  
23 together a campaign that would have various options and risk  
24 associated with it.

25 What happened on dealing with this issue, the -- not

1 only was the goal stated in terms of "defeat ISIS," but then  
2 the Pentagon was told many things in terms of what the  
3 parameters for that operation would be. And that is very  
4 different. In other words, "I don't want any civilians  
5 killed whatsoever." And many people pushed back on that and  
6 said, "That's impossible, Mr. President." But, the rules of  
7 engagement are so restrictive that we cannot conduct  
8 effective air operations to the degree that we know we can  
9 and keep people safe. "I don't want any boots on the  
10 ground." "But, can we put advisors down to help the units  
11 to -- we need to train units and" -- "No." So, those kind  
12 of restrictions are something I think most of us have not  
13 seen in our past, and how you make a policy and then provide  
14 the military instrument with a campaign plan and options  
15 associated with it. It's very different than our -- what  
16 our experience is.

17 Senator Tillis: Senator Reed, if I may ask just one  
18 other --

19 Senator Reed: Please.

20 Senator Tillis: -- question.

21 And, you know, I think it's startling to hear someone  
22 who was formerly in command of NATO to say that it's at risk  
23 of dismantling. I think that that's a message that should  
24 be loud -- heard loud and clear.

25 But, General Jones, you said something else that I'm



1 personally very interested in, and it has to do with a  
2 highly effective nonlethal economic weapon that we're just  
3 keeping in the holster, and that has to do with aggressive  
4 energy policy, whether it's preventing the transportation  
5 cost of oil to go down through the Keystone Pipeline,  
6 whether it's preventing extraction of deposits that we have  
7 that can be economically extracted, whether it's preventing  
8 the long-term price of energy futures to be influenced by  
9 our ability and our resolve to extract through other  
10 methods, like hydraulic fracturing. Have we gotten in right  
11 on any measure, in terms of using energy policy to confront  
12 Russia's aggression?

13           General Jones: Senator, I do not believe that the  
14 United States has a strategic energy policy that anyone  
15 could read. And it's a little bit because of the way the  
16 Department of Energy was formed. Years and years ago, the  
17 Department of Energy was really the Department of Nuclear  
18 Energy. And in many ways, it still is.

19           I'm of the opinion that we have a great Secretary of  
20 Energy and a great Deputy. And I believe it would be wise  
21 for the President to designate the Secretary of Energy as  
22 the focal point for all energy, from coal to wind and  
23 everything in between, and that energy is now -- energy  
24 security -- international security -- it's an international  
25 issue, and you -- and because the United States has been

1 able to, through its technology, and mostly its private  
2 sector, develop an astounding capability and capacity for  
3 energy for the future, in addition to our partners in Canada  
4 and also Mexico, that has changed the perception of what the  
5 American priorities are in the Middle East, for example.  
6 You know, the Middle East believes that energy is -- energy  
7 for a security deal over the last 40 years is no longer  
8 viable, because we have our own energy. And, in fact, when  
9 you hear people talking about energy independence, I wince  
10 at that, because it does say, "We've got ours. You're on  
11 your own." But, our energy good fortune can be used, and  
12 should be used, in the global playing field for developing  
13 countries and also as a response to what Mr. Putin is doing,  
14 and particularly in central and Eastern Europe.

15       And this plan that we're going to enter into the record  
16 today is a plan that will wean 14 nations off of Russian --  
17 from dependence on Russian energy. That's a staggering --  
18 if this works, this is a staggering response, an elegant  
19 response also, and an economic response, to Mr. Putin's  
20 actions.

21       Senator Tillis: I look forward to seeing that.

22       Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23       Senator Reed: Thank you, Senator Tillis.

24       In behalf of Chairman McCain, let me thank you all for  
25 extraordinary insightful testimony and for your commitment

1 and dedication to the country over so many years.

2 Thank you.

3 The hearing is adjourned.

4 [Whereupon, at 12:15 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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