

UNITED STATES SENATE  
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL TOD D. WOLTERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
COMMANDER  
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND

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Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, on behalf of the dedicated men, women, and their families preserving peace in the Euro-Atlantic, it is an honor to testify before you today. It is a privilege to serve alongside these dedicated patriots in a mission that is essential to national security. Their selfless service and tireless commitment is an inspiration. Together, with likeminded Allies and partners, our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians work to defend peace and prosperity around the clock.

The 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) and 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS) articulate how a free and prosperous Europe, defended by a capable and credible Euro-Atlantic Alliance, remains foundational to our security in an increasingly competitive strategic environment. USEUCOM's operations, activities, and investments are aligned with our strategies to meet the challenges of great power competition from both Russia and China. Enabled by deep and meaningful Ally and partner relationships, USEUCOM is ready to fight and win against capable adversaries should deterrence fail. We are proud of the collaborative work across the Joint Force to implement these strategies and are grateful for continued Congressional interest and support.

In Europe, political uncertainty, migration, energy competition, and diffusion of disruptive technology are stressing the established democratic order. Competitors, most notably Russia, China, and Iran, seek to take advantage of these conditions through aggressive action using all instruments of national power, and are backed by increasingly capable military forces. An environment exists where adversary disinformation and destructive cyber campaigns can be amplified to foment instability. This nexus is testing national governments and multi-national institutions like the European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

## **RISKS AND CHALLENGES IN THE USEUCOM AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (AOR)**

The USEUCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) covers a large and diverse geographic area. It encompasses not only nations such as Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Israel, but a diverse set of perspectives from the Arctic, Iberian Peninsula, Mediterranean Sea, and Eastern Europe.

### **Russia**

Russia's sizable nuclear arsenal ensures they will remain a long-term, existential threat to the United States. Russia's vast non-strategic nuclear weapons stockpile and apparent misperception they could gain advantage in crisis or conflict through its use is concerning. Russia continues to engage in disruptive behavior despite widespread international disapproval and continued economic sanctions, and continues to challenge the rules-based international order and violate its obligations under international agreements. The Kremlin employs coercion and aggressive actions amid growing signs of domestic unrest. These actions suggest Russian leadership may feel compelled to take greater risks to maintain power, counter Western influence, and seize opportunities to demonstrate a perception of great power status.

Over the past twelve years, Russia has invaded two neighboring states, violated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, leading to the treaty's termination, developed new strategic platforms resulting in the Skyfall to deliver for nuclear cruise missile accident that killed 7 Russian scientists last year, weapons, and abrogated its responsibilities under the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, all at the expense of strategic stability. Russia employs a *below-the-threshold of armed conflict* strategy via proxies and intermediary forces in an attempt to weaken, divide, and intimidate our Allies and partners using a range of covert, difficult-to-attribute, and malign actions. These actions include information and cyber operations, election meddling, political subversion, economic intimidation, military sales, exercises, and the calculated use of force. Russian state-sponsored cyber actors have attacked NATO member government and commercial data networks. Russian proxies continue their

attempt to undermine democratic institutions through concerted election meddling against the U.S., Allies, and partners.

Beyond Europe, Russia is working to build influence in the Arctic, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. They are pursuing a partnership of convenience with China to close off the current free and open international order. By probing U.S., Allied, and partner response thresholds, Russian leadership plays a dangerous game fraught with the risk of miscalculation and unintended escalation.

The Kremlin continues to maintain robust levels of defense spending, modernizing its forces across the board, with the intent of building a more flexible and rapidly deployable force to provide an enhanced capability to seize and maintain the initiative in both competition and conflict. Russia continues to rotate its forces through active conflicts in Syria and Ukraine to improve, test, and validate combat capabilities. Russia counts on its malign influence capabilities, conventional military, and nuclear forces to underwrite this aggressive approach. Modern Russian Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD), cyber and electronic warfare systems, counter-space, and long-range precision fires capabilities are postured and employed to challenge U.S. and Allied warfighting systems, doctrine, and authorities.

