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Pre-Ministerial Press Briefing

June 23, 2014

Ambassador Lute: I'll be brief in outlining the context for this ministerial meeting which begins tomorrow night and extends into Wednesday and then we'll get to your questions.

The broader context is that we're almost precisely 70 days until the Wales Summit - the first week in September. Defense Ministers met just a few weeks ago to take on the topics that are their purview and the Foreign Ministers meet this week as sort of a final stepping stone toward Wales. So, this is a big substantive opportunity for the 28 Foreign Ministers to come together and do sort of a final tune-up on topics before the Wales Summit.

There's clearly a lot going on. The crisis in the East in Ukraine continues. We have unfinished business in Afghanistan which is today seeing, I would say, increased challenges on the political front as we move through the second round of elections and towards the formation of a new government. We see continued instability outside NATO, most significantly in Syria and Iraq. And while there is not a NATO mission, there's no doubt considerable concern because those areas bound right up against NATO territory.

Secretary Kerry is in Iraq today. When he arrives in Brussels tomorrow and moves into the first event with his Foreign Minister Counterparts, he'll be fresh from that experience, those

engagements in Baghdad with Shia, Sunni and Kurd Iraqi leaders and his Foreign Minister counterparts will be anxious to get that fresh report.

So these topics frame the ministerial but they also, in fact, lead all the way to the Summit. So let me unpack them one at a time and then we'll get to your questions.

First of all: the Ukraine crisis. This is an obvious top priority for both the meetings this week but also for the Summit. In the four months since the illegal annexation of Crimea we've seen the international community rally around what I call a three-part international strategy. Let me just outline these three parts because NATO's role will then become more apparent.

First, the international community has agreed to support the government in Ukraine. Second, it agreed to impose costs and to condemn Russia. And third, it agreed, especially within the Alliance, to rally around Article 5 and the solidarity of NATO. These three parts are evident in actions that have been taken over the last 90 days or so.

So, in the first two — support Ukraine and impose costs on Russia — NATO has not had a leading role but is rather in a supporting role and the lead has been taken by other international organizations: the UN, OSCE, and the EU.

For support to Ukraine the international community has really provided two very meaningful forms of support. First: financial support. We saw this by way of the loan arrangements from

the INF. And you've also seen the U.S. reinforce the international funding for Ukraine with bilateral funding. So, by our count, a total of \$184 million in U.S. bilateral assistance to Ukraine and a \$1 billion loan guarantee. That kind of assistance has been amplified by other bilateral donors, but also by the EU and other international organizations.

The international community has also supported Ukraine by way of OSCE missions, observer missions both in and around the elections but also before and after the elections. Really in an effort to get ground truth in the face of what is obviously a distorted international propaganda effort sponsored by the Russians.

Most recently the international community has rallied around President Poroshenko's peace plan including the unilateral ceasefire that he announced just last Friday on the 20th.

With regard to Russia, the international community has condemned and sanctioned Russia for the illegal annexation of Crimea and for its continuing destabilizing activities in Eastern Ukraine. Most recently what have we seen? We've seen Russia continuing support from militias and militants in Eastern Ukraine, most recently including the transfer of heavy weapons into those eastern provinces. We've seen the return of some Russian combat forces along the border with Ukraine. And we've seen, frankly, no tangible or concrete Russian support for Poroshenko's peace plan.

Now the third part of this, beyond supporting Ukraine and condemning and imposing costs on Russia, the third part of the strategy is what NATO does internally, and here NATO does have the lead. Really our actions have centered around the intent to reassure allies that Article 5 means what it says.

Very early on, in fact the first Sunday of this crisis back in early March, Poland invoked Article 4 of the Washington Treaty which is the right of every Alliance member to call for urgent consultations if it feels threatened. It's only been invoked four times in the history of the Alliance and Poland invoked it in early March with regard to the crisis in Ukraine.

