

**Testimony of Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of
European and Eurasian Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing: “Russian Violations
of Borders, Treaties, and Human Rights”
June 7, 2016**

Thank you Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and members of this committee for the opportunity to join you and discuss the challenges posed to international peace and security by Russia today, and the Administration’s policy toward Moscow.

As this Committee knows, for more than 20 years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, across multiple Administrations led by both political parties, the United States sought to build a constructive relationship with Russia, and to support that country’s greater integration into regional and global institutions and the rules-based international order. Our working assumption was that a more integrated, democratic, secure, and prosperous Russia would be a safer, more predictable and willing partner for the United States and our Allies in pursuing shared regional and global goals. We had some success and some challenges with this approach, which I won’t recap here.

By 2014, however, we had no choice but to reevaluate our assumptions following Russia’s invasion of sovereign Ukrainian territory – first in Crimea, then in eastern Ukraine – which shattered any remaining illusions about this Kremlin’s willingness to abide by international law or live by the rules of the institutions that Russia joined at the end of the Cold War.

Our approach to Russia today seeks first to deter further aggression through the projection of strength and unity with our Allies; second, to build resilience and reduce vulnerability among friends and Allies facing Russian pressure and coercion; third, to cooperate on core national security priorities when our interests and Russia’s do align; and fourth, to sustain ties to the Russian people and business community to preserve the potential for a more constructive relationship in the future.

Strength and Deterrence

To counter the threat posed by Russia's aggression and deter any military moves against NATO territory, over the past 2 years the United States and our NATO Allies have maintained a persistent, rotational military presence on land, sea, and air all along NATO's eastern edge—in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the three Baltic States. All 28 Allies have participated, and the U.S. has used the \$985 million in FY 2015 European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) funding that Congress generously appropriated to increase the number of exercises, training sessions, and patrols that we are supporting throughout Europe. This month, over 30,000 U.S., NATO and partner nation troops will exercise together as a part of a series of military training events, including the Polish-led ANAKONDA exercise.

As we look toward the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July, Allies will institutionalize a more sustained approach to deterrence, **including by enhancing forward presence in the East to reduce response times to any aggression.** To support this commitment, the President has requested \$3.4 billion to fund the European Reassurance Initiative. With your support, these funds will be used to deploy an additional rotational Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT) to Central and Eastern Europe; the prepositioning of combat equipment; as well as additional trainings and exercises in Europe.

We also expect significant contributions from all other Allies to improve NATO's readiness, responsiveness, and interoperability. The threats we face today demand that all Allies meet the pledges they made at the last NATO Summit in Wales to reverse the slide in defense budgets, and commit to spending at least two percent of GDP on defense. Seventy percent of Allies are already on track, but all NATO members must do their part.

And, we must make investments that align with future threats. Russia's own investments in hybrid tactics, electronic and cyber capabilities, disinformation, and violations of the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) Treaty illustrate where we need to respond.

We are also pushing our Allies and partners to prioritize investment in their own homeland and cyber security and encouraging increased information-sharing to protect against internal and external threats.

To press Moscow to bring an end to the violence in Ukraine and fully implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements, we have worked with the EU, the G7 and other like-minded nations to impose successive rounds of tough, economic sanctions on Russia over the past two years. These sanctions, combined with low oil prices and Russia's continued structural weaknesses, have imposed significant costs. While Moscow has not yet changed its approach to Ukraine, our readiness to toughen sanctions even further has likely played a role in deterring further Russian efforts to grab Ukrainian territory. We are now working intensively with Europe to ensure EU sanctions are rolled over at the end of this month, and to support France and Germany in their lead diplomatic role to push for full implementation of the Minsk agreements.

Resilience of Partners

As we defend NATO territory, we are also working to reduce vulnerabilities and increase the resilience of countries across Europe that face pressure from Moscow. This effort is a part of our firm and deep commitment that countries must be able to choose their own futures.

