

**Testimony of
Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Brian P. McKeon
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
“U.S. Policy on Ukraine”
March 10, 2014**

Chairman Corker, Senator Menendez, Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today.

The crisis in Ukraine continues. After more than a year of aggressive Russian action, the situation in Ukraine remains unstable. As the Committee is aware, last year Russia occupied the Crimean peninsula and subsequently has attempted to annex it. Today, Russia continues its participation and active support to separatists engaged in violence in eastern Ukraine. As Assistant Secretary Nuland informed you, the ceasefire under the terms of the Minsk Implementation Plan may be holding in many areas of eastern Ukraine, and we have seen some progress on withdrawals of weapons. However, ceasefire violations continue, almost all of them on the Russian and separatist side; this is not an “immediate and comprehensive ceasefire” as called for by the plan. We remain concerned that this may be a period of strategic pause -- a stalling tactic as a precursor to more violence as occurred before the most recent Russian and separatist assault in January. We call on Russia to stop "moving the goalposts", to uphold the ceasefire, and to allow Ukraine the freedom to choose its own path.

As you heard from Assistant Secretary Nuland, since the beginning of the crisis the United States has vigorously pursued a multi-pronged approach in response to Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. We have raised the costs to Russia for its actions, re-assured Allies of our unwavering support to their security, and provided tangible support to Ukraine to help it through the crisis. I wish to highlight the measures taken in each of these three areas, including actions taken by the Department of Defense.

Raising costs to Russia

First, working closely with Europe and other partners and Allies, the Administration has imposed real costs on Russia for its aggressive actions. We have worked diligently to isolate

Russia at the United Nations Security Council, we and our partners have suspended Russia's participation in the G-8. The Department of Defense halted defense and military cooperation with Russia. The Administration has also prohibited exports of sensitive technologies that could be used in Russia's military modernization and has imposed blocking sanctions on 18 Russian defense technology firms. Most important, the United States and its European allies have imposed a series of sanctions to raise the costs for Russia and Ukrainian separatists for their aggressive actions, including targeted sectoral sanctions in the Russian finance, energy, and defense sectors, which have had a substantial impact on Russia's economy.

Re-assuring Allies

Second, we are taking visible, concrete measures to reassure our Allies and partners in Europe and to deter further Russian aggression. Thanks to Congress, the European Reassurance Initiative, or ERI, is helping the Department to increase and sustain an enhanced U.S. air, sea, and ground presence in Europe and to improve facilities needed to reinforce Allies along the border with Russia. Additionally, ERI funds will be used to bolster our assistance to Ukraine and to the Baltic Allies.

As part of our reassurance measures, we have maintained a persistent presence of U.S. military forces in each of the Baltic States, Poland, and the Black Sea since April 2014. We tripled the number of U.S. aircraft taking part in our Baltic Air Policing rotation, provided refueling aircraft for NATO Airborne Warning and Control System missions, deployed U.S. Navy ships to the Black and Baltic Seas 14 times, and increased training flights in Poland.

In 2015, using ERI funds, the United States will increase its reassurance and deterrence efforts with additional measures, including:

- rotating an armored brigade to Europe for several months;
- prepositioning in Europe a second battalion-sized set of tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles;

- conducting additional bilateral and multilateral exercises and training with Allies and partners;
- deploying a squadron of U.S. Air Force A-10s to Europe for nearly six months;
- making infrastructure improvements to eight airfields;
- prepositioning fuel and ammunition; and,
- building the capacity of close partners such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine to enhance interoperability to work alongside U.S. and NATO forces, as well as to provide for their own defense.

Similarly, NATO has taken concrete steps to reassure Allies and deter Russia. These measures are defensive, proportionate, and fully in line with the obligations under the North Atlantic Treaty to provide for Allied defense. NATO's deterrence measures have included:

- increasing the number of aircraft on air-policing patrols over the Baltics and the number of bases used for Baltic Air Policing;
- deploying aircraft to Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania for training and exercises;
- commencing AWACS surveillance flights over the territory of our eastern Allies;
- sending more ships to patrol the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean;
- deploying ground troops to the eastern parts of the Alliance for training and exercises, on a rotational basis; and,
- conducting over 200 NATO and national exercises in Europe in 2014.

Allies have also agreed to measures as part of NATO's Readiness Action Plan that will improve the Alliance's long-term military posture and capabilities, and ensure it is ready to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges. NATO Defense Ministers in February decided to enhance the NATO Response Force by creating a "spearhead force," known as a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), that will be able to deploy at very short notice. The VJTF consists of a land component of around 5,000 troops with an appropriate mix air, maritime and SOF units. It aims to strengthen the Alliance's collective defense and ensure that NATO has the right forces in the right place at the right time.

Efforts to support Ukraine

Third, we are providing substantial support to Ukraine as it deals with simultaneous economic and military crises. Ukraine has been a strong partner to the United States and NATO since its independence, and our security cooperation with Ukraine dates back to 1992. Such cooperation over the past two decades has paid dividends, as Ukraine has been a steadfast coalition partner in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Bosnia, as well as in counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa. During this time, the United States provided Ukraine with military training, professional education, communications equipment, and support for border control and counter-proliferation efforts. Unfortunately, the corruption of the Yanukovich regime starved Ukraine's Armed Forces of resources. But the neglect of the Armed Forces by the regime did not strip the military of its professionalism or its determination to fight.

Since the start of the crisis the United States has increased its security-related assistance to Ukraine. We have committed \$118 million in material and training assistance to Ukraine's military, National Guard, and Border Guard service. Under ERI, in FY 2015 we will dedicate at least another \$120 million including \$45 million for State Department security assistance programs. Our assistance has been consistent with identified Ukrainian needs and priorities, and it is vetted by our country team in Ukraine and by a flag-level U.S.-Ukraine Joint Commission that continuously assesses how to maximize the effect and impact of our security assistance. Key areas of material assistance include sustainment items, medical support, personal protective gear, secure communications, and perimeter security. We have also provided counter-mortar radar capabilities, which the Ukrainians tell us they have used to good effect.

Similarly, we also continue to conduct longstanding exercises such as Rapid Trident to increase interoperability among Ukraine, U.S., NATO, and Partnership for Peace member nations. The most recent Rapid Trident iteration in September 2014 included a multinational field training exercise and saw the participation of 15 countries and approximately 1,300 personnel.

Other measures remain under active consideration in the Administration, including the provision of additional security assistance. As the President has said, we are looking at all our

options, including the possibility of lethal defensive weapons. At the same time, we have made clear that we do not believe there is a military solution to the conflict in Ukraine, and are working actively to support the diplomatic track.

Conclusion

Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine are a threat to a bipartisan objective of American policy since the end of the Cold War of seeking a Europe whole, free, and at peace. The United States will continue to work closely with our Ukrainian and European partners to counter these actions and to provide reassurance and support to our partners and NATO allies.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, and look forward to your questions.