What have we seen since then? We saw a set of immediate measures which had fighter aircraft reinforce the Baltic Air Policing. We've seen ship visits, naval combatant ship visits in both the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. And you're seeing infantry units, American infantry units, deployed to each of the three Baltic states as well as to Poland.

You've seen NATO employ its AWACS fleet, so this is the airborne early warning fleet, to provide better situational awareness to the air picture in the East. And you've seen basically all 28 allies lean in and contribute to these reassurance measures. As we say, today we are 28 for 28, meaning that all 28 allies are contributing in some ways to these reassurance measures.

Now these immediate measures, you can expect to be sustained through the end of 2014 and that sustainment will in part be supported by President Obama's announcement when he was

in Poland recently of a \$1 billion U.S. appropriation to help fund these sorts of reassurance measures.

It's really too soon to tell, in my estimate, what the full impact of this crisis will be but what is clear is that it is a fundamental challenge to stability in Europe and it really changes the strategic landscape for NATO. So it's clear that this crisis to NATO's east will be a first agenda item, not only for the ministerial here in the next two days, but also we forecast in the first week in September it will also be on the agenda for the Summit.

It's hard to predict exactly what the longer term implications will be but we think Ministers this week and leaders in September will have to assess the future of the NATO-Russia Partnership. It's clear right now that only one of the two parties is abiding by the NATO-Russia Founding Act, that is the basic agreement that outlines this two-way partnership. The other party, Russia, is not abiding by those agreements. And it's also clear that NATO has before it some choices with regard to adaptations it might make internally in response to this crisis.

So these are the sorts of policy issues that are being teed up first for discussion this week, but then ultimately for a decision in September.

I think one of the very candid discussions that will carry from the Defense Ministers several weeks ago to this week and then on to the Summit is this question of defense spending within the Alliance. And what's clear is that as our 28 economies across the Alliance recover from the

recession dating back to 2008 roughly to today — a six year recession and the worst recession in the 65 year history of the Alliance — that there's an increased obligation as those economies begin to recover to contribute more to defense. This defense spending debate was prominent in the Defense Ministers meeting as it will be again this week, and I'm sure it will be again at the Summit.

The basic theme here is that I think there's an agreement that the Alliance needs to reverse the decline of defense spending that we've seen in the face of this six year recession.

So that's in essence Ukraine, Russia, and implications, but beyond that, and even before the Ukraine crisis, we were going to have a Summit. At that time, before Ukraine, we imagined that there would be three major agenda items on the Summit.

One is Afghanistan where we have, as I say, unfinished business. Most of you will appreciate that by December 2014 the current NATO combat mission in Afghanistan will end so ISAF, the ISAF mission will end and will transition to a non-combat train, advise, and assist mission called Resolute Support.

Ministers this week will assess the operations plan. This is the detailed, step by step, plan of who has responsibilities to do what for Resolute Support. They'll assess this plan and hopefully approve it, which is just another step in the right direction in terms of setting up NATO for a post-2014 presence.

Meanwhile in Afghanistan the political transition is going full throttle. You'll appreciate that back in early April we had the first round of presidential elections, and then recently a second round. Now there are some disputes to be arbitrated by the Afghan electoral authority, all headed towards the naming of the next President of Afghanistan, and we believe that with the inauguration of the next President we'll begin to assemble the final package of deliverables for Afghanistan for the Summit.

Let me just tick through the elements of that package. You have the next President inaugurated. You'll have soon after his inauguration the signing of two key documents -- the Bilateral Security Agreement between Afghanistan and the U.S. which authorizes this post-2014 presence bilaterally; and then you'll have a counterpart agreement between Afghanistan and NATO, the Status of Forces Agreement. With the signature of these two documents by the next Afghan President, you really have the authorities and protections in place to launch the post-2014 mission. So you have a new President, BSA and SOFA. You have the op plan, the operations plan being approved ideally this week.

