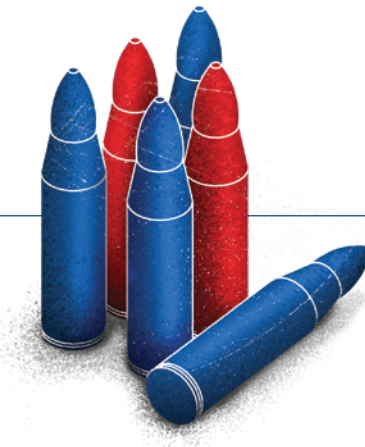


# *Adapting to the* **RUSSIAN WAY** *of* **WARFARE**

By *Small Wars Journal*, August 2018



**An interview with retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies at the Center for European Policy Analysis and former commander of the United States Army Europe (2014-2017)**



**QUESTION:** When talking about your legacy in Europe, the freedom of movement — the creation of a military Schengen zone — the infrastructure for mobility is at the core. How and in what way

do these elements boost the deterrence architecture? Where is the Alliance in this effort of building this freedom of movement space?

**ANSWER:** An aspect that gives me a lot of confidence is the fact that the EU (European Union) is taking on this military mobility as one of its main projects under PESCO (the Permanent Structured Cooperation). The EU has the resources to improve infrastructure, it has the authorities and political mechanisms necessary to help improve the cross-border permissions. That is encouraging. Another aspect that makes me optimistic is that both

NATO and the EU recognized the importance of this, and they are collaborating on improving it. Several countries have worked very hard, particularly Poland and the Baltic countries, to reduce the amount of time required to get permissions to cross borders.

The problems are related to the capacity and capability of the infrastructure. There is not enough rail to move large numbers of NATO forces quickly. I am still not confident that we have a process in place where, in a pre-crisis situation, there is enough or that sufficient rail cars will be made available in enough quantity to move fast enough to prevent a crisis from happening. Secondly, the bridges and the highways network, particularly in Eastern Europe, must be strengthened and improved to allow quicker ground movement.

**Q:** Why is this infrastructure of mobility important from a deterrence perspective?

**A:** We need to think how fast the Russians are moving. We must be able to move as fast as or faster than they do so that they do not make the mistake of thinking that they could launch an attack of some sort in an area before we could respond. That is why speed is so important to quickly move large formations and a lot of equipment. It is not practical to have troops all along the frontier. It would also appear to be provocative. So, you must assume that NATO countries, including the United States, are going to have normal peacetime trainings and rotations. Any crisis is going to require us to be able to move quickly from the training areas or from the deterrence status in Poland or Romania. It is like during the Cold War. Most of the troops were not on the border, but several hours away in garrisons. You've got to practice two types of movements: from the U.S., Canada, United Kingdom, Spain and Norway, as well as troops that are already in Germany, Poland, Romania and the Baltic states. That is why speed is so important. If the Russians can see that we don't have the ability to move a lot of equipment and people quickly, I think that increases the risk of them making a terrible mistake, and then we have a different situation. That is why I am emphasizing speed. To have speed, you have to be able to move. That is rail, highways, airports and seaports. To get into Romania, although we already have about 1,000 U.S. soldiers there and Black Sea air policing, reinforcements have to come from the North and the West over the Carpathian Mountains. If we do not have highways that allow heavy equipment to move over the Carpathians quickly and enough rail to move heavy equipment quickly, then I think our deterrence capability in Romania and Bulgaria is not as good as it can be.

**Q: The Wales and Warsaw summits were essential for setting up the adaptation of NATO to the post-Crimean security environment in Europe. What unfinished business do we still need to contemplate for developing an effective deterrence architecture on the Eastern Flank? From a Bucharest-Black Sea perspective, what we see is a massively imbalanced Eastern Flank with a center of gravity focused on the Baltic ecosystem.**

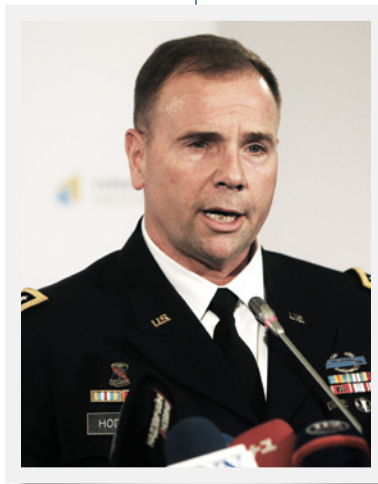
**A:** The Alliance has done very well adjusting very quickly to this new security environment. The Wales summit was just four years ago and the Warsaw summit two years ago. We've seen significant changes in the structures, commitments and in the processes of NATO. This is the reason why NATO has been the most successful alliance in the history of the world. It is not only about its commitment to collective defense over so many decades, but also about the ability to adapt.

