

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY UPDATE
February 18 - 25, 2015

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1. [Breedlove: Russia, Violent Extremism Challenge Europe \(02-25-2015\)](#)

By Cheryl Pellerin
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25, 2015 – Europe faces a different and more challenging security environment than it did just a year ago, including an increasingly aggressive Russia and a surge of violent extremism, Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove said here yesterday.

Breedlove, commander of U.S. European Command, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and Allied Command Operations for NATO, told the Pentagon press corps that countries in the region have concerns about a resurgent Russia that is exercising power and influence.

“The challenge,” he said, “is global, not regional, and enduring, not temporary.”

The most visible instance of Russian aggression started a year ago with that nation’s illegal occupation of Crimea, followed by its fueling and continuing armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Seeking a Political Solution

Breedlove said the actions violate international laws and norms and that a political solution is the best way to bring the conflict to a lasting end.

But, he added, “since the beginning of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine we have seen evidence of direct, wide-ranging Russian involvement from the supply of basic military equipment to logistics, command and control, air defense, and the list goes on.”

Unidentified Russian specialized troops who first appeared in Crimea now direct and train pro-Russian separatists, Breedlove said. And evidence shows that Russia fired artillery over its border into Eastern Ukraine during the initial stages of the conflict, the general said.

Russia also has transferred more than 1,000 pieces of Russian military equipment into Ukraine, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, heavy artillery pieces, and other military vehicles, he noted, that have been used on the front lines against Ukrainian forces.

“What we see on the ground is a revanchist Russia that does not play by international rules or norms and their activities are destabilizing to neighboring states ... and have a global impact,” Breedlove said.

A Surge of Violent Extremism

At the same time, Breedlove added, Europe faces a surge of violent extremism.

“The inhuman public execution of hostages and captives by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant shows just what a deadly threat they pose,” the general said, “and European nations are rightly worried about foreign fighters returning home to Europe from the fight in Syria and Iraq, with new skills and malign intent.”

Attacks like those in France, Belgium and Denmark are likely to become more frequent, he added, calling foreign fighters part of a broader pattern of insecurity along the southern border of Europe.

The spread of instability in Europe and the reach of transnational terrorism have a direct bearing on U.S. national security and the homeland, Breedlove said.

Countering Challenges

Eucom is working with European nations bilaterally and as part of NATO to meet and counter such challenges, the general said, and addressing those challenges means that U.S. efforts in Europe “remain utterly essential, more important now than any time in recent history.”

Last year, Eucom rushed land and air forces to the Baltics and Poland to reassure them and the NATO alliance of the U.S. commitment to their security as Russian aggression in Eastern Europe became evident, Breedlove said.

“The reason we responded quickly is because we were there, forward, ready and postured correctly,” he added.

“There is simply no substitute for our forward presence in Europe,” the general continued. “It is the bedrock of our ability to assure our allies and to deter real and potential adversaries and to respond in a timely way if, God forbid, deterrents should fail.”

Elements of National Power

On the challenge from Russia to Ukraine, Breedlove said if the economic tool of sanctions and the military tool of nonlethal aid to Ukraine aren't successful, it will still be possible to employ informational and diplomatic tools.

"Russia is placing incredible pressure on all four elements of national power on Ukraine -- diplomatic, informational, military and economic," Breedlove said.

"We should answer in all four tools of national power as well," the general said, "to change Russian President Vladimir Putin's decision calculus about what he should take on in Eastern Ukraine."

Breedlove said Putin has set the bar and the ante very high in his interactions in Eastern Ukraine.

Finding a Way Forward

"None of us knows what Mr. Putin will decide. If we take action, many believe he'll accelerate. If we take action, others believe it may raise the cost to him and he might take another decision. So I think it's appropriate that we judge what we think will happen and find a way forward," the general said.

"What is clear is that right now," he added, "it is not getting better, it is getting worse every day."

Breedlove characterized Putin and his military actions as indicating he is "all in and that they will proceed until their objectives are accomplished."

Breedlove said some people think that Putin, with these actions, is messaging, trying to influence Western decisions.

Russian Objectives

"Clearly he's not happy with, for instance, our European Phased Adaptive Approach moving forward," the general said, referring to the European part of the ballistic missile defense system.

"Maybe he's trying to adjust our decisions on that," Breedlove added.

"I think one of Mr. Putin's main objectives in many of the things he does," the general said, "is to try to divide the West, to try to divide the European Union in its approach to sanctions, et cetera, to try to divide NATO in its approach to military solidarity on issues just like this one."

Biographies:

[Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Operation Atlantic Resolve – America's Continued Commitment to European Security](#)

2. Sanctions Having a Mixed Effect on Russia, Officials Say (02-25-2015)

By Nick Simeone
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 25, 2015 – U.S. and European sanctions imposed on Russia for its support of Ukrainian separatists and the annexation of Crimea are having a significant impact on Russia's economy but have not curtailed Moscow's continued intervention in the region, two senior Defense Department officials told Congress today.

"We are hearing, for example, more dissatisfaction of the oligarchs, who to date have been very supportive of Russian President Vladimir Putin," Christine E. Wormuth, undersecretary of defense for policy, told the House Armed Services Committee during a hearing on security threats to Europe that focused largely on Russia's threat to Ukraine and Eastern Europe.

Regarding the sanctions, the Russian oligarchs "are concerned about the impact it is having on their businesses, on their own financial holdings, but it has not changed so far what Russia has been doing on the ground, and that is the great concern," Wormuth said during her testimony.

She added, "That is where there is the need again to look at the overall package of cost-imposing strategies toward Russia and also support to Ukraine to see if we can change the calculus."

Assistance for Ukraine

In addition to ongoing military exercises and a stepped-up NATO presence in Eastern Europe, the Obama administration has committed \$118 million in nonlethal aid and training to the Ukrainian government in Kiev and a similar amount for fiscal year 2015.

Ukraine's government, which has lost control of significant portions of the eastern part of the country to Russian-backed rebels since fighting began a year ago, has asked allies -- including the United States -- for lethal aid.

"There is various discussion of providing defensive lethal assistance in an effort to again raise costs on Russia, not from the perspective at all of being able to fundamentally alter the military balance ... but to try to give Ukraine more ability to defend itself against the separatist aggression," Wormuth said in answer to legislators' questions. In fact, Wormuth and Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove, Supreme Allied Commander Europe and commander of U.S. European Command, both told lawmakers they did not know how Putin would respond if the West began supplying lethal aid to the government in Kiev. However, "what we're doing now is not changing the results on the ground," Breedlove said.