You then have two commitments of resources that essentially provide the resources required for the plan. One is troops. You saw a prominent announcement a couple of weeks ago by the President of the United States on U.S. troop commitments. Those commitments now have to be teamed with commitments from other allies and partners. So we've got to go from just the U.S. announcement to a NATO set of troops, and beyond troops we've got to go to financial

resources. Here most important are the financial resources pledged at the last NATO Summit in May of 2012 for support of the Afghan National Security Forces: A sum that comes to \$4 billion a year. That \$4 billion series of pledges begins next year, 2015, and extends for three years.

So we've got assembled troops, we've got to assemble financial resources. Then finally, the last part of this Summit package on Afghanistan, NATO needs to work with the new government of Afghanistan to outline the size, scale, scope and nature of its Enduring Partnership. So this is beyond Resolute Support. This is what kind of partnership will Afghanistan have with the Alliance even beyond 2014, '15 and '16.

So there's work to be done, but actually the pieces of this six-part puzzle, if you will, are coming together and we're still hopeful that we'll be able to deliver this at Wales.

The second piece of sort of pre-existing business had to do with NATO capabilities and this is not only the hardware, the military hardware -- ships, planes, tanks, troops and so forth that have to come together to make the military Alliance, but also the bringing together these capabilities, this hardware, in a package of training and exercises and education so that, when NATO decides to commit a military force it has not only the capability but it has the coherence, it has the interoperability necessary to be effective on the battlefield.

So there are some key decisions that need to be taken with regard to this capabilities package. Capabilities typically fall in the realm of Defense Ministers, so their meeting a couple of weeks

ago was especially prominent with regard to capabilities. Foreign Ministers have less to do with capabilities. We don't expect any big decisions this week on capabilities, but it is clear that bringing together both the hardware and the software, if you will, of a military Alliance is a key deliverable for the Summit, and both of those -- hardware and software -- depend upon adequate defense spending. And defense spending which represents not only an appreciation for the shared security that comes to the 28 Alliance members, but with that shared security, the shared responsibility, the shared obligations of everybody contributing to these capabilities, the two abilities.

The last dimension of the agenda this week and then on to the Summit is partnerships. I was surprised when I came back to the Alliance after being away on other business for a couple of decades, actually, that NATO had accumulated 40-some partner countries. These are states outside of the 28 with which NATO has an operational relationship. These partnerships have been designed as a two-way street. So partners get to work alongside what I would call the gold standard military alliance in the world, NATO, and NATO avails itself not only of military capabilities that some of these partners bring to the Alliance, but also the political diversity that these partners bring to the Alliance.

So inside the 28 you have no African states, no Arab states, no East Asian states. With partners you have consultations with all three of those groupings. So you can imagine when you look around NATO's periphery, you can imagine the political value, set aside the military value, but the political value of having these partnerships in place which allow us, as we did just last week,

to meet with seven countries from the Mediterranean area in the Mediterranean Dialogue partnership format; sit with them at 28+7 at Ambassadors' level, and share observations about what's going on in Syria and Iraq. That conversation is much richer at 28+7 than it would be if the 28 of us here in NATO alone were having the same discussion.

So this week, but also very important at the Summit, we're going to ask ourselves a very fundamental question about partnerships. Has NATO appropriately invested in partnerships so that those partnerships which we think are valuable to the Alliance are enriched and sustained even when we're not operating day to day in Afghanistan, which has been a huge laboratory for partnerships. But what happens when Afghanistan is not where it is today in terms of this opportunity for interaction? How do we sustain these partnerships beyond Afghanistan? That's a big question that's a bit of a selfish question for NATO because we benefit greatly from these partnerships, but we also think there's a sort of self-interest on behalf of the partners themselves to sustain and improve these relationships.

So let me stop there, having outlined the key themes this week but also the ones for the Summit: Ukraine, Afghanistan, Capabilities and Partnerships. And when you sum these up they really become sort of the underwritten or maybe better yet, overarching theme of the Summit which is: what is the future of NATO beyond 2014?