Having said that, I do believe that NATO needs to think of the Black Sea as a security region, not as a body of water surrounded by different countries. We need to think about the Black Sea in a regional way, recognizing that the Russians are using the Black Sea as a power projection base into the Middle East and Mediterranean. We must recognize that we

have allies and very close friends (Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova) that are constantly under pressure from Russia. The Alliance needs to encourage collaboration between the member countries and the partner countries to share intelligence, to do more maritime exercises, to improve missile defense in the region, and more exercises where we move across the Black Sea into Georgia or Turkey to make sure we have freedom of movement in the Black Sea and on the ground around it. The Black Sea region is just as important as the Baltic Sea. We've done a lot in the Baltic region. I believe the Black Sea region is going to be the key area where Russia will challenge

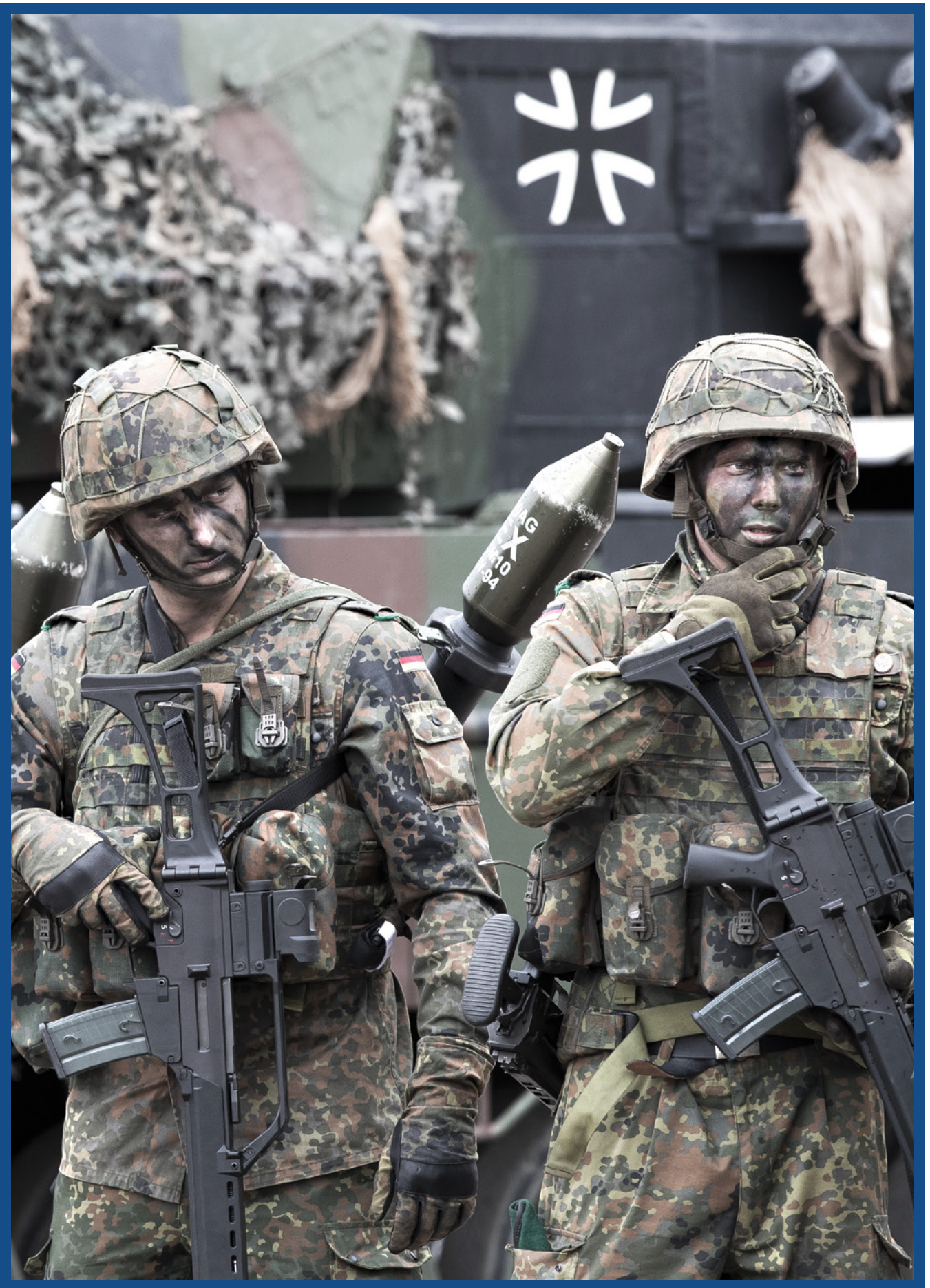
the Alliance over the next 10-15 years, and we've got to ensure credible deterrence there as well as provide support for our partners in the region.

