

**OPENING STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR JACK REED  
RANKING MEMBER, SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**ROOM SD-G50  
DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Tuesday, February 9, 2016**

**Hearing on Worldwide Threats  
*(As prepared for delivery)***

Let me join the Chairman in welcoming the Director of National Intelligence, General Clapper, and the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lieutenant General Stewart. Your long service to our nation and leadership of the men and women who serve in the intelligence community is deeply appreciated.

We live in a time when there is a complex array of threats facing the United States, some immediate, some in the future. It is a challenge for both the Administration and Congress to decide how to allocate our nation's finite resources to address those threats. Your testimony today will provide needed insight for our committee on that challenge.

**Afghanistan**

In Afghanistan, the security and political environments both remain challenging. The Taliban have sought to take advantage of the still maturing Afghan security forces by increasing their operational tempo, especially in rural areas. Also, an ISIL-affiliate has entered the battlefield in the form of the so-called Islamic State in the Khorasan Province, or IS-KP. All the while, remnants of al Qaeda continue to seek a resurgence. Pakistani Army operations across the border have added to the dynamic security environment by pushing other bad actors – including the Pakistani Taliban and Haqqani Network – into Afghanistan. I look forward to the assessment of our witnesses of these security challenges for the coming year and the prospects for reconciliation between the Afghan Government and the Taliban.

**Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant**

While ISIL controls less territory in Iraq and Syria than it did a year ago, it remains a significant

threat to regional stability, the U.S., and our allies. As our efforts to support the Iraqi Security Forces and local forces in Syria continue, there are a number of questions we must ask: what local forces will serve as the hold force once ISIL is removed from Mosul, Raqqa, and the surrounding areas; how will Iran seek to advance its interests in Iraq; how will Turkey respond to the threat posed by ISIL within its borders; will our partners across the Gulf unify their efforts in Syria; and how will ISIL react – within Iraq and Syria and transregionally – as it is put under increasing amounts of pressure. These are questions our military forces must factor in to their planning efforts in order to ensure the success of our campaign. I look forward to the assessments of the witnesses on these important issues.

### **Iran/Gulf Assurance**

Beyond, the past year has seen substantial changes in the nature of the international community's relationship with Iran. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between the so-called P5+1 and Iran has halted and rolled back dangerous elements of Iran's nuclear program and, critically, has placed it under the most comprehensive and rigorous verification regime ever assembled. I hope our witnesses will provide their assessment of the likelihood of Iran complying with this agreement over its term.

While the JCPOA made substantial progress with respect to Iran's nuclear program, it also enabled Iran to return to the international economic community. This presents the United States and our partners in the Middle East with an adversary with additional resources that may be used to support its Shia proxies in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and other locations in the Gulf. Iran may also choose to use these additional resources to advance its missile program. Iran's decisions in these respects will be a key metric as we evaluate how to array our forces across the Gulf and what assistance our partners across the region will require to confront Iran. I would welcome our witnesses' assessment of the Gulf nation's current capacity to counter Iran's proxies and unconventional forces and where this committee should consider additional investments to better support our partners' requirements.

### **Russia's Cold War Nostalgia**

Russia's posturing and increasingly aggressive acts in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East

are something we must continue to monitor, contain, and when necessary, counter. The President's decision to increase funding for the European Reassurance Initiative is a critical step. We must keep a watchful eye on the Putin regime, particularly its use of conventional and unconventional tactics to bully its neighbors and others.

Russia's Syria campaign has for the moment eclipsed its aggression in Crimea and Ukraine as the most serious flashpoint in U.S.-Russia relations. In Syria, Russia continues to bolster the military of the Bashar Al Assad regime, while simultaneously running an information operations campaign to suggest that its military operations are instead focused against the Islamic State. Unlike Russia's obscured hand in Ukraine, its actions in Syria are being played out in daily headlines that report on Russia's indiscriminate bombing and its support of the Syrian regime in areas where moderate forces are aiming to get out from under the rule of the Assad regime. This is a complex problem for the United States, the Coalition fighting ISIL, and our friends and allies in the region. I look forward to hearing how the Intelligence Community sees this situation, and how the United States can best protect and advance our interests.

### **North Korea**

North Korea presents an immediate and present danger to global security. The regime conducted a rocket launch just a few days ago, in violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions, following its January nuclear test. While China could exert pressure on North Korea through economic sanctions to encourage the regime to desist, the Xi administration prefers to remain on good terms with the North Korean regime, putting the entire region at risk. Without China's cooperation, it is clear that North Korea will continue to develop its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities.

### **China's Rise**

China continues to invest aggressively in its military, particularly in capabilities that allow China to project power and deny access to others. While China's economy is experiencing the most significant challenges in recent memory, China is continuing its aggressive efforts to solidify its claims in the South China Sea – despite the protests of its sovereign neighbors. It is critical that we enhance

our partnerships with others across the region to bring China into the rules based global regime that will guarantee peace and prosperity across the region. It is also critical that we use all of the nation's tools to ensure that China's continued theft of our intellectual property is put to a halt. I look forward to General Clapper's view regarding China's adherence to President Xi's pledge to President Obama to cease such economic espionage.

### **Cyber Space**

An area of equally great concern is the threats and opportunities presented by cyber space. From a military standpoint, our focus remains on our ability to collect intelligence, conduct defensive cyber operations to protect DoD's networks and our nation's infrastructure and intellectual property, and, as appropriate, to conduct offensive cyber operations, including actions to counter certain adversaries' abilities to utilize the internet for recruitment, propaganda, and command and control. We look forward to our witnesses' assessment of ISIL's messaging campaign and the cyber threats posed by North Korea, Iran, China, and Russia.

Thank you. I look forward to your testimony today.