So let me stop there and I'm happy to take your questions.

Moderator: I'd like to welcome the journalists from Afghanistan and start with Mustafa Sawar, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Do you have a question?

Media: Thank you very much. Mr. Ambassador, you might recall that during 2009 presidential elections in Afghanistan when there were allegations of fraud and other disputes. The U.S. intervened in a way and played a significant role which led to the victory of President Karzai for the second term.

Now the runoff in Afghanistan, you're faced with similar disputes over fraud allegations. What significant role can the U.S. play in resolving the problem? Thank you.

Ambassador Lute: My memory of 2009 is that the U.S. and others, other international players, played a role but in my view the most significant role was played by Afghans. And so here again the Afghan electoral institutions -- the IEC and the ECC -- which are five years more mature, five years better developed than they were in 2009 will play a key role in arbitrating these disputes. I think really the first line of defense for the credibility of elections have to be these Afghan electoral bodies.

The second line of defense I think comes to the international community and assistance to those electoral bodies. So here primarily in the international community the United Nations holds the prominent responsibility for assisting Afghan electoral authorities. I think you're

going to see that play out. I think you'll see the UN mission in Afghanistan alongside the IEC and the ECC come together and try to resolve any disputes.

The U.S. role is behind the process, not behind any particular candidate. And I think that's the not only the appropriate role but it's the role we're playing today.

Moderator: Terry Schultz from NPR/CBS?

Media: I'd like to go back to something we heard from a NATO official in our previous briefing about the package being prepared for Ukraine. Can you give us more details about what you expect to be in it? They were very ambiguous about what kind of language could even be used to approve what's being talked about. Could you discuss whether you expect lethal aid to come up and also perhaps put a finer point on concerns about what we see on the Russian border right now with the snap exercises, with the return of the troops and obviously the wrong direction it seems to be going.

Ambassador Lute: On the second part, yes, the return of some Russian combat formations to the border in Western Russia/Eastern Ukraine is troubling. You'll recall that President Putin removed the vast majority of these troops, some formation of 40,000 troops over the last couple of weeks. We thought that was a very positive concrete step, the kind of thing we would expect Russia to do, but now we've seen some back sliding with the return of some combat formations back into the border region.

I would only say that this does represent back sliding. It does represent that Russia has not taken the kind of responsible steps that we expect of not only a partner of NATO but a signator to the Helsinki Final Accords, the UN Charter, and numerous other documents that create the fabric of international agreements that have stabilized frankly, not only Europe but the international system since the 2nd World War. This is damaging, it is counter-productive, and it certainly doesn't support the potential of the Poroshenko plan in all its elements, to include most recently the ceasefire from just Friday.

With regard to the NATO package that's under consideration in support of Ukraine, I don't want to get into specific elements that comprise the package because this is what Ministers are going to talk about, so I would be simply guessing at how they might tailor this package. But this package alongside the other measures with Ukraine will be a major part of the discussion not only this week but at the Summit and will comprise NATO's part of support Ukraine.

But again, with regard to support to Ukraine, I would just highlight that the other international players are actually more prominent in terms of their support. Why? Because the support from the UN and the OSCE and the IMF and so forth come to the political and economic underpinnings of this crisis, which are really the root problems. So those forms of support are probably going to be more telling than anything we might provide militarily from NATO to one of our 40 partners, Ukraine, in the short term.

I don't think you should expect that any forms of NATO military support are going to sort of swing the military balance. What's really critical here, rather than military support, will be the political and economic support.

Media: And do you believe lethal aid will be part of the package?

Ambassador Lute: I don't want to go into a discussion on lethal aid because I don't want to preempt anything the Ministers might discuss.

Media: Swiss Television. It's good to meet you, Ambassador.

