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Senate Foreign Relations Committee
The Future of U.S. Policy toward Russia
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Good morning Chairman Risch, Ranking Member Menendez, and members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be here today with the Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation to discuss the future of U.S. policy toward Russia.

Under President Trump, the United States has taken consistent action against Moscow's attempts to undermine American interests and those of our allies and partners around the world. The United States will continue to use all appropriate tools of national power, including diplomacy, to address and deter any further such threatening actions from Moscow and to advance and protect the interests of America and our allies and partners, as they relate to Russia.

As articulated in the President's National Security Strategy or NSS, America is in a period of great-power competition. We must structure our policies accordingly. The Administration's Russia policy is part of the broader NSS and takes a realistic approach to Russia as a determined and resourceful competitor of the United States -- although a competitor with significant systemic and economic weaknesses that hinder its ambitions to restore its great power status and re-impose its archaic notions regarding spheres of influence. To advance broader American interests, we fundamentally do not seek an adversarial relationship with Russia. We remain open to cooperation with Moscow when it aligns with our and our allies' interests. However, there should be no doubt that this Administration will protect our national security, and that of our allies, when Moscow attempts to threaten us.

Russia's systemic weakness is reflected in President Putin's aggressive foreign policy, which is driven, in part, by insecurity and a fear of internal change. This oligarchic regime increasingly relies on repression to stifle public discontent, as illustrated by its harsh response to this summer's protests in Moscow and other Russian cities, the largest since 2011. The Russian people increasingly realize that the corrupt Putin regime is either incapable of addressing their problems or, in many cases, is the source of them. Putin's approval ratings have dropped since early 2018. A November survey by the independent Levada Center showed that 53 percent of young Russians would like to "vote with their feet," and emigrate from Russia, the highest percentage in the survey since 2009.

The regime's latest steps to quash dissent contradict Russia's international commitments to protect the fundamental freedoms of its citizens, and include new laws tightening control of the internet and labelling individuals, not just organizations, as "foreign agents." Russian security services launched a parallel clampdown on independent human rights NGOs and increased persecution of minority religious groups. Targets have included the Jehovah's Witnesses, eight of whom were sentenced to long prison terms for peacefully practicing their faith. These latest steps further extend Putin's systematic efforts to stifle civil society since he returned to the Russian presidency in 2012.

The pattern of Russian repression at home, aggression against its neighbors in Eastern and Central Europe, attacks on democratic institutions against our allies and here in the United States, and adventurism in the Middle East, Africa, and South America, all spring from this relative weakness and insecurity. At least for the short term, this dynamic will likely continue, with the regime miscasting America as the cause of Russia's domestic woes and using foreign adventures in an effort to distract Russians from reality.

The Administration's Russia policy is designed to confront Russian aggression globally by strengthening the diplomatic, military, economic, and political foundations of American power. Diplomacy is a tool of national security, and the day to day work of our diplomats in European and other capitals is critical to the success of every aspect of the Administration's Russia policy. The Department of State's diplomatic efforts reflect this Administration's commitment to bolster our alliances and partnerships to deter or reject Russian aggressive actions. The Department also supports bilateral engagement with Russia when it is in our interest to do so, including to stabilize our relationship so that the United States can address key American national security priorities. We maintain channels of communications with Russia on Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, North Korea, arms control, counterterrorism, and other bilateral matters.

The National Security Strategy recognizes that, to be effective, American diplomacy toward Russia must be backed by "military power that is second to none and fully integrated with our allies and all of our instruments of power." To this end, the Administration has:

- Increased the defense budget to \$716 billion in FY19;
- Prioritized infrastructure investments in the U.S. nuclear arsenal to maintain a robust nuclear deterrent;

- Increased funding for the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) by close to \$15 billion from FY17-19, with an additional \$5.9 billion requested for EDI in FY2020; and
- Worked with NATO allies to enact the largest defense spending increase since the Cold War. By the end of 2020, our NATO allies will have increased defense expenditures by an additional \$100 billion.