More Economic Pressure

Wormuth said pressure should continue on all fronts and that stepped-up economic and financial isolation of Russia could prove more effective than providing lethal aid to the Ukrainian government, a move that she said could lead Russia to "double down" on its support for Ukrainian separatists and thereby escalate the conflict.

Ultimately, Breedlove said, he does not think the Ukrainian military is capable of stopping further Russian advances and that the best resolution to the year-old conflict remains a diplomatic one.

Even so, neither he nor Wormuth expressed confidence that a cease-fire agreement reached earlier this month in Belarus -- the second such agreement in five months -- would hold.

“Mr. Putin has not accomplished his objectives yet in Ukraine, so next is probably more action,” Breedlove said. He suggested Moscow knows what lines are not worth crossing, testifying that while “pressure is being brought by Russia on nations to keep them from leaning West,” Breedlove felt the Russian president is well aware of NATO’s obligation to come to the defense of any member threatened with attack.

“I do believe that Mr. Putin understands Article 5, but I do not believe that that would preclude Mr. Putin from taking some actions in reaching out to the disparate Russian-speaking populations that are in some of our easternmost nations in NATO,” Breedlove said, referring primarily to the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Turning to another security concern, both defense officials described instability in the Middle East, in particular the control that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has over territory just to the south of Europe.

“The flow of returning foreign terrorist fighters to Europe and the United States in both the near- and mid-term poses a significant risk, including to our forward-based forces in Europe,” Breedlove said, and “is likely to grow more complex for the next decade or longer.”

Biographies:

[Christine E. Wormuth](#)

[Air Force Gen. Philip M. Breedlove](#)

3. Pentagon Expedites \$17.9 Million in Equipment to Aid Iraqis (02-24-2015)

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

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24, 2015 – The Defense Department has expedited \$17.9 million in equipment and supplies — some which have already been delivered — to the Iraqi government, Pentagon spokesman Army Col. Steve Warren told reporters today.

Warren provided a general update on equipment and supplies authorized for delivery to the Iraqis.

“This was a \$17.9 million Foreign Military Sales Program case,” he said. “It was an expedited delivery, which took 22 days from the time of signature -- a letter of authorization -- until delivery. This is less than a quarter of the time it normally takes to execute these types of deliveries.”

Equipment and Supplies

Warren provided dates and quantities of supplies and equipment authorized, noting some have been delivered while the rest is slated for delivery.

On Feb. 15, he said, 232 Hellfire missiles were delivered, adding to the 1,572 Hellfires delivered in 2014, and 250 mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles were delivered to the Iraqi government Jan. 4.

Along with that, Warren said, thousands of Kevlar helmets and body armor were delivered Jan. 22.

In addition, he said, 200 Harris vehicle-mounted radios will be shipped next month to equip those 250 MRAPs, noting the MRAPs were excess U.S. vehicles.

Additional deliveries are expected to happen this week, Warren said. “We expect 10,000 M-16 rifles, along with 10,000 M-68 close-combat optical red-dot sights and 23,000 magazines to be delivered,” he added.

ISIL on the Defensive

The department’s latest announcement comes on the heels of U.S. Central Command indicating the coalition military campaign is succeeding in putting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant on the defensive.

While there have been setbacks, a Centcom official said Feb. 19, the coalition military campaign has succeeded in putting ISIL on the defensive, with the terrorist group losing territory in Iraq as well as the ability to govern and adequately regenerate forces.

“There is no organization in the world that can suffer those kinds of casualties and not have a tremendous impact on their ability to achieve their long-term aims,” the official said.

The Centcom official also said Iraqi forces have retaken at least 700 square kilometers of territory, but cautioned that the military campaign against ISIL will take time to defeat the terrorists.

Related Sites:

[U.S. Central Command](#)

Related Articles:

[Centcom Official: Mosul Fight Could Begin Within Weeks](#)

4. Amb. Power at Debate on Purposes, Principles of U.N. Charter (02-23-2015)

Remarks by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at a Security Council Debate on the Purposes and Principles of the Charter of the United Nations

Thank you, Minister Wang, Minister Lavrov, Minister Rodriguez, Minister McCully, Minister Aman, Minister Linkevičius, Minister Wali. Thank you all for participating in today’s debate. And Minister Wang, thank you, above all, for coming to the UN to chair this important discussion.

The drafters of the UN Charter viewed the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations as a “test for the effectiveness of the organization.” It is a testament to their enduring relevance that, as we gather here nearly 70 years later, the same Purposes and Principles continue to guide the organization and provide that crucial measure of our collective effectiveness.

As many of you know, the very first words of the UN Charter are, “We the peoples of the United Nations.” It is all too easy in our debates in this Council, and across the UN, to lose sight of the people whose rights and welfare are dramatically affected by the degree to which we fulfill the Charter’s ambitious mandate. To recommit ourselves to the Purposes and Principles is to recommit ourselves to these people – individuals in every one of our states whose basic dignity the Charter is

meant to defend and uphold. I would like to highlight three ways the United Nations and its Member States can and must improve our effectiveness in working together toward this noble and necessary aspiration.

First, the Security Council must play the robust role set out for it by the Charter “to maintain or restore international peace and security,” and it must take actions when circumstances demand it. Yet too often this Council has not lived up to this primary responsibility. Consider Syria. When the Assad regime launches deadly attacks on peaceful protestors, when it tortures tens of thousands of detainees in its prisons, when it employs – openly – starve or surrender tactics, inflicting a devastating toll on civilians. Amid all of this, divisions among Member States continue to prevent the Council from taking action to stop the regime from attacking civilians, or even speaking in one voice to condemn the violence and call for meaningful accountability. As a result, we’ve let down the people at the heart of the Charter.

Second, Member States must “fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the Charter” -- that’s a quote -- including the obligation to accept and carry out the decisions of the Council, and must “give the United Nations every assistance in any action it takes” in accordance with the Charter. We’ve shown the ability to leverage these obligations to good effect, as arms embargoes in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo are making it harder for armed actors to get the weapons that they have used to commit atrocities, with other measures, like the ban on trade in illicit charcoal from Somalia, which is limiting the funds that violent extremist groups like al-Shabaab are using to fuel their campaigns of terror.