A couple of questions. You mentioned there are some adaptations that might depend on what's going on in Ukraine and Russia. Could you expand on that? And also there is movement in the immediate neighborhood of NATO with Sweden increasing military spending and the forthcoming Prime Minister wants to take his country to NATO. Do you have comments on that? Are there any discussions within NATO about what is happening in [inaudible]?

Ambassador Lute: On the second part of your question first: one of the actual original articles of the Washington Treaty, Article 10, allows for other members, other European democracies to join NATO if it's approved, if such a bid for joining NATO is approved by all member states. This has been called recently the Open Door policy or this question of NATO enlargement. Over the last 15 years of so NATO has enlarged, adding 12 states. We went from 16 to the current 28. Enlargement is an active policy issue inside the Alliance. There are four countries today

that have politically stated that they aspire to membership: Macedonia, Bosnia, Montenegro and Georgia. Beyond those four are a couple that you mentioned, Sweden and Finland for example, sometimes you read about them in the press, but they've not made a political commitment to formally come to NATO and specify that they're interested in membership.

So right now, aside from the four that have made this political declaration, the door is open to others but fundamentally it's a national decision on behalf of Sweden and Finland to first make the decision internally and then come and request membership of the alliance, and that simply hasn't happened but the door remains open.

With regard to adaptations, again, this will be a decision on a package at Wales so I can't forecast it in great detail, but I will say that there's considerable room for adaptations between what we're doing now in the East — these are short term reassurance measures with very modest numbers of ground troops, with reinforcement of fighter aircraft, especially in the Baltic Air Policing mission, and with ship visits both North and South, both in the Baltics and the Black Sea. But there's room between those sorts of measures and the sorts of things which are defined in the NATO-Russia Partnership Founding Act which had to do with permanent stationing of substantial combat forces.

So between permanent and substantial and the short term reassurance measures that you're seeing today there are a whole series, a menu of possibilities that fall between those two

extremes. And that's kind of the range in which I think Foreign Ministers this week, but most important, leaders when they face a decision at Wales will be considering.

Media: [Inaudible], Daily Russia.

I have two questions. First about the decision on practical cooperation between Russia and NATO that was reached: What are the concrete conditions to restart this cooperation? And second, about the perspectives of Georgia to get a Membership Action Plan for joining NATO. Will this subject be discussed tomorrow? What is the position of the USA? And do you expect any response of Russia if this actual plan is granted to Georgia?

Ambassador Lute: On concrete conditions to return to the kind of practical coordination, cooperation that is embedded in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, it's very simple. We expect Russia to be the partner that it signed up to be in 1997 when they signed the agreement. And this is fundamentally a partner who respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighboring states which has clearly been violated with the illegal annexation of Crimea.

So that's a good place to start. If Russia wishes to return to practical cooperation then it needs to abide by not only the NATO-Russia Founding Act, but the Helsinki Accords, and frankly, all the way back to the UN Charter. If Russia were to come back into alignment with its international obligations, that would be a good place to start.

With regard to Georgia or any of the other three NATO aspirants, the potential for an invitation to any one or more of those four will be discussed during this Foreign Ministers meeting. I don't think we'll have a firm decision on that until the Summit itself. In the meantime we're also considering a package of enhancements that NATO could make with regard to these four aspirants to help them along the path to meet the conditions for membership.

Certainly I don't want to forecast a Membership Action Plan for Georgia or any other discreet step that might be taken, but rest assured that NATO does believe there is more we can do to help the four aspirants, but there's also more the aspirants have to do in order to meet the conditions for membership. So it's a bit of a two-way street and it's ongoing.

Moderator: Brooks Tiegnier with Jane's Defense.

Media: Defense spending: NATO has been harking on this for 20 years since budgets have declined for 20 years despite declarations at every Summit. I don't see why this declaration should affect anything different unless, of course, the U.S. has something in its pocket. My question to you is: does Washington intend to reduce its contribution to the common fund as an incentive for the allies to do some spending or not? If not, why you expect any change?
Thank you.