## **Ukraine**

Following the purported annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia and its proxies continue their campaign to destabilize Ukraine's defense, economic, and political sectors with the intent of cementing Ukraine into the Kremlin's sphere of influence. Of particular concern is the ongoing conflict in the Donbas region, instigated and stoked by Russia. Even with the implementation of the Minsk agreements, ceasefire violations occur often. Russia also continues to undermine the government of Ukraine through cyber-attacks, support of illegitimate elections in eastern Ukraine, and aggressive actions in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov, including an attack on Ukrainian naval vessels. Contrary to Russian efforts, these coercive actions have energized Ukrainian civil society and reinforced aspirations to membership in Euro-Atlantic institutions like

the EU and NATO. The recent election of President Zelenskyy further solidified this pro-Western course. Ukraine has enhanced its commitment to fighting corruption and enacting defense reform, including by meeting the requirements of our Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI).

### **Poland and Baltics**

Poland and the Baltics remain a strategic focal point for both NATO and Russia. For NATO, this is the region at the greatest risk of Russian aggression and miscalculated escalation due to historical grievances and geographic position. For the Kremlin, Polish and Baltic geopolitical alignment with the West are reminders of a withered sphere of control, of the rush toward NATO's open door, isolation of its Kaliningrad exclave, and lost access to the Baltic Sea from the Russian mainland. The Kremlin sees the region's substantial ethnic Russian population as a potential justification for intervention. It actively targets this population with extensive propaganda and malign influence operations. While NATO forces in the region currently help deter any overt Russian attack, Russian military forces in the Western Military District and Kaliningrad hold a geographic advantage and outnumber NATO forces postured in the region. Russia is actively employing malign information and cyber operations in an attempt to weaken regional stability and Alliance resolve. Allies in the region are deepening their knowledge and expertise in the cyber and information domains to the benefit of the U.S. and the Alliance. Poland's defense budget increases, burden-sharing basing offers with the U.S., and on-going modernization that include Patriot and F-35 acquisitions, provide significant capability enhancements in the region and demonstrate resolve to meet and exceed the 2014 Wales Summit commitments.

### **South Caucasus**

The Kremlin exerts influence over countries in the South Caucasus through manipulation of regional tensions and enduring military conflicts with all instruments of national power. The Kremlin believes chronic instability in this area is central to regional hegemony. Russia

maintains leverage over Georgia through its occupation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including its attempts to alter the administrative boundary lines of occupied territories, interfere with the transit of people and goods within Georgia's sovereign territory, and complicate Georgia's NATO membership aspirations.

Russia also maintains its political influence over Armenia and Azerbaijan by playing both sides of the enduring conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, while questionably serving as a neutral mediator in the Minsk Process peace negotiations. As an example of supplying both sides of the conflict, Russia provides military grant assistance to Armenia, a Collective Security Treaty Organization member, while simultaneously selling advanced military systems and hardware to Azerbaijan. Russia also influences support of operations farther abroad, such as convincing Armenia to deploy forces to Syria as part of the Russian contingent support for Assad's regime.

### **Balkans**

The Balkans remain a strategically important region where ethnic tensions within nations and between neighbors continue to foster regional instability and are primary targets of persistent Russian malign influence. Aside from historical and cultural ties with the Balkan region, Russia views the sustainment of social and political tensions in the region as a central tenet of its goal to prevent individual Balkan nations from progressing on a path toward Euro-Atlantic alignment and integration. Nonetheless, Montenegro, and soon North Macedonia's accession into NATO represent tremendous success stories in spite of Russia's significant attempts to block and dissuade integration.

Despite Kosovo declaring independence in 2008, Russia, China, and several other nations have yet to recognize its status as a sovereign nation. Kosovo, and neighboring Serbia, have not yet normalized relations, but despite tensions, we continue to encourage both parties to maintain dialogue to find a peaceful solution. The principal stabilizing force in Kosovo remains NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), which includes a small, but significant U.S. contribution.

KFOR's presence will remain essential to stability while Serbia and Kosovo pursue a stable relationship through the planned 10-year transition of the Kosovo Security Forces.