But it is not enough for us to adopt mandates and resolutions. We must be willing to exercise the political will and take the action needed to actually preserve international peace and security. Today, we empower UN peacekeeping missions with more robust mandates than ever before to protect civilians and monitor human rights; when those mandates are contested, though, we must take appropriate action to defend them. Unfortunately, the Council was silent when the Sudanese government denied UN peacekeepers unhindered access to the town of Thabit, in Darfur, preventing the UN from properly investigating possible human rights violations following allegations that Sudanese soldiers had raped more than 200 women and girls last October. Instead, the only time the peacekeepers were permitted to reach Thabit, Sudanese military and intelligence officials refused to let them interview alleged rape victims in private, and in some cases recorded the interviews.

Ensuring respect for the work of the United Nations entails acting in good faith in accordance with the Principles of the Charter. Yet notwithstanding the foundational obligations of Member States to respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, Russia today is training, arming, supporting, and fighting alongside separatists who have brutally seized Ukrainian territory – a blatant violation of the UN Charter and an assault on its neighbor’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, one that has already cost some 5,700 lives and forced the displacement of more than 1.7 million Ukrainians.

This brings me to my third point. In dealing with states that flout the UN’s Principles and their international obligations more generally, the United Nations must come up with more effective ways to pressure them. That includes states that brutally repress their own people – behavior that, in and of itself, can threaten international peace and security.

Consider the UN’s recent actions with respect to North Korea. In March 2013, the UN Human Rights Council established the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK, which not only thoroughly documented the regime’s horrors, but also brought them into public view by

holding open hearings with victims and experts. Based on the commission's findings, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution roundly condemning the regime's systematic abuses, and encouraging the Security Council to consider "appropriate action to ensure accountability." When the Security Council met in December to discuss North Korea's human rights crisis for the very first time, many members, including the United States, echoed the General Assembly's call. It is true that the regime's prison camps continue to hold between 80 and 120 thousand people in ghastly conditions. Nonetheless, by shining a light on the unspeakable violations being perpetrated every day in the DPRK, UN action is helping to galvanize broader pressure on the regime to end abuses that were ignored for far too long.

The situation in North Korea reveals a fundamental lesson learned many times over since the Charter was adopted – widespread human rights violations can themselves pose a threat to international peace and security. We must not ignore connections between the way governments treat their own citizens and the way they interact with other states and the norms of our shared international system. North Korea, for example, has repeatedly threatened nuclear attacks against states that criticize the way it treats its own people. In Syria, violations perpetrated by the Assad regime were instrumental in the dramatic rise of ISIL and other terrorist groups, which are now wreaking havoc far beyond the country's borders. And the violence in Syria has led nearly four million people to take refuge in neighboring countries – placing a massive and destabilizing strain on their governments.

And whether in Syria or elsewhere in the world, when a country locks up its political opponents instead of resolving differences through dialogue; when it attempts to silence its critics, as some Council Members are doing, it both violates the Charter's commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and it will not bring about the stability that is so important to the lasting economic and social progress we all wish to see. Rather than locking up one's opponents or making ridiculous allegations in pointing fingers at foreign powers, respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, as the Charter provides, is the foundation for peace, security, and prosperity.

As we strive to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations, we must guard against attempts to manipulate the Purposes and Principles in an effort to prevent the UN from tackling the global challenges it was designed to confront and defending the rights of individuals it was meant to champion. Yet some seek to distort the Purposes and Principles, asserting for instance that human rights violations have no relation to international peace and security or that the sovereignty of nations precludes the UN's engagement on these issues. But as President Obama said in the UN General Assembly a few years ago, "sovereignty cannot be a shield for tyrants to commit wanton murder, or an excuse for the international community to turn a blind eye." Sovereignty did not give the Nazis license to massacre Jews 75 years ago; it did not give a Hutu extremist regime license to slaughter Tutsi two decades ago; and it does not and cannot be allowed to shield governments that commit atrocities today.

If "We the people of the United Nations" are to recommit ourselves to the Purposes and Principles of the Charter, we must see them as the drafters intended them: as a blueprint to unite us in advancing the safety, security, and human rights of people across the world, and not as an instrument to divide us and obstruct this crucial effort. People -- people like Syrians in East Ghouta, more than 200 of whom have been killed in the last two weeks by bombs dropped by the Assad regime; people like the democracy and human rights activists, whose effort to promote freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly -- have been stifled by the growing global civil society crackdown, with over 50 countries proposing restrictive measures on civil society efforts in just the last two years. And people like the Ukrainian children and elderly who were trapped in Debaltseve, left to cower in basements while separatists – with Russia's weapons, training, and

blessing – pummeled the city with rockets and mortars after agreeing to a ceasefire. If we keep such people at the heart of our efforts, we will more effectively live up to our shared responsibilities and the shared vision that the drafters embodied in the Charter’s Purposes and Principles.

Thank you, Mr. President.

5. Carter Greet Troops in Kandahar, Praises Progress (02-22-2015)

By Cheryl Pellerin
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22, 2015 – As part of his first official trip to Afghanistan as defense secretary, Ash Carter made a stop in Kandahar today to thank U.S. troops there for their dedication to the mission and the progress they and their NATO and Afghan allies have achieved.

His visit was to the Train Advise and Assist Command South, or TAAC South, formerly Regional Command South. The command’s area of responsibility includes the provinces of Kandahar, Uruzgan, Zabul and Daykundi.

The U.S. 1st Cavalry Division is what is called the TAAC South framework element, and contributing countries include Romania, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia, Jordan and Georgia.

At TAAC South’s Kandahar Airfield headquarters, Carter told the troops that they are his priority.

Thanking the Troops

“You’re what I wake up to every morning” he said. “I never forget for one minute that you’re here and what you’re doing, the sacrifice that being here entails and the risk that it entails for you.”

He thanked the troops personally and on behalf of the Defense Department and the nation.

While in Afghanistan, the secretary will assess progress being made in the country so he can determine future actions and make recommendations to President Barack Obama, he told service members.

The train, advise and assist mission is becoming the heart of the effort in Afghanistan that will make permanent the success that U.S. and coalition troops have sacrificed so much for, Carter said.

An Important Country in the World

“We’ll never be gone from Afghanistan because Afghanistan is an important country in the world,” he added, “but when our presence here is reduced to something much smaller than today, we want to make sure that the Afghans themselves are able to preserve the environment our forces have created over the last few years, one of relative security and stability.”

Carter told the men and women in uniform that he’d met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Dr. Abdulla Abdullah in Kabul.