Ambassador Lute: Let me take a positive bent on this in terms of why we expect any change.

I would argue that first of all, you're right. Your short memory of history here is right. This is not the first time that NATO has said look, there's a responsibility on behalf of all 28 to contribute proportionate with your GDP and therefore we have this fundamental benchmark. We have this benchmark of two percent of GDP committed to defense spending, but this is not new. This goes back. It was last espoused in 2011, but it actually goes back further than that. So why should this be any different?

We argue that there are three strategic conditions that suggest that it should be different this time. First of all, in most practical terms, more than half of the economies of NATO today have seen at least three years of consecutive GDP growth. And therefore that's a sort of initial take, an initial assessment that the alliance as a group, as a whole, is beginning to see its way out of the recession that began in 2008 which again is the most severe recession in the 65 year history of the Alliance. Now that's not 28 economies, but 15 of the 28 have had three consecutive years of GDP growth.

Our bid is that if you're not at two percent today as you see your economy growing you ought to move in a proportionate way by way of increasing your defense spending. So it's not one size fits all because there's not one economy across the 28 allies. There are some economies that have still suffered three consecutive years of GDP decline, so it would be unrealistic to go to those economies and make a bid for increased defense spending. But we do think there's a responsibility if a nation, as all 28 do, if a nation relies on the Alliance as a bit of a whole life

insurance policy for security that you have to pay the premiums of that life insurance, and that means two percent spending as a target for all 28 allies.

So one thing is the economies are beginning to turn. The second is: we're coming out of Afghanistan which really marks the end of what I consider to be about a 20 year period of NATO operations. So this began not with Afghanistan, but it began in the Balkans. What you see in defense spending, inside defense spending over that 20 years of operations is defense spending that has migrated to operations and maintenance expenses -- the expenses of keeping troops in the field -- and away from defense investments: investing in new hardware, in new capabilities and so forth.

So another rationale here for shifting defense spending, especially between the operations account and the investment account, is the fact that operations are declining.

The third one is just the hard reality that we face a new crisis in the East. And a crisis which I think underlines the continued importance and the continued sort of cornerstone role that Article 5 plays: The responsibility of the 28 to be prepared to defend any one of the 28. And when you look at NATO capabilities today, there's an internal process that we don't publicize that results in the Defense Planning Process. It results in every single ally, all 28 allies, getting a targeted, tailored list of capabilities that, first, that each of the allies accepts as its responsibility to invest in; and second of all, when you pool these really results in the kinds of overall capabilities the Alliance needs.

So there's increased potential to do it, we're coming out of a heavy period of operations, and we face new challenges in the East. And we're arguing that together those conspire to give us a new logic.

Media: But should Washington reduce its contribution as an incentive to the allies or not?

Ambassador Lute: No. There's no such linkage imagined.

Look, the United States makes its defense budget decisions, its fundamental decisions on defense spending, based on its global commitments. Even though the U.S. defense budget is declining, it's considerably larger than anybody else's in the Alliance and today about 75 percent of Alliance defense spending is U.S. defense spending. There's no imagined linkage that we would somehow tailor that defense spending to try to incite others. We think the obligation for all 28 to contribute is clear enough and it doesn't require any linkage to the defense budget, to the U.S. budget.

Moderator: Heidi Jenson?

Media: Regarding the crisis in East Ukraine, how concerned are you about the level of forces that the Ukrainian government is using? [Inaudible] the Russians keep coming up. And

regarding the [inaudible] in Sweden, if it was applied for membership, how fast could they become members?

Ambassador Lute: I'd have to go back into NATO history to answer the second question. I'm not sure. But the key is that the process, the enlargement process begins with a national decision and once that national decision is made then the Alliance goes through a very patterned process to assess the qualities, the merits of that national decision. Then it has to be agreed at 28. So it's a bit of a process. This is not something that happens sort of every Tuesday. I don't have a forecast for how long it would take. It would depend a lot, I think, on the merits of the individual country itself. You can imagine, some countries perhaps because of demonstrated commitments to democratic ideals, democratic values, and because of the quality of their defense establishment, are closer from the outset to the merits required for, the standards required for membership than others who might have some development work. I think we'll just leave it at that.