Serbia has attempted to find a balance between Russia and the West but finds its EU ambitions impeded by internal corruption, structural and economic challenges, EU-Russia sanctions, and the requirement to normalize relations with Kosovo. China has emerged as an alternative patron, engaging in both economic and defense support matters.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains mired in political and ethnic instability. Fueled by Russian influence, obstructionists seek greater autonomy for Republika Srpska to weaken state-level authorities and frustrate progress towards further alignment with NATO and the EU. Nationalist politics and entrenched ethnic divisions between Bosniaks, Bosnian-Croats, and Bosnian-Serbs challenge Bosnia and Herzegovina's ability to chart a path towards lasting stability.

## **Turkey**

Acknowledging tensions and political disputes, Turkey remains a strategic U.S. Ally, critical to NATO and U.S. interests in Europe, EURASIA, and the Middle East. Home to the second largest military in NATO, Turkey borders a volatile region and is geostrategically located to assist in countering Russia. Turkey is also the only NATO member to share a border with Iran. Ankara continues to view the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and its affiliates as their greatest security threat. From Turkey's perspective, continued U.S. support for the Syrian Democratic Forces remains the principal irritant to our bilateral security relationship. Turkey's intervention into Northeast Syria to address these security concerns degraded U.S. counter-terrorism efforts and further harmed our bilateral relationship.

Turkey's purchase of the Russian produced S-400 air defense system is incompatible with Turkish procurement of the F-35, the S-400 cannot be integrated with NATO's Integrated Air and Missile Defense command and control network.

Turkey's role in countering Russia, however, is pivotal. The relationship between Moscow and Ankara remains transactional. Both nations view the Black Sea region as their natural area

of influence and they continue to clash in Libya and are in direct combat in Idlib, Syria. Both U.S. and Turkey's long-term strategic interests are best served by continuing to work together to improve counter-Russia cooperation both bilaterally and through NATO.

## **Israel**

Israel continues to face a complex set of evolving security challenges spanning the spectrum of conflict. Regional instability is fueled by Iran's efforts to threaten Israel and Russia's expanded involvement in Syria and the eastern Mediterranean.

Israel's adversaries, most notably Iran, Hamas, and Lebanese-Hezbollah, have taken advantage of this turbulence. Iran has positioned forces to threaten and attack Israel, attempted to expand its influence, and increased lethal support to regional partners.

Iran and its proxies have also made significant gains in asymmetric capabilities, including advanced ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and unmanned aerial systems. Iran remains committed to modernizing its military and continues to improve the range, lethality, and accuracy of its ballistic missile systems and has the region's largest ballistic missile arsenal with the capability of striking targets 2,000 kilometers beyond its borders.

## **Mediterranean and Southern Flank**

While migrant and refugee flows from the Middle East and Africa have decreased, steady movement of people across Turkey and through the Mediterranean continue to stress European nations and the EU. Migration remains a major security and humanitarian concern for Allies and partners across Southern Europe and consumes scarce defense and security resources.

## **Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO)**

VEOs remain a transregional threat with decentralized command and control, finance, and facilitation networks spanning from conflict zones into Europe. These extremists continue to take advantage of instability in North Africa, Iraq, and Syria to hide and husband resources in the face of coalition gains. VEO-inspired and organized attacks in Europe further complicate integration efforts, isolate refugee and migrant communities, and make these groups vulnerable



to recruitment. Despite the death of al-Baghdadi, ISIS and other VEOs still require persistent global pressure to prevent a resurgence and preclude future attacks against the Homeland, Europe, and our global partners.

## **China**

China's aggressive economic and diplomatic activities in the USEUCOM AOR signal Beijing's desire to build influence in Europe to tilt the international order to its advantage. Seventeen Central and Eastern European nations have joined the China-led, *17+1* framework for cooperation. Many European countries, including the *17+1*, are also signatories to China's *One Belt One Road* Initiative. China also pursues bilateral deals with targeted nations to build infrastructure and secure agreements enabling cost-effective global trade. Chinese foreign direct investment and Chinese-backed business ventures in Europe provide China an avenue to exert influence at the expense of long-term U.S., Allied, and partner interests.