“There's one thing President Ghani said that I want to share with you. He said, ‘Would you please tell your people that I appreciate the sacrifice they have made for my country.’”

Carter said, “Just think about that -- remember that.”

Questions From the Troops

Before giving each service member a coin and having his picture taken with them, Carter took questions from his audience that ranged from cybersecurity to military retirement to downsizing the force. But first he commented on the coins.

“Let me tell you a little bit about the coin. ... I'm so new they haven't made coins with my name on them yet, so I'm sorry about that. It's a more generic secretary of defense coin. It may not be as valuable on eBay as an Aston B. Carter coin,” he said to laughter from the audience, “but you can trade up later.”

His first question was about the cyber dimension of building a force of the future.

“Cyber has to be part of building the force of the future -- is in fact part of the force of right now,” the defense secretary said.

Leveraging Technology

One of the reasons the United States has the finest fighting force the world has ever seen is because of the way the nation leverages technology, Carter said, especially information technology.

The field is exploding and it's everywhere in the world, he added, “and that means if we don't change and we don't keep up, we can't keep our position as the best in the world.”

The United States has a substantial lead in cyberspace now, Carter said, “and there's no reason why we can't keep it.”

“The reason we'll stay the greatest is that we'll keep striving to be at the forefront,” the secretary added. “And in today's world the only way to be excellent is to be open to ideas from the outside. You can't think of everything yourself and you can't do everything yourself.”

Military Retirement System

To a question about the military retirement system, Carter said he's open to reconsidering the system.

The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission studied the current system and sent its report to Carter, who said he's studying it.

“Ultimately under the law I'm required to then tell President Obama what I think about it and I haven't had a chance to do all that yet, and absorb it,” he said.

But Carter added that his starting point is that such a system attracts those who will keep the all-volunteer force healthy in the future and that continues to offer a retirement structure that is attractive and gives recruits appropriate incentives along the way to stay in the military or retire at a time that is best for them and best for the force.

Keeping the All-volunteer Force Healthy

“That’s the criterion that I will principally apply in considering these things,” the secretary added. “It’s not about money or anything else. It’s fundamentally mostly about the health of the force in the future and that’s the lens through which I will look at it.”

The military retirement system has financial implications for each individual service member and for the country as a whole, Carter said, but the priority is to make sure the services have the right people.

“Any change we make should be one that those already in service don’t have to make if they don’t want to,” the secretary said, adding that this in line with what the commission recommended.

“I don’t want to breach our understanding with you at the time you joined, that’s not fair, he told service members.

The services can make alternatives available to those who may join the military in the future, and available to those who are in now, Carter said, “but if we made a deal with you when you first got in, I think we ought to keep that deal.”

Defending the Nation

To a question about downsizing the military at a time when multiple national security challenges face the nation, Carter said he’s adamantly opposed to the budget cuts known as sequestration.

The sequestration process is unwise and unsafe for national security going forward,” he told troops.

“We’ve got to spend enough money on defense to protect our country and protect our interests,” the secretary said. “We just can’t have a mindless mechanism that decides what the defense budget is.” The nation, he added, must decide what it needs to protect itself, its interests and its allies, and consider those elements to build a budget.

It’s also imperative, he said, to put every defense dollar to good use.

“My reaction every time somebody says ... how are you spending your money? Fair enough. It’s fair enough to be challenged and make sure we’re using all that money” in the best possible ways, Carter said.

Biographies:

[Ash Carter](#)

Related Sites:

[Special Report: Travels With Ash Carter](#)

[Remarks by Secretary Carter at a Troop Event in Kandahar, Afghanistan](#)

[Media Availability with Secretary Carter at Kandahar, Afghanistan](#)

[Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan](#)

6. Dempsey Discusses Pacific Rebalance During Australia Visit (02-22-2015)

By Lisa Ferdinando
DoD News, Defense Media Activity

SYDNEY, Feb. 22, 2015 – The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is slated to meet with his Australian counterpart here tomorrow, as he focuses on the importance of the U.S. military rebalance to the Pacific.

Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey and the Australian chief of the Defense Force, Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin, will have a day of talks to include current global challenges, interoperability, and strengthening cooperation.

The United States and Australia have excellent relations, and defense officials have noted the many important contributions Australia has made to global security missions, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

Australia Supports Resolute Support, Inherent Resolve Missions

Australia is currently contributing troops to Resolute Support, the NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces as well as providing military trainers to Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq.

Dempsey's trip to Australia followed yesterday's brief visit to the remote Pacific Kwajalein Atoll, the home to the U.S. Army Kwajalein Atoll/Ronald Reagan Ballistic Missile Defense Test Site.

In Kwajalein, the chairman told a town hall audience that the U.S. rebalance to the Pacific region is a matter of "national imperative."

It is important, Dempsey said, because 7 billion of the 9 billion people in the world are projected to be living in the arc from India to China by 2050.

National Security Interests Migrating to the Pacific Region

"That's why we're here -- precisely to continue to reinforce that point that our national security interests are migrating to the Pacific over time," the chairman said.

"As a Pacific nation that takes our Pacific alliances and partnerships seriously, we will continue to build on our active and enduring presence in the region, including with Australia," said Dempsey's spokesman, Air Force Col. Ed Thomas.

In College Station, Texas, the first stop in this current tour, Dempsey told a forum at Texas A&M University that he travels to the Pacific area a few times each year to meet with his counterparts and "try to understand the region from their perspective."

U.S. Rebalance to Pacific Region a 'Steady' Effort

The rebalance has been a "steady" effort, the chairman stated.

"It's more like a marathon than a sprint, which is good," he said of the U.S. rebalance to the Pacific region. "It's inevitable. It's imperative -- and I don't use those words often."

While most U.S. partnerships in the region have been bilateral, the United States is seeking to expand that further, Dempsey said.

"What we're trying to do is kind of knit it all together because I think a multinational or multilateral security environment is the environment in which I think China can rise peacefully," he said.

While in Australia, Dempsey also is slated to meet with David Hurley, the governor of the state of New South Wales.

Biographies:

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

Related Sites:

[U.S. State Department Note – Australia](#)

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

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[7. Kerry on Anniversary of Maidan Protests in Ukraine \(02-21-2015\)](#)

Statement by Secretary Kerry

One Year Anniversary of the Maidan Protests in Ukraine

For three months ending last year, Ukrainians braved long nights, bitter cold, and violent crackdowns by a government that refused to hear its own people. Snipers shot at them from rooftops, cutting down more than 100 people - protestors and police alike.

