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DEFENCE AND SECURITY
COMMITTEE

REINFORCING NATO'S DETERRENCE IN THE EAST

DRAFT GENERAL REPORT*

Joseph A. DAY (Canada)
General Rapporteur

* Until this document has been adopted by the Defence and Security Committee, it only represents the views of the General Rapporteur.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. INTRODUCTION 1
- II. NATO'S NEW SECURITY CONTEXT..... 1
 - A. NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS DRIVING EASTERN DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE RECALIBRATION..... 2
 - B. DISRUPTIVE DOCTRINE AND MILITARY MODERNIZATION VIEWED MORE CLOSELY 2
- III. CHANGES TO NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POSTURE – EAST 3
- IV. THE EFP AND TRIPWIRE DETERRENCE 4
- V. THE TAILORED FORWARD PRESENCE 5
 - US EUROPEAN DETERRENCE INITIATIVE..... 6
- VI. BARRIERS TO ENTRY – THE CHALLENGES OF DEFENDING THE EAST 6
 - A. RUSSIAN REGIONAL A2/AD CAPABILITIES 6
 - B. THE ZAPAD 2017 EXERCISE..... 7
- VII. NATO'S KEY REMAINING HURDLES: MILITARY MOBILITY AND DEFENCE INVESTMENTS 8
- VIII. INTERIM CONCLUSIONS 10
- BIBLIOGRAPHY 12

I. INTRODUCTION

1. NATO's most conspicuous steps to adapt its defence and deterrence posture since 2014 are being taken in the Alliance's eastern European territories. Increased Allied presence in the form of rotating forces, equipment stockpiles, and exercises is supposed to change the balance of conventional forces to deter a resurgent, revisionist, and increasingly capable Russia. This draft report will review and assess the Alliance's 'tripwire' deterrence via the establishment of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, as well as the Tailored Forward Presence (TFP) in the Black Sea region.

2. Increased Alliance presence in both regions is meant to signal the credibility of the Alliance's post-2014 defence and deterrence posture – which includes the balance of conventional and nuclear forces, as well as missile defence and arms control initiatives. Significant contributions from the United States and Canada underscore the transatlantic security imperative of the efforts to reinforce the Alliance's eastern flank. According to officials at NATO HQ, the EFP and TFP are intended to communicate Alliance cohesion and capability in the face of an evolving threat to Alliance populations and territory.

3. As this draft report highlights, the current configuration of conventional forces in the Alliance's eastern territories remains insufficient. In the instance of a contingency in any region along the eastern flank, particularly in the Baltic States, the Alliance would be at pains to reinforce any operation to repel an invading force and return the area to the *status quo ante*. This is due to two critical remaining challenges: first, the ability to move necessary military equipment and personnel to and across the region due to cumbersome bureaucratic and logistical hurdles; and second, the lack of a sufficient number of European member states high-readiness rapid reaction forces currently available for deployment in the event of a crisis.

4. Russia has neither of these problems and can bring overwhelming force and manpower to bear upon the region quickly. Russia has the advantage of efficient internal lines of communication and a restructured brigade-focused army, which permits rapid deployment. In addition, Russian modernization allows these forces near-peer capabilities in firepower and mobility, as well as air defence systems.

5. The Alliance is taking steps to overcome these critical hurdles. Last fall, NATO HQ announced the creation of two new commands in the Atlantic and Europe. Both will assist with the coordination of the movement of troops across the Atlantic and within Europe. In addition, the United States is increasing its investment in the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) and Allies are increasingly investing in the personnel and equipment needed to make the current rebalancing of conventional forces available for NATO's defence and deterrence posture. More still needs to be done.

6. This paper continues the Defence and Security Committee's reporting on NATO's evolving post-2014 adaptation, which has followed the Alliance's reconsiderations of the proper weight to be given to its mix of forces comprising its deterrence and defence posture. NATO's ability to reinforce its conventional capabilities along the eastern flank remains a vital security concern.

II. NATO'S NEW SECURITY CONTEXT

7. As this Committee discusses frequently, the Alliance's eastern and southern flanks are new sources of threat, instability, and potential conflict. As NATO SACEUR, General Scaparotti told the delegation at the Joint Committee Meetings in February: "We now have to manage crises, stabilize, and defend in an environment shaped, manipulated, and stressed by strategic challenges. The two principal challenges we face are Russia and violent extremism. Both have strategic destabilization efforts that go after the foundation of our security and target its key institutions. They attempt to turn

the strengths of democracy into weaknesses.” The recent buzzword for this in NATO HQ briefings is the commitment to 360-degree security in a complex and distributed environment.

A. NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS DRIVING EASTERN DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE RECALIBRATION

8. NATO-Russian relations are hovering close to historic lows. Russia’s annexation of Crimea unleashed escalating tit-for-tat sanctions, dangerous rhetoric, and acrimonious distrust. As a result, brinkmanship is at its highest levels since the Cold War (Frear, Kulesa and Kearns 2014; Boulègue, 2018).

9. The size, scope, and pace of Russian military modernization, a change in military doctrine, and aggressive nuclear rhetoric and conventional military actions are critical variables driving NATO’s defence and deterrence posture in the eastern part of the Alliance (NATO Warsaw Declaration, 2016). Russian saber-rattling via ongoing operations in Ukraine and Syria, large-scale ‘snap’ military exercises against the ‘spirit of the Vienna Document’, and disruptive military activities in the seas along the Alliance’s eastern flank from the Baltic to the Black Sea are also highlighted in the official Warsaw Summit Declaration.

10. The deployment of modern anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities along NATO’s eastern flank also gives Russia the potential to reduce or even block Allied freedom of movement within its own territories and water spaces.

11. In the interim, Russian interference in Western democratic processes via election manipulation is a point of contention and division in many Allies’ domestic political discussions – the United States’ Presidential election being a particularly acute example. Cyber interference is now one of the ways in which Russia is continuing its long history of political interference. In addition, for years, Russia has used its supply and control of natural resources to bully its neighbors.

12. As the past four years have demonstrated, Russia is ready to use any means available – from hybrid tactics, to conventional operations, to nuclear menacing – to leverage its power over the Alliance. Ultimately, its goal is to break Allied consensus and reduce Washington’s say in the future of European security.

B. DISRUPTIVE DOCTRINE AND MILITARY MODERNIZATION VIEWED MORE CLOSELY

13. NATO officials point to Russia’s changed military doctrine and military modernization as particular drivers of the Alliance’s defence and deterrence posture changes in the Eastern territories.

Doctrinal Shift

14. In 2014, a few months after the intervention in Ukraine, Russia published its new military doctrine. The document marks a fundamental change of direction in Russian foreign policy. While Russia’s 2010 military doctrine openly contemplated cooperation with NATO, four years later, the updated doctrine considers the Alliance as a *de facto* competitor. In particular, it highlights NATO’s activities in Central and Eastern Europe as a threat to Russian national interests (Sinovets and Renz, 2015). It notes the intention to increase Russian efforts to protect Russian interests in its immediate neighborhood, moving from the Arctic down through Eastern Europe to the Black and Caspian Seas.

15. Russian military modernization, exercises, and rhetoric in recent years confirm this shift in strategy.

Russia's Increasingly Modernized, High-Readiness, Deployable Forces

16. As reported in this Committee before, Russia continues its now decade-long concerted effort to build a modern, professional, and high-readiness suite of armed forces. Increased investment is impacting the quality of the forces dramatically.

17. The Russian army of 2018 is a far cry from that of 2008. After relatively hobbled performances in the Caucasus during the first two decades after the demise of the Soviet Union, particularly the Georgian War of 2008, Russia instituted a massive military reform project. In addition to structural reforms, a massive arms procurement policy, the State Armaments Programme (SAP), has reversed decades of decline and significantly improved the Russian military's ability to sustain firepower and to maneuver over time and distance (Giles and Monaghan, 2014; IISS, 2018). Russian defence spending increased 16-fold in nominal terms from 2000-2015 (IISS, 2015). In recent years, Russia has consistently dedicated between 3-4% of its GDP toward force modernization (IISS, 2018).

18. Though military spending was somewhat slowed in recent years due to the sanctions-stressed Russian economy and depressed global oil and gas prices¹, Russia now fields very capable land, air, and sea forces. New Russian equipment has increased the ability for precision strikes at distance, state-of-the-art air defence systems and highly-mobile and powerful equipment, for example the SU-57 5th generation stealth fighter, the T-14 *Armata* tank and the dual-use *Iskander* tactical ballistic missile systems, among others (IISS, 2018; RAND, 2018).

19. Restructuring is making the Russian army more brigade-focused, which allows for quicker mobility. In addition, the number of volunteer (or contract) soldiers has increased dramatically – up to approximately 360,000 out of a total of about 900,000 personnel in the armed services (IISS, 2018; Golts, 2017). The professionalization of the army allows for a larger number of units to be ready for short-notice deployment. Russia has also reinforced its Western Military District, sending units from its inner regions and activating new armored, infantry, artillery, and air defence formations – the Western District now bases up to 400,000 forces, approximately 80,000 of which are within close proximity to the Baltic States (RAND, 2018; IISS, 2015).

20. Finally, the Russian military has been training its forces via large-scale 'snap' exercises, which emphasize sustaining combined-force operational scenarios over time and distance. These exercises have been augmented by the real battlefield experiences of combined arms operations in both Ukraine and Syria, where Russia is not only testing troop readiness, but also the efficacy of its new, modern weapons systems.