Of particular concern are China's efforts to expand 5G networks into Europe through state-backed firms like Huawei and ZTE. These networks place intellectual property, sensitive technology, and private personal information at heightened risk of acquisition and exploitation by the Chinese government. This ongoing initiative, coupled with China's growing interest and investment in European ports and infrastructure, complicates steady-state and contingency operations. We continue to articulate this risk to European defense counterparts and highlight shared values, interests, and business practices that distinguish the U.S. as a partner of choice. We see encouraging signs from European nations as they become increasingly wary of strings attached to Chinese capital and investment.

## **USEUCOM OPERATIONS, ACTIVITIES, INVESTMENTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Strategy Implementation**

We confront challenges in the USEUCOM AOR by adapting our thinking and approach to meet assigned missions as detailed in capstone strategy documents and maintain laser-sharp

focus on expanding the competitive space with Russia. USEUCOM acts as Coordinating Authority for the Russia problem set by overseeing the global coordination of day-to-day operations, activities, and investments. In this role, USEUCOM advises the Secretary of Defense on resource, force structure, and synchronization of Department of Defense activities to deter Russia and curb its global malign activities.

USEUCOM tirelessly works with the U.S. interagency, Allies, and partners to address the evolving challenges posed by our adversaries. In this increasingly competitive security environment, we remain vigilant to ensure any challenge or challenger is met with a lethal, responsive, and resilient force, in all domains, in every strategic direction, and with a capable set of Allies and partners.

### **Support NATO's Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area**

USEUCOM's primary mission is to deter and "posture" to respond to aggression with the full weight of the NATO Alliance. In 2019, NATO took significant steps toward improving command and control and other military capabilities to meet the challenges and complexities of a dynamic security environment. NATO's Military Committee approved a new NATO Military Strategy, *Comprehensive Defense and Shared Response*. NATO continued implementation of the adapted NATO Command Structure with the establishment of two additional NATO headquarters: Joint Forces Command Norfolk, focused on maintaining trans-Atlantic lines of communications, and the German-led, Joint Support Enabling Command, focused on rear-area security and logistics coordination. These headquarters increase our ability to command and control and will organize and enable the deployment and sustainment of NATO forces in crisis or conflict. The EU, NATO, and USEUCOM have made progress improving infrastructure and transit permissions to facilitate the rapid movement of forces and logistic support across the Euro-Atlantic. We will "leverage" and "proof" many of these advancements during the U.S. led Exercise DEFENDER-Europe 20 this spring. The NATO Readiness Initiative will ensure NATO's ability to respond to aggression rapidly by identifying 30 battalions, 30 air squadrons,

and 30 naval combat vessels, for use in 30 days. Finally, the forthcoming accession of North Macedonia as the 30<sup>th</sup> member of NATO demonstrates the vibrancy of the Alliance through its *Open Door Policy* while continuing to show the strength of purpose in defending shared values in the face of Russian malign influence.

NATO members contribute to common defense through capability investments, support to Alliance members, and continued participation in operations, missions, and exercises. Poland's acquisition of F-35s and Patriot air defense capability, Romania's acquisition of High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) long-range fires capability, and the fielding of F-35s by Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom are increasing interoperable combat power across the AOR. NATO members provide host nation support to forward-stationed U.S. forces across the region and participate in Alliance and U.S. multi-lateral exercises focused on enhancing responsiveness and interoperability. NATO members contribute forces to ongoing NATO and U.S.-led coalition missions advancing and securing our common interests in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq, and Syria. NATO members help underwrite infrastructure investments, defraying costs of U.S. military construction in theater through the NATO Security Investment Program.

As NATO fortifies its position against a resurgent Russia, ballistic missile threats from Iran, and the continued threat of international terror groups, U.S. leadership within the Alliance is critical for ongoing activities to address competition and ensure combat-credible military forces are trained and postured to deter any would-be aggressor. USEUCOM plays an important role in exercising this leadership through our support to ongoing NATO operations, missions and engagements as NATO adapts to ensure it is an Alliance fit for purpose.