We will never forget those who lost their lives and raised their voices for freedom and dignity.

Ukrainians celebrate this weekend the first anniversary of the Revolution of Dignity, when the EuroMaidan protestors stood up against injustice and sparked the birth of a new Ukraine.

I visited Kyiv in the aftermath of these protests, and I was inspired by the remarkable strength of the Ukrainian people.

I saw barricades made of mattresses and discarded chairs, burned tires stacked like firewood, and street lamps riddled with bullet holes. I paid my respects at the Rada, where photos of the fallen stood on display framed by crowns of thorns. And I placed roses and a candle on the Shrine of the Fallen on Institutaska Street.

But what inspired me most was the Ukrainian people themselves, who are striving for a democratic and European future in the face of adversity and Russian aggression.

Today we are united with Ukraine in somber remembrance of the sacrifices made by the “heavenly hundred.” We also recognize the efforts of the people of Ukraine to make progress over this difficult year. From L’viv to Luhansk, from Chernivtsi to Sevastopol, Ukrainians are coming together to define their own future.

And finally, we join you in declaring, Slava Ukrayini. Glory to Ukraine.

America stands with you.

8. State's Friedt on U.S. Nuclear Arms Control Policy (02-20-2015)

Remarks by Anita E. Friedt, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance, Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIJA), Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Tokyo, Japan

U.S. Nuclear Arms Control Policy and Security in the Asia-Pacific

Thank you all very much for welcoming me here today. For over fifty years, Japan Institute of International Affairs has advanced research and dialogue on major regional and global security issues, so I'm very pleased to join you to continue to share in and advance those discussions.

I'm also particularly honored to speak with this audience so early in the calendar year, as 2015 marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. At the U.S. Department of State, we have been working with our Japanese partners to commemorate the successes of the decades-long partnership that's followed.

Introduction

So as mentioned, my name is Anita Friedt, and I am the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear and Strategic Policy at the U.S. Department of State.

Today, I'd like to discuss the United States' nuclear arms control and deterrence policies, particularly as they relate to regional security in the Asia-Pacific.

U.S. Nuclear Arms Control

Let me begin by providing a brief update of U.S. arms control policy, taking stock of where we left things at the end of 2014.

Last December, my boss – Under Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller – attended the Prague Agenda 2014 Conference where she reiterated U.S. commitment to achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. We continue to pursue nuclear disarmament and we will keep faith with our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, prominent among them, Article VI.

Our responsible approach to disarmament has borne fruit in the form of major reductions in nuclear weapons, fissile material stocks, and infrastructure. These efforts have led us to reduce our nuclear arsenal by approximately 85% from its Cold War peak. In real numbers, that means we have gone from 31,255 nuclear weapons in our active stockpile in 1967 to 4,804 in 2013. Through our Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) and follow-on study, we have reduced the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy. Additionally, it is the policy of the United States to not develop new nuclear warheads.

We want to do more.

As we consider future reductions, our focus must be on achievable and verifiable measures that all interested parties – both nuclear and non-nuclear states – can trust. Our past experience – both successes and shortcomings – must inform our next steps if we are to succeed in forming an irreversible path towards nuclear disarmament.

In December, I attended the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW) with Ambassador Adam Scheinman. The potential human toll of nuclear weapons use drives our daily efforts to combat the threat of nuclear weapons – from ensuring that countries with nuclear weapons reduce and eliminate them, nations that don't have nuclear weapons never acquire them, and that such weapons never fall into the hands of extremists bent on causing colossal destruction.

The Vienna Conference reaffirmed the growing political resolve to pursue a practical disarmament agenda. We know there are voices out there calling for the negotiation of a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. The United States cannot and will not support such efforts. A divisive, amorphous nuclear weapons convention or the false hope of a fixed timeline for the elimination of all nuclear weapons will not result in the actual elimination of nuclear weapons.

What can help us achieve our shared goal is the creation of verification and monitoring tools. Verification will become increasingly complex at lower numbers of nuclear weapons, while requirements for accurately determining compliance will dramatically increase. That is why next month, the United States will host the first meeting of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification in Washington, DC. The goal of this partnership between experts from both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states is to better understand the technical problems of verifying nuclear disarmament agreements, and to develop solutions.

The United States is committed to a practical and responsible pursuit of our disarmament goals, and we are grateful to have a partner in Japan who shares these goals. We cannot and will not accept a world that remains forever under the shadow of nuclear war or nuclear terror. Therefore, the United States has been striving, and will continue to work, to create the conditions for such a world with the aid of the various tools, treaties and agreements, including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty regime.

Extended Deterrence and Security Alliances

That said, we must acknowledge that not every nation is ready or willing to pursue serious arms control and nonproliferation efforts.

We are seeing new and enduring pressures on the NPT – pressures that threaten global stability. We are seeing a few nations turn away from cooperation, turn away from the common good of nonproliferation efforts, and cling ever more tightly to their nuclear arsenals.

As we work to get those nations to accept their own global and ethical responsibilities, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal.

Our commitment to the security of Japan will not waiver.

The United States remains fully prepared and capable of defending ourselves, Japan, and the peace and security of the region, with the full range of capabilities available, including the deterrence provided by our conventional and nuclear forces.

As the United States considers arms control and nonproliferation priorities, we will continue to consult closely with our allies and partners every step of the way. This Administration has placed the utmost importance on strengthening our relationships with allies. We recognize the need to continue to promote and deepen our extended deterrence dialogues and to enhance our alliance in wide-ranging areas of common interest in order to address the changing security environment.

A central component of this effort is the work we do with Japan through the Extended Deterrence Dialogue. In fact, I was here in Japan this past week to attend this bilateral dialogue. I have had the privilege of co-chairing these extended deterrence dialogues for a couple of years now, and I can personally attest to how these discussions have strengthened our bilateral security alliance. These dialogues have enabled candid exchanges on our respective nations' views and concerns about deterrence and the challenges of the 21st century.

With regards to trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and the ROK, I would like to emphasize what Assistant Secretary Frank Rose said a few weeks ago while he was in Seoul: Developing an interoperable regional missile defense architecture is an important future area of focus in light of the increasing nuclear and missile threats posed by North Korea. We believe that future trilateral cooperation between the United States, the ROK, and Japan can positively impact our deterrence efforts against North Korean aggression and send a powerful message of deterrence to the DPRK. I would also add how pleased we are with the recent signing of the Trilateral Information-Sharing Arrangement among our respective defense establishments. We look forward to building on this success, and to broadening and deepening trilateral cooperation with our two strongest allies in Northeast Asia.