In its immediate neighborhood, Russia seeks to dominate, as demonstrated by its ongoing aggression against Ukraine and Georgia. In Ukraine, Russia must end its belligerence and implement its Minsk agreement obligations. We are encouraged by the positive steps Ukrainian President Zelensky has taken to resolve the Russia-instigated conflict in eastern Ukraine; thus far, we are disappointed by Moscow's response. The December 9 Normandy format summit provides an opportunity to test Russia's willingness to reverse its harmful behavior. We condemn Russia's continued militarization of Crimea and in July 2018, the Secretary of State issued a Crimea declaration stating that the United States will never recognize Russia's attempted annexation of the peninsula. The construction of the Nordstream 2 pipeline and Moscow's unhelpful approach to trilateral gas negotiations with the EU and Ukraine give Russia a new instrument for its strategy of using energy as a political weapon.

To increase the resiliency of our Ukrainian and Georgian partners, we have obligated over \$1.6 billion in State and DoD military assistance to Ukraine. This assistance is enhancing Ukrainian defense capabilities including to monitor and secure its borders, deploy its forces more safely and effectively, and improve interoperability with NATO forces. Our assistance has saved lives while helping to build Ukraine's long-term defense capacity. We have likewise provided Georgia over \$170 million in Foreign Military Financing since 2014, including \$94.5 million in FY2018-2019, to improve its resilience to Russian aggression, enhance its territorial defense, and support its military transformation efforts and interoperability with NATO.

NATO is establishing two new NATO Commands, one in the United States focused on securing critical transatlantic sea lines of communication, and one in Germany to enhance logistics support. These NATO Commands will create support teams to help our allies confront new and evolving threats such as cyber-attacks. They also will launch major, multi-year initiatives to bolster the Alliance's mobility, readiness, and decision-making capabilities. The Alliance is also strengthened by the inclusion of additional members. In June 2017, Montenegro joined NATO. Thanks to the work of this Committee and the whole

Senate, North Macedonia is on track to become NATO's newest member once the remaining NATO member state consents to the treaty, as the Senate did in October.

The threat from Russia is not just an external or military one. Moscow utilizes digital technologies to target us and our democratic allies from within. These actions include election meddling and complex, well-resourced influence operations – directed by the highest levels of the Russian government – in the very heart of the western world. Russia does not discriminate along political ideology or party lines. It aims to undermine democratic institutions – including in places like Chile – by exacerbating the divisions inherent in a democratic, pluralistic society. Understanding this threat is essential for developing a long-term response.

The Department of State is working closely with interagency counterparts and our allies to counter Russian influence operations, both domestically and abroad. We have provided significant foreign assistance in Europe and Eurasia to build resilience to and increase pressure on Russian malign influence in accordance with the goals of the Countering Russian Influence Fund established by Congress. The Department has also increased its support for the Global Engagement Center (GEC) through additional funding and staffing; the FY2020 State Department Budget requested \$76.5 million for the GEC, a \$23 million increase over the FY2019 request.

We support the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in its efforts to advance the development of USAID's partner nations in Europe and Eurasia through the Countering Malign Kremlin Influence Development Framework (CMKI). The CMKI Development Framework responds to the challenge of malign Kremlin influence by strengthening the economic and democratic self-reliance of these countries. The Framework focuses on key sectors for development in Europe and Eurasia, including democracy and the rule of law, the news and information space, and the economic and energy sectors. While the Kremlin seeks to weaken and strong-arm its neighbors, the Administration via USAID seeks to enable governments, civil society, and the private sector to make their own choices and build self-reliance by strengthening institutions and creating new economic opportunities.

These tools are making a difference. This summer, the Department executed a successful campaign to counter Russian disinformation that sought to undermine the “Baltic Way” and the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the human chain created by two million Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians to stand up for freedom from the Soviet Union. The GEC, working with allies across Europe,

coordinated a series of live events, social media campaigns, and news broadcasts across these countries. The campaign, which spread throughout social media, was an exercise in shared messaging to strengthen transatlantic ties and counter disinformation. Showcasing the success of the three Baltic countries since the 1989 revolutions and the fall of the Berlin Wall directly counters false Russian disinformation narratives about the Baltics as “failed states.”