The sorts of claims that we see coming out of Moscow with regard to Ukrainian abuses and so forth we do not see corroborated by independent observers on the ground. We have two different story lines here. We have story lines that are coming out of independent international observers, largely OSCE observers on the ground and out of the Ukrainian government, and those are in contrast to the sorts of story lines you hear, that we all hear coming out of Russia.

The key I think is, and the most promising step forward I think in the last several weeks has been not only the ceasefire. Unilateral ceasefire which is not an easy step for a newly elected President of Ukraine to take, declared on Friday. But that ceasefire, of course, is only one part of a comprehensive, multi-part peace plan that President Poroshenko outlined when he was inaugurated.

So that seems to us that political initiative of Poroshenko seems to us the most credible and the most promising step forward to try to resolve the conflict. And it has not only the ceasefire as a dimension but it has political outreach across the political spectrum, a series of political roundtables with leaders in the eastern provinces. It has commitments having to do with additional outreach and the potential for constitutional measures. So it's quite comprehensive.

We think first, it's a Ukrainian initiative to resolve the Ukrainian crisis; and second of all, we think the whole international community, to include Russia, ought to step in behind it and support it. And we haven't seen that support yet from Russia.

Moderator: Stephen Fiddler, Wall Street Journal.

Media: A couple of questions. One relates to something you touched on earlier which is common funding. It would seem like a rational response to the pressure on budgets and to get a bigger bang for the buck would be to increase NATO common funding. Is there any chance

whatsoever that that could happen in the next few months or there could be a declaration to that effect in Wales?

Secondly, in Ukraine you've seen a different type of combat operation it seems to which there's a sort of deniability of forces acting there. Is there a NATO doctrine, a NATO response to this challenge should it happen in NATO territory? And if so, what is it or what should it be?

Ambassador Lute: Those are good questions. On common funding, there's not now a discussion underway about increasing NATO common funding. The funding that we're targeting right now is the 28 national funding lines which we think are most fundamental to Alliance capability.

On the sort of ambiguity or ambiguous warfare or shadow warfare that we've seen played out - - in some cases not so ambiguous -- it is the blend of tools that have been assembled by Russia first in the Crimea and now in eastern Ukraine, are a bit different. They're a quite sophisticated blend of use of conventional forces like the 40,000 Russian troops amassed on the Ukrainian border as an act of intimidation. So it has an element of conventional forces. But much of it is unconventional and shadowy, asymmetric, and ambiguous. So here I'm referring to the support of separatist proxies, the role of Russian Special Forces or intelligence operatives on Ukraine soil, economic intimidation, political intimidation, conventional force intimidation, the use of propaganda and information tools to distort not only Russia's role but actually what's

happening on the ground itself. There's an element of cyber warfare, cyber attacks in that information campaign.

So when you blend these four or five or six elements together in a very sophisticated way, the design is to sustain pressure on the Ukrainian government, to ensure Russian influence obviously Crimea in a very significant way, but in different ways also in the eastern provinces in Ukraine, and to shade or obscure responsibility for this instability by way of generating the sense of ambiguity and the two story lines that we talked about earlier.

So when you put this all together you have a package which is not only tough to confront in Ukraine, but I think from a more narrow perspective inside the Alliance itself, we have work to do to design a counter to these sorts of tactics if they ever were to be employed on NATO territory.

So yes, I think there's a responsibility for NATO to come up with that counter, and we expect that to be delivered at the Summit. So there's work underway I think is the way to put it.

Media: My name is Ken [inaudible], I'm from Radio Free Europe [inaudible].