USEUCOM's participation in NATO operations and activities demonstrates U.S. commitment to the Alliance. U.S. soldiers stand ready in Poland as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence mission in one of four battlegroups holding the line against Russian aggression in Poland and the Baltics. U.S. aircrews fly alongside Allies as part of the Baltic Air Policing

mission, helping to safeguard the sovereignty of Baltic airspace against Russian incursions. A U.S. destroyer operates as the flagship of Standing NATO Maritime Group One, responding to maritime challenges in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and the Baltic Sea. The European Phased Adaptive Approach, including the Aegis Ashore in Romania and U.S. Aegis destroyer presence in the Mediterranean, provides the foundation of NATO's Ballistic Missile Defense capability.

The support Congress provides through the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) has been critical to our deterrence and posture successes in the USEUCOM AOR. Through EDI, we have enhanced our presence in the theater to assure Allies and deter adversaries. Increases of forward-stationed and rotational forces continue to improve our posture and enable us to compete and win in a multi-domain crisis or conflict. EDI funding for exercises, training, and building partner capacity programs enhance the readiness and interoperability of U.S. and Alliance forces. EDI funds have also improved our ability to respond using prepositioned stocks and improved theater infrastructure. Together, these improvements enable the rapid deployment and sustainment of forces. Section 333-funded Security Cooperation initiatives are pivotal components to EDI. Programs such as the Black Sea Maritime Initiative and enhancing Baltic Integrated Air and Missile Defense are potent, regionally-focused, components of a resilient theater posture.

We continue to improve the infrastructure to enable swift response in any contingency. On the ground, we are establishing a U.S. armored division capability through the combination of forward-stationed and rotational forces. Army Prepositioned Stocks in Europe hold equipment and logistics for an Armored Brigade Combat Team and key enablers, facilitating increased lethality by rapidly integrating deployed units into operations. U.S. Army Europe, with extensive participation by NATO member states, will exercise this capability in the first deployment and exercise of a division echelon formation on NATO's eastern flank since the end of the Cold War in Exercise DEFENDER-Europe 20 this spring.

In the air domain, we are improving the mix of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> generation fighter aircraft stationed in the theater along with rotational forces from the U.S. to enhance our IAMD networks and underwrite our Allies' efforts to enhance air defense systems. The build-out of European Contingency Air Operation Sets and Deployable Air Base Sets enhance the resiliency of our forces.

In the maritime domain, we see predictable Carrier Strike Group and Amphibious presence as key elements of an agile theater posture. The reactivation of U.S. Second Fleet provides necessary maritime command and control capability in the Atlantic, while reinforcing NATO's western flank.

In the space domain, we are building an integrated planning element to leverage the capability USSPACECOM is building to ensure our ability to plan and execute multi-domain operations.

We have leveraged the Dynamic Force Employment (DFE) model to re-affirm our commitment to Allies, deploy diverse military capabilities within the AOR to improve our deterrent posture, and demonstrate operational unpredictability to adversaries. DFE deployments have included posturing the HARRY S. TRUMAN strike group from the Mediterranean to the High North, deploying a Terminal High Altitude Defense (THAAD) battery to both Israel and Romania, Bomber Task Force missions throughout the AOR, and an F-35 deployment to exercise with European Allies, demonstrating our ability to rapidly generate significant combat power across the AOR.

Rotational Army, Marine, and Special Operations Forces (SOF) maintain a presence on the ground in strategic locations across the theater. These forces work alongside Allies and partners to deter aggression and build host nation defense capacity, interoperability, and readiness. DFE enables us to improve posture and unit readiness simultaneously. In Eastern Europe, a rotational Armored Brigade Combat Team and Combat Aviation Brigade are deployed

as part of Operation ATLANTIC RESOLVE to deter and are postured to respond if required. Rotational Marine Forces in Norway have improved an important position on NATO's northern periphery while training in Arctic conditions alongside our Norwegian allies. Additionally, the tangible improvements by individual European nations and the EU to enhance military mobility throughout Europe is increasing responsiveness and combat capability. The EU, in consultation with NATO and USEUCOM, is investing 6.5 billion euros for improvements to civilian and military dual-use transportation infrastructure across the continent.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance. The fundamental purpose of NATO's nuclear capability is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression. The strategic forces of the Alliance are the supreme guarantee of the security of Allies and underwrite every U.S. military operation in Europe. Since 2015, the Alliance has placed increased emphasis on the role of nuclear capabilities in its overall deterrence and defense posture, and continues to adapt its posture to ensure its nuclear capabilities remain credible, coherent, resilient, and adaptable to the changing environment.