As another element of this integrated response, we have degraded Putin’s ability to conduct aggression by imposing costs on the Russian state and the oligarchy that sustains it. The Administration has sanctioned 321 Russia-related individuals and entities since January 2017. For example, on September 30, the United States increased our sanctions on Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin by targeting his assets, and other actors associated with the Internet Research Agency for their efforts to influence the 2018 midterm elections. These sanctions, and other corresponding actions, serve as a warning to the Russian government ahead of the 2020 elections that we will not tolerate any activity by Moscow or its proxies aimed at undermining or manipulating our democratic processes. I confronted Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov on Russian interference in our elections during our July meeting in Helsinki, and have raised the matter with Russia Ambassador Antonov several times.

We have likewise taken firm action against Russia’s intelligence presence in America in response to Russia’s bad behavior, including its actions to undermine our diplomatic presence in Russia. In response to Russia’s imposition of a staffing cap on U.S. diplomatic personnel in Russia, we closed the Russian Consulate General and consul general’s residence in San Francisco; an embassy annex in Washington, DC; and a consular annex in New York. When Russia brazenly attacked UK citizen Sergey Skripal in March 2018 with a military-grade nerve agent, we closed the Russian Consulate General and consul general’s residence in Seattle, eliminating Russia’s diplomatic presence on the west coast of the United States, and expelled 48 Russian intelligence officials from the Russian Embassy in Washington. We also expelled 12 intelligence officers from the Russian Mission to the United Nations. These combined actions in March 2018 constituted the largest expulsion of Russian officials since the Cold War.

I mentioned earlier the valuable role American diplomats play in advancing the Administration’s Russia policy – our personnel in Moscow, Yekaterinburg, and Vladivostok are the forefront of this effort. Even as Russia has cut the size of our diplomatic staffing in Russia, the critical work requirements of our diplomatic mission to Russia have not changed. Our diplomats in Russia represent the very

best the Department has to offer. They have taken on far more responsibilities and kept pace on one of the Administration's top foreign policy priorities, even as the environment in which they operate has steadily become worse. We all should give credit to their service.

Elsewhere, our diplomats are seized with countering Russian adventurism in other regions — including the Middle East, South America, and Africa — where Russia's actions exacerbate instability and undermine U.S. interests. In Syria, Russian military support to the Assad regime and its attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure are destabilizing and have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in that country. We continue to stress to Moscow that the only way to resolve the conflict is through the UN facilitated political process in line with UNSC Resolution 2254. In Venezuela, we are pressing Russia to withdraw its diplomatic protection and military and economic support, through Rosneft, for the former Maduro regime, which has created a humanitarian disaster that radiates into neighboring countries. In Africa, we have called out Russia's destabilizing policies, including support for mercenaries like the U.S.-sanctioned Wagner Group — an outfit also active in Libya, Ukraine, and Syria. Furthermore, the Wagner Group and similar actors have advanced disinformation campaigns and election meddling schemes, weakening already fragile states throughout the continent.

As the Assistant Secretary of International Security and Nonproliferation will describe in more detail, Russia's serial disregard for its international security and arms control commitments represents another significant challenge for our policy. To address this challenge, the President has charged us to pursue a new era of arms-control agreements. We have not ruled out an extension of New START, but our priority is to promote arms control that goes beyond the confines of a narrow, bilateral approach by incorporating other countries — including China — and a broader range of weapons — including non-strategic nuclear weapons.

We fully appreciate that Congress has a critical role to play in providing the tools and resources needed to address and implement all aspects of our Russia strategy. We are committed to working with all of you to counter the threats and challenges posed by Russia.

Mr. Chairman, thank you again for inviting me today to discuss our policy towards Russia. I look forward to your questions.