It might be even more important when you think about what the Black Sea means to the Russians and how they use it to exploit their capabilities and the trouble they are causing in Syria, the pressure they are putting on Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. The Russians have not lived up to what they are saying they would do in the Minsk process and don't show any indication of cooperating in Ukraine — so we need to think about what does that mean for Crimea? Does the West and the world recognize territorial boundaries, territorial waters for Russia because of Crimea? We need to be unified on this to make sure that no one takes the eye off the ball in the Black Sea because



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Ben Hodges

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of the illegal annexation of Crimea and the implications for the Black Sea — on the water and what is below the water. Of course, there is another angle involved — what are the implications for the Danube River, the fact that there are so many allies as well as partners through which the Danube River passes, and that Russia is now closer to the mouth of the Danube.

The other unfinished business is air and missile defense. I think we must figure out how to encourage Germany and the Netherlands to take more responsibility with missile defense and short-range air defense because of all the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) the Russians can put in the air. So, you need that integrated, layered air and missile defense. We need to improve the protection of our allies in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. We need to improve protection for European citizens who would be within range of the missiles coming out of Kaliningrad — to include northern Germany, Denmark, Poland, Norway, Finland and Sweden. I think NATO needs a large exercise focused on air and missile defense every year that would enable us to practice coordination and the ability to integrate different kinds of systems into the appropriate levels of command. Germany hosts several cities and facilities (Hamburg, Nuremberg, Ramstein) necessary for rapid reinforcement and transportation that would be within range of the Russian missiles. All these places could be targets. You must protect the facilities that are necessary — seaports and airports and major rail. I do not believe the Russians would ever intend to invade to control territory in Germany. I don't think that is their interest. What they can do is go into the Baltic states, Poland and Romania to challenge the Alliance and try to demonstrate the Alliance cannot protect its members. That means a short, limited, quick attack — not something that would have been expected back in the '80s. Territorial defense, land defense is probably not the priority west of Poland.

**Q: On the Eastern Flank, one of the original sins of NATO enlargement in the 1990s was the decision not to deploy on a permanent basis significant allied forces on the territory of new members. Such a decision was taken in a very different operational security environment, a highly permissive one from a political point of view as well as from a military point of view. Now we see revisionist behavior and military capabilities that are challenging the very essence of how NATO used to reinforce and deter. Has the time come to fix, adjust NATO's Eastern posture on a permanent basis? Do you see a political consensus on this topic in the U.S. and older Europe?**

German Bundeswehr soldiers of a NATO enhanced forward presence battalion attend a ceremony at the Rukla military base west of Vilnius, Lithuania. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**A:** First, maintaining the cohesion of the Alliance is the most important thing. We've got to maintain that. A decision to permanently station troops in Lithuania, Poland or Romania with families and two- to three-year tours like in Germany should only be made in consultation and with the agreement of all the allies. If the Alliance decides that is helpful and effective in the same way that the Alliance agreed with the deployment of the enhanced forward presence (EFP) battle groups, then I would be more supportive. Poland is a great, reliable and strong ally, and they've done so much to contribute to burden sharing. Their offer to host U.S. forces in permanent basing is an example of that. So, I'm not against permanent basing per se ... but I am against doing it as a bilateral action between the U.S. and Poland, without the support of the rest of our allies, because I am concerned it would add friction and discord within the Alliance. The problem is that some allies think that such a move provokes Russia unnecessarily or raises the risk of a crisis and they see it as a mistake on our part. The move could also create additional friction with allies who are already at odds with each other. Russia will react, without a doubt, and all our allies will have to deal with the consequences, so they should be consulted in this. The EFP was so successful because it had the support of all 29 nations. I think permanent basing, with the support of all 29 nations, would therefore be successful. Meanwhile, if Eastern Europe wants to enhance NATO's deterrent effect, a potentially divisive military presence is not the right way to do it. It's far better to protect the cohesion of the Alliance, while ensuring that trained and ready forces are ready to move in if necessary.