Russia Update

The United States has made clear that we are prepared to engage Russia on the full range of issues affecting strategic stability and that there are real and meaningful steps we should be taking towards a more predictable, safer security environment. Given that the United States and Russia continue to possess over 90% of the world's nuclear weapons, we have a special responsibility to do so.

In June 2013 in Berlin, President Obama stated U.S. willingness to negotiate a reduction of up to one-third of our deployed strategic nuclear weapons from the level established in the New START Treaty. Progress, of course, requires a willing partner and a conducive strategic environment.

With specific regard to the Russian INF violation, we will continue engaging the Russian government to resolve U.S. concerns. The INF Treaty benefits the security of the United States, our allies and the Russian Federation. The United States is committed to returning Russia to compliance to ensure the continued viability of the Treaty. We are also consulting with Allies and reviewing a range of appropriate options should Russia persist in its violation.

Despite our serious concerns about Russia's compliance with the INF Treaty, New START has proven durable and continues to enhance security and strategic stability between the United States and Russia. Both nations are now faithfully implementing the Treaty, including its onsite inspection regime. Current tensions with the Russian Federation highlight the value of the verification regime and the important confidence that is provided by data exchanges and on-site inspections under the Treaty, as well as the security and predictability provided by verifiable mutual limits on strategic weapons.

Conclusion

Despite these security challenges, the United States has no intention of diverting from our active efforts to reduce the role and numbers of nuclear weapons, increase confidence and transparency, strengthen regional defense architectures, prevent proliferation, and address compliance challenges. We will do so pursuing all available and practical avenues.

Let me stop there to allow time for questions. Thank you again for your kind invitation, and I look forward to our discussion.

9. State's Rose on Ballistic Missile Defense, Stability in East Asia (02-20-2015)

Remarks by Frank A. Rose, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Arms Control, Verification and Compliance Federation of American Scientists, Washington, DC

Ballistic Missile Defense and Strategic Stability in East Asia

Introduction

Thank you all very much, and a special thanks to Bruce and Chuck for having me here today to address this important workshop.

I'm told that this group is exploring China's potential interest in and deployment of strategic ballistic missile defense and what that means for U.S. and allied security.

At the State Department, we're taking a hard look at it as well, and in particular, the role of ballistic missile defense in achieving the overarching goal of strategic stability between the United States and China.

Overview of Strategic Stability with China

Before discussing China's interest in developing a BMD system and the possible implications of such an effort, I'd first like to provide an overview of what the United States is doing to ensure a stable U.S.-China strategic relationship in the region.

As stated in the Nuclear Posture Review, the United States is committed to maintaining strategic stability in U.S.-China relations and supports initiation of a dialogue on strategic stability and nuclear postures aimed at fostering a more stable, resilient, and transparent security relationship with China.

During the Cold War, many associated strategic stability with what we called "mutual assured destruction," the notion that the incentive to initiate nuclear use would be discouraged by the fear of suffering unacceptable retaliatory damage. This notion, of course, is ill-suited and too narrow to fully capture the U.S.-China relationship given our multifaceted and shared interests. In today's world, strategic stability encompasses much more than just nuclear relations and reflects the fact that the U.S.-China relationship, which has both elements of competition and cooperation, is not adversarial.

The strategic relationship between the United States and China is complex, and we each view stability differently. Thus, it is important that we have frank and open dialogue about how our nations define and view strategic stability and how we perceive our nuclear postures and policies impacting this balance. As part of these discussions, the United States is willing to discuss all issues, including missile defense, space-related issues, conventional precision strike capabilities, and nuclear weapons issues, with the goal of improving the conditions for a more predictable and safer security environment.

A sustained and substantive discussion of our national approaches to maintaining effective deterrent postures and modernization of associated strategic capabilities can increase understanding, enhance confidence and reduce mistrust.

Overview of China's BMD Activities

As you're all aware, China is continuing to develop its BMD capabilities.

Although China does not say much about its BMD programs, China publicly announced that it conducted ground-based mid-course BMD tests in 2010, 2013, and 2014. I'll say more about the 2014 "BMD" test later. Chinese state media has stated that such tests are defensive in nature and are not targeted at any country.

I was in Beijing earlier this month, and the message I delivered was clear: It is important that our governments have a sustained dialogue on the role that our BMD systems have in our respective defense policies and strategies. We would welcome an opportunity to learn more about how BMD fits into China's defense policy and strategy.

More broadly, a sustained dialogue would improve our understanding of China's strategic perspective and enhance China's understanding of U.S. policy and strategy. Institutionalizing discussions of strategic issues is a prudent long-term approach to strengthening strategic stability and exploring means for strengthening mutual trust and risk reduction.

To encourage that dialogue, we have taken and will continue to take steps to keep China informed about developments in U.S. BMD policy.

Potential Chinese BMD through the Lens of the U.S. Experience

The U.S. experience with BMD and specifically with our Ground-based Midcourse Defense System, or GMD, provides a useful lens for examining the challenges the Chinese would face in developing a BMD capability to threaten our nuclear deterrent.

We have been clear that our homeland BMD capabilities provide for defense of the U.S. homeland from limited ICBM attack, and are purposely not intended to affect Russia's or China's strategic deterrent. The GMD system is designed to support that policy, and it is not scaled, intended, or capable of defending the United States against the larger and more sophisticated arsenals of Russia and China. GMD is designed to protect the U.S. homeland only from limited ICBM attacks from states such as North Korea and Iran.

The U.S. experience with BMD suggests that attempting to develop a comprehensive homeland BMD system to defend against ballistic missile attack from China or Russia would be extremely challenging – and costly - given the size and sophistication of Chinese and Russian ICBMs. This owes to several factors, including the relatively low number of GMD interceptors and the sophistication and large numbers of Russian and Chinese missiles.

Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates stated this publically on May 18, 2010, in testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when he said that trying to eliminate the viability of the Russian nuclear capability would be "unbelievably expensive."

Given these factors, we could potentially expect a notional Chinese equivalent to the GMD system to provide at most a limited defense of the Chinese homeland, which would not counter the U.S. strategic deterrent and therefore would not undermine strategic stability.

This is for the same reason that GMD does not impact strategic stability: the number of interceptors is low and they are not designed to deal with complex threats, and developing a comprehensive

system to cope with a full-scale attack from another nuclear-armed great power would be expensive and ultimately unsuccessful.