To help Ukraine better monitor and secure its borders, deploy its forces more safely and effectively, and defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity, the United States has committed over \$600 million in security assistance. We have trained over 1,700 Ukrainian conventional forces and National Guard personnel and 120 Special Operations Forces (SOF). We have provided counter-artillery and counter-mortar radars, over 3000 secure radios, 130 Humvees, over 100 armored civilian SUVs, and thousands of medical kits to help Ukrainian troops successfully resist advances and save lives.

To strengthen democratic institutions, reform economies, fight corruption, and build the resilience of partners, we have requested \$787 million in funding for Europe and Eurasia, including to those countries most vulnerable to Russian pressure, especially Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and the Western Balkans. Our programs and advisors focus on improving governance, squeezing out graft and fraud, strengthening justice systems, improving election standards, hardening border security and homeland defense, and building energy independence. In Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, our assistance is reorienting economies away from excessive dependence on Russia and toward growth-spurring markets in Central and Western Europe. In the Balkans, we have also increased our focus this year on countering violent extremism. And we're deepening intelligence-cooperation across Europe and Eurasia to detect and blunt Russia's covert and overt efforts to manipulate internal politics.

Energy diversification also continues to be a key component of our strategy, and we have seen progress on this front across Europe. Ukraine has now broken its dependence on Russian gas, ended costly household energy subsidies, and is making real strides in introducing full market standards across the sector. In the Baltics and Central Europe, critical projects and actions have reduced energy vulnerability, including the opening of Lithuania's and Poland's new LNG terminals, and the construction of electricity grid connections between the Baltic countries and their EU partners.

We appreciate the attention so many members of this Committee have paid to these issues, your visits to countries under threat, and your energy security advocacy, including for the completion of projects like the Southern Gas Corridor and against schemes like Nord Stream II that will increase Europe's dependence on single energy sources.

Cooperation on Shared Interests

Even as we push back against Russian aggression and support neighbors under pressure, the United States will continue to look for areas where our interests and Moscow's align, and we can work together to tackle global

challenges, including nonproliferation, nuclear and other WMD security, preventing atrocities and humanitarian crises, and combating violent extremism and terrorism.

We have worked with Russia to remove Syria's declared chemical weapons, to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, to contain the nuclear threat emanating from the DPRK, and to negotiate and implement the New START Treaty.

For the past eight months, Secretary Kerry has led multilateral efforts to resolve the crisis in Syria, establishing the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), and forging a critical agreement on a cessation of hostilities, which has reduced violence, even as that agreement is tested daily.

These efforts require hard-headed diplomacy with Russia. While working in the ISSG for a political settlement, we continue to call on the Kremlin to bring its influence to bear on the Asad regime to prevent unnecessary civilian casualties and suffering, and to end barrel bombing and the regime's obstruction of aid deliveries to besieged communities.

Engaging with Russian Society

Finally, we must continue to foster direct engagement with those Russian businesses, organizations, and individuals who want to work with us, who share our interests and values and are working for a better future for their country. Despite Moscow's crackdown on civil society, a free press, exchanges with the West, and political pluralism, our people-to-people exchanges; health, environment and cultural programs; and educational opportunities for Russians remain hugely popular, and continue to promote constructive ties between our countries. And we will continue to speak out against laws and policies that impede the work of Russian civil society and contravene the fundamental rights of freedom of expression, assembly, and association in Russia and elsewhere in the region.

The approach to Russia that I have outlined is not without its challenges and internal contradictions. And I will not claim that it has yet brought an

end to Russian aggression in Ukraine, its unmitigated support for Asad in Syria, or its violations of treaties and global norms. However, I am convinced that U.S.-Allied unity has been essential to deterring worse behavior, protecting our own security, and bringing the Kremlin to the table on critical issues from Ukraine, to Iran, and Syria.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cardin, members of this Committee, thank you for your careful attention to the challenges that today's Russia poses. My colleague and friend from the Defense Department, Dr. Michael Carpenter, will give you further detail on DoD's efforts to mitigate the threats we face.

Thank you.