To have permanently stationed troops in Europe, the U.S. Army would have to grow significantly, and I don't see that happening. I think we can achieve the strategic effect we need to achieve with rotational forces that include the EFP posture, air policing, the multinational exercises. The U.S. has a continuous presence of rotational troops in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland and has small numbers in Latvia and Lithuania. I would like to see an increase in the infrastructure for logistics from the U.S. side in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania that would help us with rapid reinforcement and with the strategic effect of having Americans continuously in all three Baltic countries. We could also pre-position ammunition and fuel, those things necessary to enhance speed. I like the idea of having mobile, short-range air defense units deployed in all three Baltic countries as some sort of mobile tripwire. This would make it more difficult for Russia to attempt a strike. In addition, we need to continue practicing the movement of Patriot surface-to-air missiles around different countries as we did in the last couple of years. Finally, I think we need to make the conversion from air policing to air defense.

**Q: From a problem definition point of view, the fundamental challenge the latest National Defense Strategy identifies is the eroding U.S. military advantage with regard to China and Russia that undermines what is called the American way of war. What are, from a European theater perspective, the key ingredients developed by the other side designed to offset the American way of war?**

**A:** First, the American way of war relies on allies and coalitions. Foremost, our capability and strength really come in part from this wonderful alliance, from the fact of always having partners that go with us and bring additional capabilities. That is very important. In this context, Russia and China both are constantly looking for ways of splitting that cohesion with disinformation, with cyber, trade — with finding ways of creating friction, tension and distrust inside the Alliance and the EU.

Another aspect of the American way of war is that we have always relied so much on air power and sea power. Russia and China have developed significant A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) capabilities that would limit, at least for a period, our ability to fully employ all our air and sea power potential. They've developed military capabilities, systems and doctrines aimed at undermining the American way of projecting power to defend U.S. allies' interests. Credible air defense layers and anti-ship missiles are part of their asymmetric approach in countering the American way of war.

Thirdly, at the tactical level, the Russians have worked very hard making improvements in their electronic warfare (EW) and UAV capabilities. As an alliance, we must be prepared to operate in an environment that is very competitive in terms of cyber and EW threats.

**Q: The latest National Security Strategy emphasizes that the key feature of the operational environment is the era of great power (multi-domain) competitions. Has the U.S. government developed the right whole-of-government machinery at the theater level to compete across political, economic and military arenas? What about NATO?**

**A:** I think the improving collaboration between NATO and the EU is an important part of that. One is a security alliance, the other one is a political/economic institution. So, you must have collaboration there to really be able to project a whole-of-government approach, including information, diplomacy and economic tools. Inside the U.S.,

it has to start at the top. There are a lot of smart people who understand that, certainly in the U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and his staff understand it and all the combatant commanders know this. Frankly, I think that the Department of State does not get enough resources to do its job, and that undermines our effort. The Department of State has got to be better resourced to accomplish its tasks. This is an area where there is a wide margin for improvement.

**Q: How would you characterize the Russian way of war in Europe — the objectives of the Russian disruptive strategy?**

**A:** Russia's strategic objective is to be seen as the great power in Europe. To do that, they have to undermine, disrupt, divide, make irrelevant the Alliance and undermine the EU. The way they do that with the EU is using energy resources as leverage. The Nord Stream 2 pipeline is causing a lot of tension and friction inside EU member countries, and Russia knows this. A fully operational Nord Stream 2 would give Russia much more influence inside European countries. This type of pressure is part of their way of war. I don't think Russia thinks of themselves as at war or not at war. They are constantly in confrontation mode — sometimes it is kinetic with the military, sometimes it is economic or informational. All these things in combination are how they do this. They don't need the capability to conquer. To undermine the Alliance, they just need to successfully take part of an allied country. They still believe they are entitled to buffers, to a sphere of influence — Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova

are examples. This is accomplished by making sure these countries cannot join the EU or NATO, or by putting an A2/AD bubble near them — in this way they can influence. All these elements are part of Russia's way of war. We have just to think together, continue adapting and build a strong deterrence.