USEUCOM fully supports the continued modernization and recapitalization of our nuclear forces. Congress has recognized the importance of modernizing U.S. nuclear forces after decades of deferred recapitalization and has substantially funded these programs. USEUCOM fully supports recommendations in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review to deploy the W76-2 Low Yield Ballistic Missile and to pursue development of a modern, sea-launched nuclear cruise missile. These actions would address a perceived deterrence gap, raise the Russian threshold for nuclear use, and disabuse the Russian Federation of the misconception there is any path to victory through nuclear escalation.

### **Counter Russian Malign Influence**

Every day, USEUCOM and NATO compete to challenge and counter Russia's *below-the-threshold* strategy, and to counterbalance the multi-faceted and capable military power which underwrite its malign approach. We bring potent assets to this ongoing contest through

coordination with the U.S. interagency and multi-national partners. A key platform for competing with Russia on this front is the Russian Influence Group. USEUCOM co-chairs this effort with U.S. Department of State's Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs to promote Whole of Government cooperation and to identify, attribute, and counter Russia malign activities. Congressional funding for information operations activities enables USEUCOM to challenge adversary narratives and disinformation on a daily basis. Our SOF forces are another vital element of this approach working with European Allies and partners to enhance defense institutions, border security, and resilience to Russian malign attacks.

In the Cyber domain, our Cyber Component (Joint Forces Headquarters Cyber (Air Force)) and USEUCOM's Joint Cyber Center, in coordination with USCYBERCOM, continue to mature manning, facilities, and authorities to actively counter Russian cyber attacks. Together, these elements also assist with the enhancement of Allied and partner cyber capabilities.

Recognizing worldwide cyber capabilities of China, Iran, and North Korea, we work with other combatant commands and interagency partners to enhance global cyber defenses and our ability to impose costs on aggressive adversary behavior.

National Guard and Reserve forces maintain vibrant relationships and unique access with Allies and partners through the twenty-six-year-old State Partnership Program (SPP). With more than 500 engagements, through 22 active programs annually, the SPP provides unique opportunities to cultivate regional expertise and strengthen personal relationships to improve readiness and alignment across the AOR.

Recognizing the state of competition between Russia and the West, escalation control/management must be foundational to our approach as military forces deter and posture to defend. We make extensive use of authorized military-to-military channels for safety deconfliction and to maintain strategic stability while remaining operationally unpredictable.

### **Assist in the Defense of Israel**

USEUCOM underwrites the U.S. commitment to Israel's inherent right of self-defense from growing regional threats and our defense ties remain an important anchor of U.S.-Israel relations. USEUCOM conducts a robust series of exercises, activities, and senior leader engagements. We work closely with Israel's Defense Force to help maintain their qualitative military edge over any potential competitor. This assistance demonstrates our unwavering commitment to Israel, support for stability in the Levant, and the containment of Iranian malign activity.

### **Advance and Strengthen Strategic Relationships**

Our strong bilateral and multi-lateral ties with European Allies and partners are invaluable and enable advancement of our shared interests in Europe and further abroad. USEUCOM's strong military-to-military relationships with defense counterparts across Europe signal continued U.S. commitment and are foundational to these national ties, particularly with countries such as Turkey, Ukraine, Georgia, and our Arctic partners.

Turkey remains a key U.S. and NATO ally. Turkey's military strength and strategic position further U.S. and NATO interests. Our military-to-military relationships remain close.

