

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE
February 4 - 11, 2015

1. [Obama Sends Resolution for Use of Force Against ISIL to Congress](#) (02-11-2015)
2. [Hagel Welcomes Proposed Resolution on Use of Force Against ISIL](#) (02-11-2015)
3. [President: Massive Global Effort Created Anti-Ebola Success](#) (02-11-2015)
4. [Aircraft Deploy to Europe to Boost Interoperability With Allies](#) (02-11-2015)
5. [Work Outlines Budget Priorities, Process](#) (02-10-2015)
6. [U.S.-Estonia Agreement Strengthens Partnership, Defenses](#) (02-10-2015)
7. [Obama, Merkel Discuss Ukraine Situation, ISIL](#) (02-09-2015)
8. [Allies Must Stay Focused on Russia, Biden Says in Munich](#) (02-08-2015)
9. [Leaders: Resources Key for National Security Strategy](#) (02-06-2015)
10. [Closing Guantanamo 'National Security Imperative,' Official Says](#) (02-06-2015)
11. [NATO Sets Sizes for Spearhead, Response Forces](#) (02-05-2015)

1. [Obama Sends Resolution for Use of Force Against ISIL to Congress](#) (02-11-2015)

By Jim Garamone
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11, 2015 – President Barack Obama has sent a draft resolution to Congress to authorize the use of force against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

The president spoke about the draft authorization during a White House announcement this afternoon. Vice President Joe Biden, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Secretary of State John Kerry stood with the president.

The draft resolution would give the United States the authority to fulfill the objective of destroying the terror group in Iraq and Syria, the president said. U.S. forces and coalition allies are already striking at the group in the region. American forces are operating under authorizations passed after the 9-11 attacks.

2,000 Strikes

Air forces have launched more than 2,000 strikes against ISIL. “We’re disrupting their command and control on supply lines, making it harder for them to move,” Obama said. “We’re destroying their fighting positions, their tanks, their vehicles, their barracks, their training camps and the oil and gas facilities and infrastructure that fund their operations. We’re taking out their commanders, their fighters and their leaders.”

The airstrikes are happening in conjunction with Iraqi ground forces. Iraqi security forces have largely held the line against the ISIL terrorists. “In Syria, ISIL failed in its major push to take the town of Kobani, losing countless fighters in the process, fighters who will never again threaten innocent civilians,” the president said. “And we’ve seen reports of sinking morale among ISIL fighters as they realize the futility of their cause.”

While it will take time to destroy the hateful group, “our coalition is on the offensive, ISIL is on the defensive, and ISIL is going to lose,” Obama said.

He delineated what the draft resolution does and does not do. It supports the strategy against ISIL – aerial assaults and training and equipping indigenous forces for ground combat. It also would aid in preventing ISIL attacks in the region and beyond, including by foreign terrorist fighters who try to threaten coalition countries.

No U.S. Ground Combat

“The resolution we’ve submitted today does not call for the deployment of U.S. ground combat forces to Iraq or Syria,” the president said. “It is not the authorization of another ground war like Afghanistan or Iraq. The 2,600 American troops in Iraq today largely serve on bases. And yes, they face the risks that come with service in any dangerous environment, but they do not have a combat mission.”

U.S. forces in Iraq are training Iraqi forces including the Kurdish peshmerga. “I’m convinced that the United States should not get dragged back into another prolonged ground war in the Middle East,” Obama said. “That’s not in our national security interest and it’s not necessary for us to defeat ISIL. Local forces on the ground who know their countries best are best positioned to take the ground fight to ISIL and that’s what they are doing.”

The draft resolution also gives military leaders the flexibility to adjust to the changing nature of the battlefield, the president said. “We need flexibility, but we also have to be careful and deliberate,” he said. “And there’s no heavier decision than asking our men and women in uniform to risk their lives on our behalf. As commander in chief, I will only send our troops into harm’s way when it is absolutely necessary for our national security.”

The draft authorization runs out after three years.

“I believe this resolution can grow even stronger with the thoughtful and dignified debate that this moment demands,” the president said. “I’m optimistic that it can win strong bipartisan support and that we can show our troops and the world that Americans are united in this mission.”

Related Sites:

[Remarks by the President on Request to Congress for Authorization of Force Against ISIL](#)
[Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL](#)

[Statement by Secretary Kerry](#)

[DipNote](#)

[Special Report: Operation Inherent Resolve - Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists](#)

2. Hagel Welcomes Proposed Resolution on Use of Force Against ISIL (02-11-2015)

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11, 2015 – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel today expressed his support for a proposed resolution President Barack Obama is submitting to Congress that would authorize the use of military force against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

“I welcome the president's proposed resolution ... and urge Congress to pass it,” the secretary said in a statement.

Obama is expected to make a statement about the resolution -- formally known as an Authorization for Use of Military Force, or AUMF -- later today.

“While existing AUMFs provide legal authority for our ongoing military operations in Iraq and Syria, I agree with the president that bipartisan support for the proposed ISIL AUMF would provide an important signal of support to DoD personnel, of commitment to our partners, and of resolve to ISIL,” Hagel said.