**Q: What should be some of the crucial elements of a potential area-access strategy to preserve NATO's access to the frontline allies?**

**A:** The Alliance is going in this direction. There is a word I keep hearing: coherence. The adaptation initiative that is coming out, including the establishment of a

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Fighter jets and a helicopter sit on the deck of China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, as it sails into Hong Kong. China is integrating stealth fighters into its air force and developing an array of missiles able to attack air and sea targets at great distances. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



*“The Alliance is going in this direction. There is a word I keep hearing: coherence. The adaptation initiative that is coming out, including the establishment of a Joint Sustainment and Enabling Command that would be based in Germany that is not only for the reinforcement of Lithuania, but for the entire Alliance.”*



Joint Sustainment and Enabling Command that would be based in Germany that is not only for the reinforcement of Lithuania, but for the entire Alliance. I think, overall, the Alliance is looking to be more coherent in all of its planning, capabilities and adaptation initiatives. What stitches all of this together is infrastructure — rail, highways, pipelines, fiber networks that allow fuel, communications and movement. What we need is a framework of infrastructure that provides the Alliance the ability to move quickly, provide logistics anywhere needed. Napoleon had a series of magazines, depots along the realms that he would take during his campaigns. In that way he always had ammunition and equipment in places around Europe that would enable him to maneuver. We need a modern version with a vibrant network, fuel pipelines, improved rail and highways, seaports and airfields that would allow us to do this. This network is vital for an area-access strategy. I think that to encourage this, countries should get credit toward their 2 percent (gross domestic product NATO contribution) if they build or improve infrastructure that has real military value, even if it serves a dual use. A pipeline could carry commercial and military fuel. Countries seeking business and commerce could all benefit from improved dual-use rail, roads and bridges. To encourage a country like Germany to do this, it should count toward the 2 percent.

**Q: What is your main takeaway from the latest NATO summit in Brussels? What remains to be done?**

**A:** There was real substance achieved and delivered leading up to and during the summit. The command adaptation with the two new commands, the 4X30, the continued improvement of cooperation between NATO and the European Union, the continued emphasis on military mobility, the recognition that Georgia is closer to membership. Despite the nearly complete public focus on the issue of 2 percent and burden sharing, at the end of the day we still had a commitment by the allies to continue investing in security as well as several other tangible accomplishments. This shows the resilience and adaptability of the Alliance and why it will remain the most successful alliance ever.

I think people should start thinking about burden sharing in a more sophisticated way. What does the 2 percent actually mean? The current metric is useful in a political sort of way, but it is not very useful in a practical operational sense. We need to look at burden sharing in a way that delivers what the Alliance needs. In my view, the Alliance needs improved infrastructure for speed and military mobility, improved air and missile

Georgians stand before a monument to victims of the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia during a wreath laying ceremony in Tbilisi, Georgia, in 2018. Russia believes it is entitled to a sphere of influence over neighboring countries. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

defense — particularly in areas like the wider Black Sea and the greater Baltic Sea region. The Alliance needs to continue working toward coherence of all the operational plans. SACEUR (supreme allied commander Europe) is leading the way here and we made huge progress, but this is an area that needs continued effort to improve the coherence of how the Alliance deters. Finally, the Alliance needs to continue to focus on overall readiness. The Bundeswehr and other allies have got to improve the level of readiness of their equipment and of their units. Secretary Mattis is always emphasizing readiness. It is in the culture of the U.S. Department of Defense.

**Q: Are there concerns with how NATO deals with the A2/AD domes/bubbles at the fringe of allied territory? On the Eastern Flank, we see the emphasis on developing IAMD (integrated air and missile defense systems), on investing in national porcupine postures, while at the alliance level, there is increased focus on multidomain reinforcement and on increasing speed and readiness. Is this enough? The whole effort seems to favor a deterrence-by-denial posture. What is missing is the deterrence-by-punishment piece. Shouldn't this focus be balanced? Shouldn't we talk also about the right ways to dismantle, neutralize and be able to operate inside a competitor's access denial bubble?**

**A:** Key in countering the A2/AD capabilities that Russia has installed in Kaliningrad and Crimea (and they are also attempting to establish a similar capability in the Arctic, closer to the border with Norway) is to understand that these places are bastions, but they are not impregnable. We need to continue to understand what capabilities they have, what vulnerabilities they have.

We need to emphasize freedom of the seas and freedom of movement in the Baltic and Black seas and in the Arctic. The world's greatest Navy needs to push back against Russian harassment and interference with shipping. We are going to have to improve both the air and missile defense protection around both of these regions to be able to neutralize their long-range missile capability. Ultimately, solutions will require our own EW capabilities to counter their significant capabilities. It will always be a joint solution between land, air, maritime and cyber forces. Finally, we should continue to highlight what Russia is doing in the information space. The Russians passed a law acknowledging that Crimea is part of Russia since the time of Catherine the Great. What this tells us is that they have no intention of leaving Crimea. The West needs to continue to highlight their intransigence and unwillingness to be truthful and honest in their negotiations. □

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