Relationship to ASAT Testing

There is another important aspect of China's BMD program that bears discussing, which is its connection with China's anti-satellite, or ASAT, weapons program.

On July 23, 2014, the Chinese Government conducted a non-destructive test of a missile designed to destroy satellites in low Earth orbit. However, China publicly called this ASAT test a "land-based missile interception test."

Despite China's claims that this was not an ASAT test; let me assure you the United States has high confidence in its assessment, that the event was indeed an ASAT test.

The continued development and testing of destructive ASAT systems is both destabilizing and threatens the long-term security and sustainability of the outer space environment. A previous destructive test of the Chinese system in 2007 created thousands of pieces of debris, which continue to present an ongoing danger to the space systems—as well as astronauts—of all nations, including China.

The destructive nature of debris-generating weapons has decades-long consequences: they can increase the potential for further collisions in the future, which only create more debris. A debris-forming test or attack may only be minutes in duration, but the consequences can last for decades. It is for these reasons that the United States believes testing debris-generating ASAT systems threaten the security, economic well-being, and civil endeavors of all nations.

Space systems and their supporting infrastructures enable a wide range of services, including communication; position, navigation, and timing; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and meteorology, which provide vital national, military, civil, scientific, and economic benefits. Other nations recognize these benefits to the United States and seek to counter the U.S. strategic advantage by pursuing capabilities to deny or destroy our access to space services.

The use of such ASAT weapons could be escalatory in a crisis.

China's ASAT program, and the lack of transparency accompanying it, also impedes bilateral space cooperation. While we prefer cooperation, it will by necessity have to be a product of a step-by-step approach starting with dialogue, leading to modest CBMs, which might then perhaps lead to deeper engagement. However, none of this is possible until China changes its behavior with regard to ASATs.

Conclusion

As many of you know, one of my biggest priorities as Assistant Secretary is to look over the horizon a bit and begin to structure our Bureau to address the emerging security challenges of the 21st Century.

For me, that means an increased focus on developing a stable strategic relationship with China, while at the same time reassuring our Allies.

Managing the U.S.-China relationship will take a lot of time and effort, and we won't always be successful. It's a challenge. But as Secretary Kerry likes to remind us, it's important for us to get caught trying, and that's what we intend to do.

Thanks very much.

10. [Obama: Our Fight Against Violent Extremism \(02-18-2015\)](#)

This commentary by President Obama originally appeared in the Los Angeles Times on February 17.

President Obama: Our fight against violent extremism by Barack Obama

The United States has made significant gains against terrorism. We've decimated the core al Qaeda leadership, strengthened homeland security and worked to prevent another large-scale attack like 9/11.

At the same time, the threat has evolved. The al Qaeda affiliate in Yemen actively plots against us. Since 9/11, terrorists have murdered U.S. citizens overseas, including in the attacks in Benghazi, Libya. Here in the United States, Americans have been killed at Ft. Hood and during the Boston Marathon.

In Syria and Iraq, the terrorist group we call ISIL has slaughtered innocent civilians and murdered hostages, including Americans, and has spread its barbarism to Libya with the murder of Egyptian Christians. In recent months, we've seen deadly attacks in Ottawa, Sydney, Paris and Copenhagen.

Elsewhere, the Pakistan Taliban massacred more than 100 schoolchildren and their teachers. From Somalia, al-Shabaab has launched attacks across East Africa. In Nigeria and neighboring countries, Boko Haram kills and kidnaps men, women and children.

In the face of this challenge, we must stand united internationally and here at home. We know that military force alone cannot solve this problem. Nor can we simply take out terrorists who kill innocent civilians. We also have to confront the violent extremists — the propagandists, recruiters and enablers — who may not directly engage in terrorist acts themselves, but who radicalize, recruit and incite others to do so.

This week, we'll take an important step forward as governments, civil society groups and community leaders from more than 60 nations gather in Washington for a global summit on countering violent extremism. Our focus will be on empowering local communities.

Groups like al Qaeda and ISIL promote a twisted interpretation of religion that is rejected by the overwhelming majority of the world's Muslims. The world must continue to lift up the voices of Muslim clerics and scholars who teach the true peaceful nature of Islam. We can echo the testimonies of former extremists who know how terrorists betray Islam. We can help Muslim entrepreneurs and youths work with the private sector to develop social media tools to counter extremist narratives on the Internet.

We know from experience that the best way to protect people, especially young people, from falling into the grip of violent extremists is the support of their family, friends, teachers and faith leaders. At this week's summit, community leaders from Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Boston will highlight innovative partnerships in their cities that are helping empower communities to protect their loved ones from extremist ideologies.

More broadly, groups like al Qaeda and ISIL exploit the anger that festers when people feel that injustice and corruption leave them with no chance of improving their lives. The world has to offer today's youth something better.

Governments that deny human rights play into the hands of extremists who claim that violence is the only way to achieve change. Efforts to counter violent extremism will only succeed if citizens can address legitimate grievances through the democratic process and express themselves through strong civil societies. Those efforts must be matched by economic, educational and entrepreneurial development so people have hope for a life of dignity.

Finally — with al Qaeda and ISIL peddling the lie that the United States is at war with Islam — all of us have a role to play by upholding the pluralistic values that define us as Americans. This week, we'll be joined by people of many faiths, including Muslim Americans who make extraordinary contributions to our country every day. It's a reminder that America is successful because we welcome people of all faiths and backgrounds.

That pluralism has at times been threatened by hateful ideologies and individuals from various religions. We've seen tragic killings at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in 2012 and at a Jewish community center in Kansas last year.

We do not yet know why three young people, who were Muslim Americans, were brutally killed in Chapel Hill, N.C. But we know that many Muslim Americans across our country are worried and afraid. Americans of all faiths and backgrounds must continue to stand united with a community in mourning and insist that no one should ever be targeted because of who they are, what they look like, or how they worship.

Our campaign to prevent people around the world from being radicalized to violence is ultimately a battle for hearts and minds. With this week's summit, we'll show once more that — unlike terrorists who only offer misery and death — it is our free societies and diverse communities that offer the true path to opportunity, justice and dignity.