Draft Language Reflects Congressional Input

The president's draft language reflects important input from Congress, the secretary said, and would give the Defense Department the support and flexibility needed in military operations against ISIL.

“The Department of Defense will continue to work with members of Congress to secure this resolution,” he added. “Given the nature of our adversary and the complexity of our ongoing campaign, I urge Congress to avoid any undue restraints on the commander in chief's choices in the effort to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL.”

ISIL represents a serious threat to the interests of the United States and its allies, Hagel said. “The depths of ISIL's barbarism are matched only by the scale of its ambition,” he said.

“DoD personnel are working each day -- with 60 coalition partners -- in our campaign against ISIL,” he continued. “We want Congress's full, bipartisan support in this fight, because the country is stronger when both parties and both branches of government stand and work together.”

Biographies:

[Chuck Hagel](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Operation Inherent Resolve - Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists](#)

[Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on the Proposed Authorization for Use of Military Force](#)

3. President: Massive Global Effort Created Anti-Ebola Success (02-11-2015)

By Terri Moon Cronk
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11, 2015 – The American and partner-nation fight in the last few months against the Ebola virus in West Africa has cut cases of the disease by 80 percent, President Barack Obama announced here today.

But the battle won't be over until the caseload totals zero, he said.

The president spoke at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, addressing U.S. military and civilian personnel, thanking them for answering the call for help in the Ebola-affected countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Obama said the progress made in just a few months has been enormous.

“Last fall, we saw between 800 and 1,000 new cases a week,” he said of the region. “Today, we're seeing between 100 and 150 cases a week.”

Last summer, as Ebola spread in West Africa and threatened to cross more borders, he said fighting the disease had to be “more than a national security priority, but an example of American leadership.”

Using Science to Override Fear

“People were understandably afraid,” Obama said. “But we believed if we made policy based ... on sound science and good judgment, America could lead an effective global response while keeping the American people safe, and we could turn the tide of the epidemic.”

Nearly 3,000 U.S. troops deployed to West Africa to set up logistics support, build Ebola treatment units and train more than 1,500 African health care workers, Obama said.

“We were a force multiplier,” he said.

The United States led a massive global effort to combat the epidemic, Obama said, and the nation mobilized other countries to help, while strengthening global health systems for the long term.

Many Federal Agencies Contributed Numerous American agencies fought the Ebola battle, the president said. U.S. Agency for International Development teams directed the response, Centers of Disease Control representatives traced contacts of the ill to stop further spread of the disease, and health care workers and scientists helped contain the outbreak, he added.

“We launched the Global Health Security Agenda last year to bring more nations together to better prevent and detect and respond to future outbreaks before they become epidemics,” Obama said. “This was a wake-up call, and it's going to be important to learn lessons from what we've done and sustain it into the future.”

Leading philanthropists who committed themselves to continue the work and find new ways to battle Ebola also contributed “more effective surveillance, prevention, and quick response to diseases in the future,” Obama said.

The Fight is Not Over

Overall, Obama noted, the team provided support for 10,000 civilian responders on the ground.

Some 1,500 American troops have already returned home from West Africa, and by April 30, about 100 workers will remain in the affected countries, the president said.

But America's work is not done, he added.

Even a single case of Ebola poses risks, he said. "Every case is an ember that, if not contained, can light a new fire. So we're shifting our focus ... to extinguishing it," Obama said, crediting the Congressional bipartisan majority that approved funding to do so.

The United States continues to screen and monitor all arrivals from affected countries. And because Ebola entered the United States in a few cases, Obama noted that more hospitals are equipped with protective gear and protocols.

A few months ago, 13 states were able to test for the virus, and now, more than 54 labs operate in 44 states, he said, noting that medical facilities qualified to treat Ebola patients grew from three to 51 treatment centers. Six of the eight patients who were successfully treated in the United States were in the audience today, Obama said.

"America does not succumb to fear. We master the moment with bravery and courage, and selflessness and sacrifice, and relentless, unbending hope," the president said, crediting the workers in the audience. "That's what's best in us, and we have to remember that because there will be other circumstances like this in the future."

Related Sites:

[Special Report: DoD Helps Fight Ebola in West Africa - Operation United Assistance](#)

[America's Leadership in the Ebola Fight](#)

[Fact Sheet](#)

[DipNote](#)

[Response to the Ebola Virus](#)

Related Articles:

[Pentagon to Keep 100 People in West Africa to Help Fight Ebola](#)

[USAID Administrator Shah on Ebola Response Transition](#)

4. [Aircraft Deploy to Europe to Boost Interoperability With Allies \(02-11-2015\)](#)

Compiled from U.S. European Command and U.S. Air Forces in Europe News Releases

STUTTGART, Germany, Feb. 11, 2015 – The Air Force has deployed 12 A-10 Thunderbolt II aircraft to Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, as part of a theater security package in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve, U.S. European Command officials announced yesterday.