III. CHANGES TO NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POSTURE – EAST

21. NATO responded to Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea by revamping the NATO Response Force (NRF) via the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), which sought to scale the number of forces capable of responding to a contingency to 40,000 and to make them more flexible and adaptable, with the objective of guaranteeing rapid reinforcement and mobility. After its reform, the NRF contains air, land, maritime and Special Operations Forces (SOF) components.

22. The RAP also established the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) as the spearhead of the NRF, capable of deploying 5,000 brigade-level troops within two to seven days' notice to the

¹ Oil and gas revenues surpass 35% of Russia's annual budget, up from only 9% in 2000. See, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Russia: International Energy Analysis and Data, October 31, 2017. www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.cfm?iso=RUS

periphery of the Alliance. At the same time, NATO Allies held land, sea and air military exercises, from the Baltics to the Black Sea region, and established new air and maritime policing missions².

23. By 2016, Allies recognized the necessity of larger-scale adaptation across the Alliance to create a more modern mobile and dynamic deterrence posture to face the realities of a far more complex security environment.

24. In light of continued deterioration in NATO-Russia relations, NATO Allies decided at the July 2016 Warsaw Summit to further strengthen the Alliance's posture in order to deter potential adversaries from using force against NATO member countries. In Warsaw, NATO adopted the Enhanced Forward Presence in Poland and the Baltic States and the Tailored Forward Presence in the Black Sea region. During the Warsaw Summit, then-US President Barack Obama committed to use US defence funds in reassurance and support of the European allies' defence efforts, referred to as the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI).

IV. THE EFP AND TRIPWIRE DETERRENCE

25. NATO's EFP consists of the deployment of four rotating multinational battlegroups, stationed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. These forces are drawn from 17 different NATO member states under the lead of four framework nations: Canada in Latvia, Germany in Lithuania, the United Kingdom in Estonia, and the United States in Poland. The four battlegroups are under NATO command as they report to a new multinational division headquarters based in the Polish 16th Mechanized Division in Elblag, which will in turn answer to the Multinational Corps Northeast Headquarters in Szczecin in Poland. The four battlegroups became fully operational on 28 August 2017 after the completion of all certification exercises (CERTEx).

26. From a conventional power perspective, the deployed battalions are clearly insufficient to defend against a large-scale, conventional Russian offensive, a point driven home to the Defence and Security Committee during its table exercise with members of the RAND Corporation research staff during its January 2017 visit to Washington.

27. The table exercise summarized the findings of the RAND Corporation's study on NATO's ability to repel a concerted attack on the Baltic States. According to the study, the longest it would take Russian forces to reach either Tallinn or Riga would be 60 hours. As RAND Corporation researchers told Defence and Security Committee members, despite efforts to bolster the Alliance's deterrence posture in the region in terms of forces and equipment, NATO would in fact need about 35,000 soldiers already on the ground and with much better equipment, such as air defence systems and heavy armour, to thwart a serious Russian invasion – today's EFP rotating battalions only interpose approximately 4,400 troops at any given time.

28. While perhaps insufficient as standalone forces in the instance of a full-scale attack by Russia in the region, the EFP instead serves as a tripwire for a whole-of-alliance Article 5 response in the instance of an aggressor's potential action against any Allied territory and/or populations. Ultimately, the EFP seeks to bolster the credibility of the Alliance's deterrence posture in what had been perceived as a strategically vulnerable part of the Alliance.

² This Committee addressed in greater detail the impact of the decision in the previous report, *NATO's Readiness Action Plan: Assurance and Deterrence For The Post-2014 Security Environment*, by Xavier Pintat, [167 DSCFC 15 E bis].

V. THE TAILORED FORWARD PRESENCE

29. At the Warsaw Summit, NATO also established the Tailored Forward Presence in the Black Sea region. Based on a proposal by Romania, the TFP bolsters NATO's presence in the land, air and maritime domains (Romania's Permanent Delegation to NATO, 2017).

30. The NATO PA was reminded of the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea during the 2017 Annual Session in Bucharest, as NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg promised to step up NATO's efforts for projecting stability in the whole region. On that occasion, he stressed the TFP was a direct response to Russia's illegal activities in Ukraine.

31. The land component of the TFP includes a multinational brigade in Craiova and a Combined Joint Enhanced Training Initiative (CJET). The Multinational NATO South-East Brigade reached Initial Operational Capability in April 2017 and was officially inaugurated on 9 October 2017. The core of this multinational formation is the Romanian 2nd "Rovine" Infantry Brigade, a brigade of up to 4,000 soldiers³, which is complemented by a separate deployment of 900 US troops already in place (Emmott, 2017). The CJET is a regional platform for cooperation, aimed at ensuring a continuous Allied presence in the region, through participation in exercises and training activities.

