

**Chairman Jerry Moran Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction,  
Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies**

**Hearing titled “United States European Command: Theater Assessment  
and European Reassurance Initiative Progress”**

**May 2, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

The Subcommittee will come to order. Good afternoon. We are joined today by General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, the Commander of United States European Command and the NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

Our nation was founded based on our complex relationships with European countries. The complexity of our relationships regarding military support was specifically developed due to alliances and Allied powers of World War II, leading to the first U.S. military headquarters in Europe in 1942 and in 1944 designating an official command structure with then-Major General Dwight D. Eisenhower, as the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe – a title now held by our witness today. You could say that Kansans have had oversight of the U.S. military presence in Europe since its inception.

Looking at the last 25 years, Europe has been a continent in transition. From the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the expansion of NATO, and now the resurgence of Russia asserting its aggressive global power, European Command has had to adapt to a new reality of instability and uncertainty, forcing us to examine our partnerships and relationships with the 51 countries within the command’s area of responsibility.

The new reality must also take into account that despite the recent rise in turmoil and tension, we have reduced our footprint in Europe over the last 30 years. In 1989, the Army had 213,000 troops stationed at 858 sites in Europe. Today, the Army has 26,000 troops at about 80 sites.

Two years ago, DoD announced the results of its European Infrastructure Consolidation (EIC) study, resulting in the closure or divestiture of more than 15 sites throughout the continent and a decrease of 2,000 U.S. personnel, both military and civilian. Ironically, the results of this consolidation study were released about 11 months after “Little Green Men” who bore close resemblance to Russian soldiers began appearing in Crimea. This prompted the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI), a plan to bring more U.S. troops back to Europe.

At first, ERI was supposed to be a one-time, \$1 billion response to Russian activities in Crimea and Ukraine. Last year, the ERI request more than quadrupled, to a total of more than \$3.4 billion. This is clearly now an enduring mission focused both on reassuring our allies as well as deterring further Russian aggression. For example, you call for increased Army Brigade Combat Team rotations, and I recently learned that Big Red One soldiers out of Fort Riley, Kansas, are deploying this fall in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve.

Committing more U.S. troops will come at a price and military construction will play an important role in optimizing our presence and readiness in Central and Eastern Europe.

This committee anticipates the FY 2018 budget will include increased funding for ERI, including a significant increase in military construction funding. As such, it is important for the committee to better understand the progress made thus far in ERI and the geopolitical climate in the theater.

The risks and challenges are prevalent throughout the European Command area of responsibility – from Russian positioning in the High North to violent extremists and transnational vulnerabilities in the South. If we return to this historical posture in Europe, how do we make certain our Armed Forces are sufficiently protected, that they do not become targets for terrorists?

Though our attention has been drawn to the East, particularly with North Korean missile launches as was the case on Friday, we must be ready for to face what many describe as our nation's greatest threat – Russia.

General Scaparrotti, your testimony today is timely and I welcome you to our subcommittee. Today's hearing is an opportunity to examine your planning, priorities and investments – with people and with infrastructure – that you foresee today and years from today in Europe.

###