About 300 airmen and support equipment are deploying with the A-10s from the 355th Fighter Wing, based at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

“While in Germany, these aircraft will forward-deploy to locations in Eastern European NATO nations,” said Navy Capt. Greg Hicks, Eucom spokesman. “Units will conduct training alongside our NATO allies to strengthen interoperability and to demonstrate U.S. commitment to the security and stability of Europe.”

Demonstration of Continued Commitment

Operation Atlantic Resolve is a demonstration of U.S. European Command’s and U.S. Air Forces in Europe’s continued commitment to NATO’s collective security and dedication to the enduring peace and stability in the region, officials said.

"The Air Force has been rotating forces as a part of OAR for the past year," said Air Force Lt. Gen. Tom Jones, vice commander of USAFE and Air Forces Africa. "The theater security package is another way the Air Force is increasing rotational presence in Europe to reassure our allies and partner nations that our commitment to European security is a priority."

The Air Force's forward presence in Europe provides the support infrastructure needed to increase the current force and build new and deeper partnerships across the continent, Jones added.

The A-10s are the first of several theater security package deployments to Europe, officials said, adding that rotations generally will last six months, depending on mission and Eucom requirements.

Although this deployment is a first in Europe, officials said, the Air Force has been conducting similar theater support rotations in the Pacific region since 2004.

Related Sites:

[U.S. European Command](#)

[U.S. Air Forces in Europe](#)

[Special Report: Operation Atlantic Resolve](#)

[EUCOM announces USAF deployment in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve](#)

5. Work Outlines Budget Priorities, Process (02-10-2015)

By Claudette Roulo
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

SAN DIEGO, Calif., Feb. 10, 2015 – The president’s fiscal year 2016 defense budget request begins the process of restoring future warfighting capacity and capabilities by reversing delays to long-term modernization efforts, Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work said today.

The request balances lower budgets with higher operational demands, he said during his keynote address at the U.S. Naval Institute’s 2015 WEST Conference here, and totals \$585 billion in FY 2016, which includes \$51 billion in overseas contingency operations funds.

“These numbers are about \$36 billion above the FY 2016 sequestration caps -- which remain in effect at this point -- and about \$38 billion, or 7.6 percent more than the enacted FY 2015 budget levels,” the deputy secretary said.

“These figures are right in line with those that we submitted last year,” he added.

How the ‘Sausage’ is Made

The request is strategy-driven, resource-informed and the result of long months of review, Work said.

In describing “how the sausage gets made at the department,” the deputy secretary said the process involves hours upon hours of deliberations in a windowless room in the bowels of the Pentagon.

“That’s where we make our strategic priorities and hash out where we will invest our money,” he said.

Before deciding where to invest, Work said, the Defense Department had to determine whether the strategies outlined in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review were still right for the existing global security environment. Deliberations were disrupted by three global security “surprises,” he said.

Global Security ‘Surprises’

Russia’s illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea actually began with destabilization efforts before the QDR was published, the deputy secretary said. Moscow continued its interference in Ukraine by backing separatist activity in the eastern part of the country, Work said.

“These actions suggested unless we could convince Moscow to change its course, that we and our NATO allies were going to be entering into a period of prolonged and heightened tension with Russia,” he said.

In June, terrorists from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant launched an offensive out of northeast Syria and into Iraq, the deputy secretary said.

“The threat to our people and our interests, along, most importantly, with the formation of a partner -- a new, more inclusive Iraqi government that we could work with, prompted our leadership ... to forge a counter-ISIL coalition and to use force in Iraq and Syria to confront that threat,” he said.

And finally, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa surprised the world in its scale and scope, Work said.

Enduring Challenges Continue

The transition of the mission in Afghanistan, ongoing negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program, China’s activities in the East and South China seas, and global cyberattacks -- culminating in the hack and theft of data from Sony’s networks -- made for an already volatile security environment, the deputy secretary said.

And as the nation called on its international partners and allies to respond to these crises, it quickly became evident that the capabilities and capacities of its allies were tapped out, he said.

“So, like it or not, the United States would remain the global security first-responder,” Work said.

Strategy Remains Viable

But, he added, the department’s leaders concluded that the strategic decisions arising from the 2014 QDR were, in fact, still viable and the priorities remain intact.

"Now, we recognize that the assumptions that underpin each of these ... priorities would have to continually be reviewed, especially with regard to what has happened in Europe and the Middle East," the defense secretary said.

DoD came to the same conclusion on the strategy's force-planning construct, Work said. "This construct calls for a smaller, leaner, technologically advanced joint force able in peacetime to do three things: defend our homeland, carry out global counterterrorist operations in multiple theaters, and deter aggression and assure allies through forward presence and engagement," he explained.

And if deterrence fails, Work said, this joint force must be able to defeat a regional adversary in a large-scale multi-phased campaign, while at the same time imposing costs on or denying the objectives of another aggressor in another region.

"We concluded that the force we submitted last year in the president's 2015 budget remained broadly sufficient to need, with one key exception," the deputy secretary said. "And that was in ... intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets."

As a result, he said, the force structure in this year's request is similar to the one proposed by the president for FY 15.