Related Statements:

[Statement from Summit on Countering Violent Extremism](#)

[Remarks by Secretary Kerry on the White House Summit to Counter Violent Extremism](#)

Related Sites:

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[Media Note](#)

[Appointment of Rashad Hussain as U.S. Envoy for Counterterrorism](#)

11. Ambassador Baer's Response to Briefings on Ukraine Cease-Fire (02-18-2015)

United States Mission to the OSCE

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer to the Special Permanent Council, Vienna

Response to Briefings by Ambassadors Apakan and Tagliavini and ODIHR Director Michael Link

I'd like to begin by thanking you for convening us today, and thanking Ambassador Apakan, Ambassador Tagliavini and Director Link for briefing us. It's very important that we can hear

directly from you, particularly about the latest on the ground, and we appreciate your taking the time to share with us.

Ambassador Apakan and Ambassador Tagliavini, we've heard clearly from you today that the "Package of Measures" agreed last week at Minsk is an opportunity to jump-start the implementation of the Minsk Protocol and Agreement of last September, and as such represents the latest in a long string of opportunities to de-escalate peacefully the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. We've heard clearly from you that the Minsk Protocol and Agreement – along with President Poroshenko's peace plan – remain the framework that is the most promising recipe for de-escalation of this crisis. And we hope that the package of measures can indeed jump-start the process of implementing the Minsk agreements in full.

I stayed up late on Saturday evening to watch the live broadcast of President Poroshenko giving orders to his military commanders to cease fire when the clock struck midnight. We've seen the assessment from the SMM that the ceasefire is holding in a number of areas, but we share the assessment that the ceasefire is being violated with intense, ongoing attacks on Debaltseve, as well as a number of incidents in other locations.

I think it's important for us to remember what happened before Saturday, what happened leading up to the appointed time for the ceasefire. We know from publicly available information that a great deal of the negotiations in Minsk last week were taken up with President Poroshenko being willing to have an immediate ceasefire, and President Putin stalling and wanting some delay before the ceasefire would take effect, presumably in order to further change the facts on the ground.

Prior to the ceasefire deadline this past weekend, the Russian military deployed a large amount of artillery and multiple rocket-launcher systems around Debaltseve. We are confident that these are Russian military, not separatist systems. The Russian military also has air defense systems deployed near Debaltseve. We are also confident that these are Russian military, not separatist systems. Russian units along the border with Ukraine were preparing a large shipment of supplies to pro-Russia forces fighting in eastern Ukraine.

We also have continued to see a large volume of reporting in open sources on Russian military personnel killed in action and the subsequent return of those bodies across the border from Ukrainian territory.

This is what was happening before the ceasefire was to take effect. And now we see ongoing reports of heavy fighting going on, with attacks in and around Debaltseve continuing. Debaltseve is – to remind everyone – clearly west of the September 19 ceasefire line, so it seems obvious that the separatist attacks, and the statements affirming their intention to ignore the ceasefire with regard to this area, are aimed at changing facts on the ground. This underscores the importance of the OSCE SMM being able to get access to Debaltseve, to monitor the ceasefire – or the violations thereof.

We have heard today that Deputy Chief Monitor Hug has been working assiduously to negotiate security guarantees for the SMM to reach Debaltseve. There, too, the separatists, and the Russian participants, have not been forthcoming in offering the security guarantees that the SMM needs.

So I think it's important that we review the facts known to us now:

We know, first of all, that while Ukraine replied to Ambassador Apakan's request for information that would help the SMM plan to monitor the implementation of the package agreed last week, only one of the three other signatories has responded. The Russian Federation has failed to respond to

Ambassador Apakan's letter, the so-called "LPR" has failed to respond to Ambassador Apakan's letter, only the "DPR" has responded on that side of the conflict. Ambassador Apakan, I would appreciate some clarification from you on whether you have heard anything from Russian Ambassador to Ukraine Zurabov about the Russian Federation's response or non-response to the letter, and why it isn't responding, given the numbers of fighters and weapons the Russian Federation needs to withdraw in order to be compliant with what it signed on to in Minsk last week and last year.

Second, we've seen the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" make statements that the ceasefire doesn't apply to certain areas, that they have no intention of abiding by the ceasefire.

Third, we've heard that the so-called "LPR" and "DPR" have imposed new restrictions on the freedom of movement of our OSCE monitors, the monitors that belong to all 57 countries around this table.

Fourth, we heard from Ambassador Tagliavini about the failure of the Tri-lateral Contact Group to speak with one voice to condemn the unhelpful statements from the so-called leaders of the "LPR" and "DPR."

Fifth, we know of the failure at the level of the Kremlin: President Putin has failed to come out and condemn these kinds of statements, has failed to condemn the ongoing fighting at Debaltseve.

Sixth, we know that Russia has sent another illegal convoy into Ukraine, in direct contrast to the commitments it made last week, that humanitarian assistance should be given in line with internationally accepted standards.

Seventh, Nadiya Savchenko, and many others, remain hostages. Nadiya Savchenko is a hostage held by the Russian Federation.

So while President Poroshenko has made it clear that he is ready to fully implement the package of measures and the Minsk agreements, we have a number of examples that Russia, and the separatists it backs, have failed already to take the steps that they agreed to less than a week ago.

I would like to say a bit about the SMM. I read about what the SMM is doing, and frankly, the map that Ambassador Apakan showed with the "spaghetti" lines of the patrols – I think it's important that everybody sitting in this room takes time to reflect that those spaghetti lines are going through very heavily armed, very dangerous places. The SMM monitors are taking great personal risk, no matter how much effort we put into making sure that all safety precautions are made, there is still some risk. And they do that on behalf of peace. They demonstrate courage on behalf of peace. And what a disrespect it is – for any party – to not recognize the courage of our monitors and the work that they do on behalf of peace and to facilitate that work.

We welcome the efforts of the SMM to quickly marshal the resources and to be able to deploy to help monitor the ceasefire and the pull-back of weapons that was agreed to. We know that this is a difficult task and we appreciate their courage. We are reviewing the information that has been provided by the SMM about possible and known additional needs, and we call on everyone around the table to do our best to meet those needs so the SMM can do its job.

We continue to call on Russia, and Russia-backed separatists, to allow immediate full access for the OSCE monitors to monitor the ceasefire as agreed in Minsk.

February 25, 2015

In closing, Mr. Chair, we urge all signatories to implement the September 5th Minsk Protocol, the September 19th Memorandum agreed to in Minsk last year and reaffirmed in the Minsk Implementation Plan package on February 12. These agreements represent the best path to a lasting peace that respects Ukraine's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity.

We also call on Russia to end its illegal occupation of Crimea and to return all hostages.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