Along Russia's border, key U.S. partners see a brighter future to the West and resist Russia's efforts to hold them in a sphere of influence. Despite an ongoing Kremlin-sponsored malign influence campaign, violence by Russian-sponsored forces in the Donbas region, and the purported annexation of Crimea, Ukraine continues to seek closer partnership with the United States. Security cooperation funding provided through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative enhances the capability of Ukrainian formations and EUCOM's stated mission to deter Russian aggression. American service members on the ground in the Joint Military Training Group-Ukraine work shoulder-to-shoulder with Ukrainian forces, helping to build competence and confidence. NATO partnership mechanisms and funds reinforce these programs and present a unified and coherent approach in our collective support to Ukraine. Maintaining this positive



momentum and continued USAI funding for lethal aid are essential to enabling Ukrainian forces' ability to defend their sovereignty against well-armed, Russian-backed forces.

In the Caucasus, where Russian forces occupy the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia continues to be a steadfast partner and contributor to global security. Georgia is the largest non-NATO contributor to Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT—NATO's ongoing Afghanistan mission. Georgia's commitment of 870 soldiers in support of U.S. operations in Afghanistan demonstrates the enduring strength of our strategic partnership. USEUCOM assists Georgian forces in preparing for this mission through the Georgia Deployment Program. We continue to support Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity by improving their capability to generate and sustain capable defense forces through the Georgia Defense Readiness Program.

In the Arctic, changing environmental conditions present new opportunities for exploration, trade, and interaction. USEUCOM supports Whole of Government efforts to preserve the region as a place nations act cooperatively to address shared challenges and where U.S. national interests remain secure. USEUCOM leverages its close relations with USNORTHCOM and European Arctic nations to build Arctic awareness, increase operations, and strengthen the free and open order to secure the Arctic. These bilateral and multi-lateral strategic relationships enhance Alliance efforts to deter Russian aggression and advance shared interests.

### **Enable U.S. Global Operations**

Europe and the U.S. remain the foundation for upholding a free and open international order. USEUCOM's unique geographic location is essential to enable global operations through synchronization, access, basing, and overflight permissions within Europe. From this key terrain, USEUCOM acts in support of multiple Combatant and Functional Commands, Allied, Coalition, and U.S. interagency operations. Basing, access, and overflight permissions are built upon mutual respect and trust between the U.S. and our sovereign Allies and partners, and should not be taken for granted. We work within the Whole of Government to maintain these

relationships, permissions under bilateral agreements, and to resist Russian and Chinese strategic investments. Absent these agreements, we would be unable to meet our treaty obligations or protect vital national interests. Beyond strategic position, the shared values, trust, and longstanding relationships we have in Europe, with some of our most capable and willing Allies and partners on the planet, enable the U.S. to generate coalitions for worldwide operations in support of shared national interests.

Most recently, European Allies and partners proved essential in our national efforts to deter Iranian aggression. Our Allies and partners enabled USEUCOM's rapid posture shift of U.S. forces in response to potential contingencies in the Levant. Key partners provided indispensable access, basing, and overflight permissions that enabled our ability to protect American citizens and diplomats in harm's way, had the security situation deteriorated. This recent example highlights the value of European support to enable U.S. global operations that preserve and defend our national interests worldwide.

## **Conclusion**

The United States' position in Europe is an invaluable cornerstone of national security, built by our predecessors upon the wreckage of two world wars. Today, U.S. service members in Europe continue to generate global peace and prosperity alongside our Allies and partners in the face of growing challenges. Revisionist actors, most notably Russia and China, present formidable, long-term challenges to preserving a Europe that is free, whole, and at peace.

We appreciate Congressional interest in these challenges and your continued pledge to meet them through support, funding, and authorities...particularly potent are support for European Deterrence Initiative and Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI). EDI enables USEUCOM's ability to enhance U.S. and Alliance readiness and posture to quickly respond in crisis or conflict. USAI ensures Ukraine has the resources and training to deter further Russian aggression. USEUCOM sits in a strategically significant part of the world and the dedicated

men and women of the command unceasingly strive to be good stewards of the trust our nation has placed in us. Together with the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and civilians of USEUCOM, your support demonstrates our Nation's continued commitment to defend the homeland forward and preserve peace for the one billion people living in the Euro-Atlantic.