Budget Balancing Act

Even at these elevated budget levels, maintaining the balance between personnel, readiness and modernization is extremely challenging, Work said. Any funding below the levels outlined by this budget request, or a denial of compensation and efficiency initiatives, would place the strategy at risk for a number of reasons, the deputy secretary said.

The department is emerging from 13 years of war that has caused enormous strain on troops and their equipment, he said.

Recent events have highlighted the difficulty of taking a long-planned 2-3 year "reset" to repair and replace war-torn equipment and to train troops, Work said.

"As this last year has shown us, we just cannot be ready for one thing. We can't be a counter insurgency force, we can't be a high-end multi-phase campaign force, we have to be able to do all those things, and it takes time," the deputy secretary said.

Because of this high operational tempo, the department isn't doing a reset, it's doing a "running reset," he said. "We're building this airplane while it's flying," Work said.

This is made even more challenging because readiness is only now beginning to recover from the damage caused by sequestration in 2013, the deputy secretary said.

"Our forward-deployed forces are locked and cocked and ready to go ... but the surge force, the heavy-duty Sunday punch that you throw when necessary, that's not as ready as it has been in the past," he said.

Time and Money

This is a problem of time as much as it is money, Work said.

Consequently, he said, the department has adjusted service end-strength ramps for the Army and Marine Corps to reduce personnel turbulence and stress on the force.

Home station training and range infrastructure have received additional funding, Work said, as have efforts to alleviate maintenance backlogs.

Funding toward each of the services' operational and maintenance accounts increased nearly 10 percent over last year, but, he said, achieving full-spectrum combat readiness cannot happen overnight.

"Even if Congress gets rid of sequestration and gives us the full president's budget level, it's going to take until 2020 for the Army, Marines and Navy to get back to full-spectrum combat readiness and it's going to take the Air Force until 2023," the deputy secretary said.

"The second challenge is because personnel and operations and maintenance costs increase faster than the rate of inflation, the department needs to see 1-3 percent real growth per year to maintain balance," Work said. "But we have been at flat budget levels for three years now."

To free up resources, the department has worked to become more efficient and disciplined in its use of resources, the deputy secretary said.

Efficiency Initiatives

Four rounds of efficiency initiatives sought to shift defense spending to the teeth of defense programs, rather than the tail, Work said.

"But these savings often come over time, and they really do not keep up with the increased spending on operations and maintenance costs," he said.

In addition, Congress has denied several reform proposals, the deputy secretary said.

For example, even though force sizes are decreasing, "Congress continues to reject our repeated requests for a Base Realignment and Closure round. We project, conservatively, that that would save us about \$2 billion, recurring," Work said.

"Maintaining outdated and duplicative systems and unwanted infrastructure drains scarce resources that should go elsewhere into the program. It is wasteful, it's strategically unsound, and it ultimately endangers the readiness of our men and women in uniform," he said.

Technological Advantage Eroding

The erosion of the military's technological edge not only challenges the Defense Department, but it ultimately threatens America's leadership in the world, the deputy secretary said.

This undermines the assurance America provides to its allies, and may undermine deterrence, Work said.

"We're seeing levels of new weapons development that have not been seen since the mid-1980s, near the peak of Soviet Union Cold War defense spending," he said.

Russia is modernizing forces that were once in steep decline, the deputy secretary said. China's defense budget is estimated to have increased by 500 percent between 2011 and 2016, Iran has built up an array of asymmetric capabilities, and North Korea's growing arsenal of nuclear weapons and road mobile ballistic missiles put allies and forces in the region at risk, Work said.

To prevent that from happening, the FY 2016 budget submission is an attempt to reverse years of under-investment in new weapons and capabilities deemed the highest priority in the 2014 QDR strategy, he said.

"Because of the proliferation of guided munitions and other advanced technologies that threaten our ability to project power, we're spending more on ... counter anti-access area-denial weapons," the deputy secretary said.

And because the space constellation is under more threat now than at any time before, Work said, the budget request includes increased funding for space resiliency and space control capabilities.

Defense Innovation Initiative

"Trying to tackle this erosion of technological superiority is exactly what Secretary Hagel had in mind when he announced the Defense Innovation Initiative in November," he said. "It's a department-wide effort to identify a third offset strategy ... or perhaps more accurately, offset strategies, in order to sustain and advance our military and technical edge into the 21st century."

This will be more difficult now than in the past because threats have become more diffuse, the commercial sector now drives much of defense innovation, and the rapid spread of technology shortens the lifespan of any advantage, Work said.

The FY 2016 budget submission invests in some potentially game-changing new technologies, he said, as well as long-range research efforts.

"For example, we're investing more in unmanned underwater capabilities, high-speed strike weapons, rail guns and high-energy lasers," the deputy secretary said.

The third offset strategy is about much more than technology, Work said. "It really is about what can we do in terms of operational concepts, and what can we do differently to provide us with an advantage," he said.

A big part of the third offset strategy is to find innovative ways to employ promising technologies, Work said.