My question is on Ukraine. If you watch the Russian television [inaudible], the actions of Ukrainian government is described as almost an act of genocide on its own people. What's your reaction to these accusations, and do you see any evidence?

Ambassador Lute: We see no evidence of steps by the Ukrainian government that approach anything like the Russian claims, to include the Russian use of the term genocide. How can we have confidence in our perspective? Well, we have embassies in Ukraine, we have consulates in Ukraine, we have political officers in Ukraine who are giving us first-hand reports. Those reports are corroborated by hundreds of OSCE observers who are drawn from OSCE member states and also report back to OSCE and then obviously as a member, as a participant there we get those reports.

The alignment of what we're hearing from our national reporting is very close to being corroborated by what we hear from these international reports. And of course we have other NATO member states who are also giving national reports.

So we have an accumulation of reporting -- national, international, NATO, OSCE, UN -- that are very close to the same story line. Then we have one outlier and that is what you hear coming out of Moscow.

How does Moscow disseminate its story line, its narrative? It does it by way of control of the Russian language media, obviously inside Russia but also piped into Russian-speaking areas, enclaves in Ukraine. And, by the way, Russian-speaking enclaves elsewhere, outside Ukraine as well. It's the Russian dominance in that media channel that is one of the key tactics that they use in this very sophisticated package of influence.

So we have no corroboration of the kinds of reports that we're seeing coming out of the Russian media. So it's a mass accumulation of international reporting compared to what? And that's what gives us very high confidence in what we're seeing.

Media: [Inaudible] Times Magazine [inaudible].

As you said, Russia has forces on the border with Ukraine. Does NATO have any plans in case Russia decides to officially cross the border?

Ambassador Lute: No, NATO has no defense plans for Ukraine, and that's because Ukraine is not a member. It's not among the 28. NATO has continuing efforts to coordinate with Ukraine, to help them along and so forth. They have a liaison office in Kiev, for example, but does not have defense responsibility or plans for Ukraine proper.

The basic international plan for bringing to bear influence on Russia is the continued promise that if Russia continues its unhelpful, illegal influence campaign in eastern Ukraine that there will be additional economic sanctions. These will be sanctions that are not solely driven by the United States, but also a matter of cooperation between the United States and its European allies and with the EU.

So the big hammer here, the counter-influence leverage comes through economic sanctions, not through defense policy.

Media: [Inaudible]. I'm just wondering is there any possibility for the U.S. to get approval for a no fly zone in Iraq just to overthrow the ISIS rebels, bearing in mind that we [kind of have] some example in the Libya case.

Ambassador Lute: The challenge with, I'm not sure how -- First of all, there's no consideration of a no-fly zone today. That's fundamentally because ISIS have no aircraft except for the ones that have maybe been taken from the Iraqi forces in the north. So a no-fly zone I don't see how that would actually apply.

The fundamental approach that the U.S. is taking with regard to Iraq is to try to enable Iraqi authorities to step up to their responsibilities to politically form an inclusive power sharing arrangement between the major political sections in Iraq. And I think when Secretary Kerry gets here tomorrow afternoon, he'll report his engagements across the political spectrum in Baghdad. So he'll meet not only with Prime Minister Maliki, but he'll also meet with Sunni and Kurd leaders as well.

Look, that's how you get to the root of this problem. This is much more about Iraqis stepping up together as a multi-sectarian nation than it is about individual protective measures like no-fly zones or so forth.

On top of that, however, because of our longstanding relationship with the Iraqi Army, you saw the announcement where President Obama will send some 300 American military advisors back into Iraq to assess the capacity of the Iraqi Army and to assess if there are discreet measures that we could take to assist them. But that's only done under the overarching view that this must be fundamentally a political and not a military solution. So the forms of support you're going to see are more things like the John Kerry's visit than you will see discreet military steps.

Thanks. I hope there's good news coming out of the Ministerial this week and I suspect I'll see many of you at Wales. Thanks.

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