Severe Consequences if Sequestration Returns

All of this is done with one thing in mind, the deputy secretary said. "Provide our troops with a decisive competitive advantage. Ultimately, if it's not about winning on the future battlefield, I, as the deputy secretary of defense, don't want to waste a moment's time with it," he said.

"Our job is very simple," Work said. "We have a mission. And that mission is to organize, train and equip a joint force that is built and ready for war and operated forward to preserve the peace. Everything else that we do, if it's not focused on that mission, it's a damn waste of time."

“So, every day, when I get up, I ask myself, 'How can we make the future lives of our service men and women better by providing them the tools that they're going to need to prevail at war?'"

Returning to sequestration funding levels would be a disaster for that mission, he said.

“It just doesn't make sense,” Work said. “Everyone you talk to says it doesn't make sense. But then they say, 'But we can't figure out how to de-trigger it.' Well, that's what you're elected for, all right? Go figure it out.”

“... We do this in the Pentagon all the time. Lock yourself in a room, feed you pizzas for six weeks, I guarantee you, at some point you'll say uncle and come out with an answer,” the deputy secretary said.

“Sequestration is a blunder that allows our fiscal problems, not our security needs, to determine our strategy. If you want a budget-driven strategy ... go to sequestration,” Work said.

“The budget we are submitting supports the national defense strategy ... we would not submit a budget that nullifies it. The senior leadership of the department is in total agreement with President Obama that sequestration must be overturned,” he said.

“In the coming months, we will provide updated details on whatever Congress needs, what we need to do. But we want to work closely with them to get rid of this very destructive and very non-strategic way forward,” Work said.

Biographies:

[Bob Work](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Travels With Work](#)

Related Articles:

[Work Departs for Budget, Nuclear Enterprise Trip](#)

6. U.S.-Estonia Agreement Strengthens Partnership, Defenses (02-10-2015)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 10, 2015 – The Defense Department signed a memorandum of understanding today with Estonia, marking the beginning of a partnership to strengthen both countries' reserve forces through annual exchanges of personnel, a senior defense official said.

Richard O. Wightman Jr., principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for reserve affairs, discussed the Military Reserve Exchange Program and the significance of the agreement.

“This memorandum of agreement between the U.S. and Estonia provides ongoing proof of our continued dedication to our NATO partners,” he said.

“The Military Reserve Exchange Program further strengthens the partnership between our two nations,” Wightman said, “and plays a key role in the development of the Reserves and their contribution to national defense.”

The agreement, he noted, complements U.S. European Command’s theater security strategy and the National Guard’s State Partnership Program.

“By entering into these partnerships, our two nations hope to enhance reserve component capabilities and training opportunities,” Wightman said.

“This MOU opens the way to closer cooperation between the Estonian Defense League,” he said, “and U.S. reserve component forces that should improve the interoperability and capabilities of the Estonian military.”

Benefits of the MREP

According to Wightman, the primary benefit of the MREP is the opportunity to directly engage reserve forces in the development of national defense capabilities. “U.S. reserve components each have their unique capabilities, which the Estonian Defense League can now access through this program,” he said.

This is a unique, cost-effective program, he said, focused on bilateral interoperability without the deployment of units or large forces.

“Each nation faces unique challenges specific to the reserves,” Wightman said, “and this program is designed for each nation to grow by sharing best practices concerning their reserve forces.”

The bottom line, he said, is the MREP program provides bilateral and multilateral engagements with tailorable capabilities to quickly respond to any international environment and helps maintain total force operational capability and maximize cost efficiency.

Reserve Force Dependence Increasing

Wightman explained the MREP partnership with Estonia has been in “progressive” development since 2012, and is one of many programs nations can opt to engage in.

“Just in the last 15 years,” he said, “there has been a dramatic increase in requirements and dependence on reserve forces to support various contingency operations around the world.”

These reserve forces, Wightman said, have developed into both strategic and operational forces and “Estonia is no different.”

“Estonia has been actively involved in the State Partnership Program since 1993,” he said, “and continues to seek prospects and opportunities.”

Reassuring European Partners

The MREP, Wightman said, is a “great” example of a low-intensity program providing a visible assurance that the U.S. remains engaged at all levels with NATO partners.

“This program fits within the Defense Department’s priority of reassurance by stressing shared stability and long-term commitment through direct reserve engagement,” he said.

“The program also ensures armed forces gain a working knowledge of operating effectively together for the future,” Wightman added.

NATO Cyber Center of Excellence

One benefit of working with Estonia, Wightman noted, will be the “unique” international experiences in cyber defense challenges both reserve forces will be able to offer leaders. Both nations face many challenges in the area of cyber defense, he noted.

“Close bilateral cooperation with a capable partner nation such as Estonia,” he said, “plays a key role in enhancing cyber defense capabilities and addressing a myriad of present and future threats and risks in this interconnected world.”

“Immersion and integration with cross-cultural opportunities significantly increase global understanding of international threats and challenges,” Wightman said.

MREP Partnership Qualities

Paul Patrick, deputy assistant secretary of defense for readiness, training and mobilization for reserve affairs, talked about what the U.S. seeks in partnerships such as the agreement with Estonia.

“We look for the ability of a nation to sustain a long-term partnership and exchange program between that country and the United States,” he said.

“As far as Estonia is concerned,” Patrick said, “... given the fact that this country is the NATO Cyber Center of Excellence, we see great opportunity in the cyber arena, especially as U.S. Cyber Command is beginning to set up its cyber mission force, which of course will include a Reserve component element.”

Officials see “great” opportunities for cross-fertilization and an exchange of experiences and learning in the cyber arena, he said.

Program Differences

Patrick explained the differences between the MREP program and the State Partnership Program.

“The State Partnership Program is a National Guard-centric program,” he said, “that focuses on a wide range of building partnership capacity events as part of a combatant commander’s -- in this case, U.S. European Command -- theater security cooperation program.”

What MREP provides, Patrick said, is a wider aperture of opportunity for the entire reserve force, rather than just the National Guard.

The MREP program allows the Naval and Marine Corps Reserves to participate along with the Army and Air Force Reserves, he said.

Patrick also pointed out a difference between U.S. and Estonian reserve forces.

“Estonia has the Estonian Defense League,” he said, “which is comprised of citizens, who, in a volunteer and non-paying status, support the national defense and security of the country.”

It is very unlike the United States’ robust reserve forces, Patrick said, which are fully integrated into the total force and used as part of the operational force.

“But, nonetheless,” he said, “for a country the size of Estonia it’s a very important element of their total national defense force.”

MREP Invaluable

Patrick praised the MREP program, noting it’s been “extremely invaluable,” in terms of establishing relationships with participating countries and by virtue of the reciprocal, bilateral exchanges that occur between the U.S. and participating countries.

The MREP program is an important part of the Defense Department’s overall effort to build partnership capacity, he said.

Biographies:

[Richard O. Wightman Jr.](#)

[Paul D. Patrick](#)

Related Sites:

[State Department Note on Estonia](#)

[Reserve Affairs](#)

[NATO](#)

[Military Reserve Exchange Program](#)

[State Partnership Program](#)

7. Obama, Merkel Discuss Ukraine Situation, ISIL (02-09-2015)

By Jim Garamone

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9, 2015 – The United States will continue to stand with nations around the world in sanctions against Russia for its actions in Ukraine, President Barack Obama said during a joint news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel today.

The two leaders met at the White House, where Merkel briefed the president on her recent discussions on the situation in Ukraine with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Merkel and Obama will continue to seek a diplomatic resolution. “We are in absolute agreement that the 21st century cannot ... have us stand idle and simply allow the borders of Europe to be redrawn at the barrel of the gun,” Obama said.

NATO Presence in Central, Eastern Europe

The United States and its NATO allies will continue building up alliance presence in Central and Eastern Europe, he said. The United States has rotated Army units through the Baltic Republics and

Poland, sailed ships into the Baltic and Black seas and contributed aircraft to the Baltic Air Policing effort.

The president and Merkel discussed ongoing sanctions on Russia over its actions in Ukraine.

“We agreed that sanctions on Russia need to remain fully in force until Russia complies fully with its obligations,” he said. “Even as we continue to work for a diplomatic solution, we are making it clear again today that if Russia continues on its current course ... Russia's isolation will only worsen both politically and economically.”

The two leaders also discussed ongoing coalition air operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant forces in Syria and Iraq. The United States and Germany “remain united in our determination to destroy” ISIL, Obama said.

He thanked Merkel for Germany’s assistance as part of coalition efforts against the terror group.

“In a significant milestone in its foreign policy, Germany has taken the important step of equipping Kurdish forces in Iraq, and Germany is preparing to lead the training mission of local forces in Irbil,” the president said.

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Operation Inherent Resolve - Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists](#)

8. Allies Must Stay Focused on Russia, Biden Says in Munich (02-08-2015)

By Jim Garamone
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8, 2015 – Europe and the United States tried to bring Russia into the community of nations in a constructive manner, but Russian President Vladimir Putin has other ideas, Vice President Joe Biden said yesterday in Munich.

Russia’s actions against Ukraine, its bullying of neighboring nations and its repression of dissent at home worry U.S. and European leaders, and they must remain focused against the threat, Biden said at the annual Munich Security Conference.

“America and Europe are being tested,” the vice president said. “President Putin has to understand that as he has changed, so has our focus.”

Western leaders have moved from resetting relations with Russia to reasserting the fundamental bedrock principles on which European freedom and stability rest, Biden said: inviolate borders, no spheres of influence and the sovereign right to choose alliances.

‘We Have to be Laser-focused on the Greater Threat’

“To protect these important principles,” he added, “we have to be laser-focused on the greater threats to the project of a Europe whole, free, and at peace.”

The vice president said world powers need to be united in support of Ukraine, and that what happens there will resonate well beyond Ukraine. Russia has gone back on freely achieved agreements, he said, and that should matter to countries around the world.

“Russia needs to understand that as long as it continues its current course, the United States, and, God willing, all of Europe and the international community, will continue to impose costs on their violation of basic international norms,” Biden said.

Russia’s president promised peace and a cease-fire, and instead launched troops and tanks and aircraft, the vice president said. The United States “will continue to provide Ukraine with security assistance, not to encourage war but to allow Ukraine to defend itself,” he added.

“Let me be clear,” Biden said. “We do not believe there is a military solution in Ukraine. But let me be equally clear: we do not believe Russia has the right to do what they are doing. We believe we should attempt an honorable peace. But we also believe the Ukrainian people have a right to defend themselves.”

Urges Russia to Comply With Minsk Agreement

Biden called for Russia to go back to the agreement it signed at Minsk with the Ukrainian government in September. This calls for the full withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, the return of control over the international border to Ukraine and to develop a robust international monitoring mission on the Ukrainian-Russian border.

“It’s fully within the power of Moscow to stop the separatists from pursuing the military solution,” Biden said.

The objective, he said, is to preserve the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

“Let me state as clearly as I can what is not our objective -- it is not the objective of the United States ... to collapse or weaken the Russian economy,” he said. “That is not our objective. But President Putin has to make a simple, stark choice: Get out of Ukraine or face continued isolation and growing economic costs at home.”

9. Leaders: Resources Key for National Security Strategy (02-06-2015)

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6, 2015 – Praising President Barack Obama’s 2015 National Security Strategy for recognizing the challenges the nation faces, the Defense Department’s top civilian and military leaders today stressed the need for an end to scheduled sequestration spending cuts to allow the military to do its part in implementing the strategy.

White House officials released the strategy, known as the NSS, today.

Strategy Draws on All Sources of National Power

“President Obama's 2015 National Security Strategy provides a comprehensive blueprint for defending and advancing America's interests at home and around the world,” Defense Secretary

Chuck Hagel said in a statement. "It is clear-eyed about our nation's challenges as well as our strategic opportunities.

"The strategy wisely calls for drawing on all the sources of our national power -- including the unrivaled strength and resilience of America's economy, diplomacy, and military, as well as our values -- to strengthen and sustain America's global leadership," he said.

Bedrock of National Security

The strategy makes clear that a strong military is the bedrock of U.S. national security, Hagel said, adding that the Defense Department stands ready to help in its execution. DoD leaders actively participated in its development, he added, noting that the NSS complements the defense strategy articulated by the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review.

"Every day, across the globe, the men and women of DoD defend our nation, our fellow citizens and our allies and partners," the secretary said. "They assure our prosperity, represent our values, and help uphold a rules-based international order."

The Defense Department needs the resources to continue doing so, Hagel said.

"That is why President Obama and I are urging Congress to end sequestration and approve the defense budget we have submitted for fiscal year 2016 -- so that we preserve our ability to execute our national security and defense strategies, and maintain the military superiority necessary to underwrite America's global leadership for decades to come," the secretary said.

Complex Threats in a Turbulent World

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, also issued a statement.

"The United States retains the world's pre-eminent military, but we cannot take it for granted, given the complex threats we face in today's turbulent world," he said.

The NSS recognizes this reality with its charge to maintain the U.S. military edge and readiness, Dempsey added, by continuing to insist on reforms and necessary investment in military forces and their families.

"In particular, I welcome the NSS's call to working with Congress to end sequestration so that we can maintain the military the American people deserve and expect," the chairman said.

Biographies:

[Chuck Hagel](#)

[Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#)

Related Sites:

[Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on the 2015 National Security Strategy](#)

[2015 National Security Strategy](#)

[Statement by Secretary John Kerry](#)

[Fact Sheet](#)

[National Security Strategy](#)

10. Closing Guantanamo 'National Security Imperative,' Official Says (02-06-2015)

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr.
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6, 2015 – The question on closing the detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, is not whether to do it, but rather is how to do it, a senior Defense Department official said on Capitol Hill yesterday.

Brian P. McKeon, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel is among the defense and national security officials who agree the Guantanamo detention center weakens U.S. national security and should be closed.

“Senior figures across the political spectrum have made clear that Guantanamo poses risks to our national security and should be closed,” he added, noting that former defense secretaries Robert M. Gates and Leon E. Panetta also support the detention center’s closure.

National Security Imperative

McKeon said President Barack Obama has determined that closing the Guantanamo detention facility is a national security imperative.

“The president and his national security team believe that the continued operation of the facility weakens our national security by draining resources, damaging our relationships with key allies, and is used by violent extremists to incite local populations,” McKeon said.

It’s “no coincidence” that hostages being killed in recent Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant videos have been dressed in orange jumpsuits, “believed by many to be the symbol of the Guantanamo detention facility,” McKeon said.

Efforts Being Made

Rigorous interagency efforts led to determinations for Guantanamo detainees to be approved for transfer, prosecution or further review, or for further Law of War detention, McKeon said.

Six years ago, the detainee population at Guantanamo Bay was 242, he said. “Today, because of the work of the task force and subsequent efforts, 122 detainees remain,” he added. “Of these, 54 are eligible for transfer, 10 are being prosecuted or have been sentenced, and 58 are being reviewed by the periodic review process.”

In nearly two years as defense secretary, McKeon said, Hagel authorized the transfer of 44 detainees: 11 who were transferred in 2013, 28 who were transferred last year, and five who have been transferred this year. The “great majority” of the transfers the secretary authorized occurred under the authorities of Section 1035 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, McKeon said. “We urge you to maintain these authorities,” he told the senators.

Potential Re-engagement

A primary concern of transferring detainees, McKeon said, is whether they will return to the fight or otherwise re-engage in terrorism. “We take the possibility of a re-engagement very seriously,” he said. “The most recent public data on re-engagement of former detainees was released last September, and the data are current as of July 15, 2014.”

Data provided by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, McKeon said, indicates 17.3 percent have been confirmed as re-engaging, and 12.4 percent are suspected of re-engaging.

“Before January 2009,” he added, “that is, those transferred in the last administration -- the numbers show 19 percent confirmed and 14.3 percent suspected of re-engaging, for a total of 33 percent. The data after January 2009 shows that 6.8 percent confirmed of re-engaging, six out of 88 transfers, 1.1 percent suspected, for a total of 7.9 percent.”

In other words, he said, the rate of re-engagement has been much lower for those transferred since 2009, which he said attests to the rigor of this new process.

McKeon credited the downturn in re-engagement to careful scrutiny of the detainee transfer review process and subsequent security measures.

“Re-engagement is not a free pass,” he said. “We take any reports of suspected or confirmed re-engagement very seriously and work in close coordination with our partners to mitigate re-engagement or take follow-on action.”

Closer to Goal

McKeon said many officials have worked toward the objective of closing Guantanamo, and “we are closer to this goal than many people may think.”

“The president and the national security experts of this administration believe it should be closed,” he said, “as do the senior military leaders and civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. We believe the issue is not whether to close Guantanamo. The issue is how to do it.”

Biographies:

[Brian P. McKeon](#)

11. NATO Sets Sizes for Spearhead, Response Forces (02-05-2015)

By Jim Garamone

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5, 2015 – The NATO Response Force’s new Spearhead Force will be a multinational, brigade-sized unit of around 5,000 troops, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in Brussels today.

Stoltenberg spoke at a news conference wrapping up a meeting of the alliance’s defense ministers at NATO headquarters in which Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel participated.

The force will help the alliance meet the threats in the east and south, the secretary general said.

A Highly Trained Land Force

The Spearhead Force will be a highly trained land force of around 5,000 troops. “These will be supported by air, sea and special forces,” Stoltenberg said. “The lead element of this land brigade will be ready to move within as little as 48 hours, with the rest moving within a week.”

Two brigades will back up the Spearhead Force as a rapid reinforcement capability in case of a major crisis, he noted. All told, the enhanced NATO Response Force will number up to about 30,000 troops.

France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom will be framework nations for the Spearhead Force. They will command in rotation in the coming years to ensure that the Spearhead Force can be sustained for the long term, the secretary general said.

“These countries will provide the main elements of the force, and help bring together other allies, so this will be truly a multinational force,” he added. “This is a strong signal of NATO solidarity, and it shows that European allies are fully playing their part, taking the lead in protecting Europe.”

Interim Spearhead Force

Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and others already have begun training and exercising an interim Spearhead Force, Stoltenberg said.

The defense ministers also decided to immediately establish six multinational command and control units in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, the secretary general told reporters. “If a crisis arises,” he added, “they will ensure that national and NATO forces from across the alliance are able to act as one from the start. They will make rapid deployment easier, support planning for collective defense, and help coordinate training and exercises.”

Stoltenberg stressed the importance of these units, noting that they will be the link between national defense and multinational NATO forces. “They will be key for connecting national forces with NATO reinforcements,” he added.

All NATO nations will contribute staff to these units, and they will be in the countries “on a persistent basis,” Stoltenberg said.

The secretary general also welcomed the work of Germany, Denmark and Poland to develop the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, Poland.

“This will enhance our high readiness capability to command forces deployed to Poland and the Baltic states,” he said. “I also welcome Romania’s intention to make available a new deployable Multinational Division Headquarters for the southeast.”

Hagel Outlines U.S. Involvement

The United States is involved in the process, Hagel said earlier in the day, noting that, the U.S. Congress has approved the \$1 billion that President Barack Obama requested for the European Reassurance Initiative, which he called a major contribution to NATO’s Readiness Action Plan.

“This initiative will enable us to continue providing a persistent presence of U.S. air, land and maritime forces along the alliance’s eastern flank as we also upgrade infrastructure and preposition equipment and supplies,” Hagel said. “We intend to contribute staff officers to each of NATO’s new command and control centers in Eastern Europe.”

These “defensive, proportionate” moves are in line with NATO’s international commitments, Stoltenberg said. “Our core responsibility is to keep our nations safe,” he added, “and this is exactly what we are doing.”

Biographies:

[Chuck Hagel](#)

[Jens Stoltenberg](#)

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