32. The TFP's maritime component involves integrated training and more exercises with the participation of the NATO Standing Naval Forces. An example of the TFP's Black Sea maritime efforts is the July 2017 multinational maritime exercise Sea Breeze, which included assets from the Standing NATO Maritime Group Two Task Unit Two (SNMG2 TU.02)⁴ and other maritime assets from both Allied and partner states. The exercise played out both in the Black Sea and on Ukrainian territory with the participation of Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Georgia, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States.

33. The TFP's air component, NATO's enhanced Air Policing (eAP), is manned by rotating Allied forces patrolling the Romanian and Bulgarian airspace. On 31 December 2017, Canada concluded its four-month contribution to the eAP, after having deployed approximately 135 Canadian Armed Forces personnel and four CF-188 Hornets at the Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base in Romania. During the mission, ATF-Romania, Canadian Air Forces also participated in joint training exercises with their Romanian counterparts, demonstrating their readiness in terms of medical support, flight safety, aircraft maintenance, command and control, and policing (Strong, 2018).

34. At the NATO defence ministerial meeting held in Brussels on 8-9 November 2017, the United Kingdom announced the decision to redeploy four RAF Typhoons to work with Romania to police the Black Sea skies on a permanent basis (Wills, 2017). The decision came right after two Typhoon jets were scrambled in September to monitor Russian planes heading towards British airspace; a similar incident occurred in January 2018 (Hartley-Parkinson, 2018). In July 2017, RAF Typhoons scrambled in response to Russian Federation Air Force Tu-22 Backfire strategic bombers heading south near NATO air space over the Black Sea.

³ Aka Scorpions Brigade, previously deployed in Afghanistan and in Iraq

⁴ SNMG2 is one of NATO's four Standing NATO Maritime Groups (SNMGs). The SNMGs are a multinational, integrated maritime force made up of vessels from various Allied countries. These vessels (including their helicopters) are permanently available to NATO to perform different tasks ranging from participating in exercises to actually intervening in operational missions. <http://www.mc.nato.int/media-centre/news/2016/nato-and-partner-country-forces-participate-in-exercise-sea-breeze.aspx>

US European deterrence initiative

35. The Trump administration's December 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS) defines the current international security environment as one of global competition at all levels. In the document, Russia is identified as seeking peer-rival status vis-à-vis the United States. The document underscores that an important line of effort to counter this is to build stronger alliances. The NSS emphasizes Washington's desire to remain active in Europe: "A strong and free Europe is of vital importance to the United States" (NSS, 2017).

36. US policymakers also attempted to lay to rest any lingering doubts in delegation members' minds about the United States' Article 5 commitment during the Defence and Security Committee's most recent visit. As Thomas Goffus, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for European and NATO Policy, confirmed: "The United States' Article 5 guarantee is iron-clad." Goffus continued by stating that the United States would focus on the European Deterrence Initiative during the upcoming summit in Brussels: "Deterrence is what we do together, rather than the US-focused European Reassurance Initiative, as the EDI was previously known."

37. The United States recently announced a planned allocation of USD 6.5 billion to the EDI in 2019, a USD 1.7 billion increase from last year, and USD 3.1 billion more than was allocated in 2017.

38. The ERI/EDI has funded a significant increase in US presence in Eastern Europe, which supports more exercises, infrastructure, equipment repositioning, and partner capacity development efforts. In many ways, the proof of US commitment is in the USD 10+ billion already spent or planned to reinforce Allied defence and deterrence in Europe.

39. The EDI includes plans for additional forces, prepositioned brigade sets, and other support assets in Europe, with the increased number of forces coming from the combination of additional forces and the deferral of previously planned force reductions. It also provides support for an additional armored brigade combat team (ABCT). The EDI, therefore, funds the maintenance of two ABCTs, two Fires Brigades, air defence, engineer, movement control, sustainment and medical units in the region, which would be sufficient to sustain a division (US DOD, 2018).

40. During the February 2018 Defence and Security Committee meetings held in Brussels, briefers reiterated the United States' commitment to Europe is strong and a paralleled surge in defence investment is now expected from the United States' European Allies.

VI. BARRIERS TO ENTRY – THE CHALLENGES OF DEFENDING THE EAST

A. RUSSIAN REGIONAL A2/AD CAPABILITIES

41. From a conventional tactical point of view, NATO's tripwire deterrence relies heavily on reinforcements being deployed from the center to the periphery of the Alliance on short notice. Even if the decision to deploy the NRF and its VJTF is taken in due time, Russia could easily outmatch NATO's forces by simply denying them freedom of movement to and inside the targeted area through the effective use of its anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities (Baroudos, 2016).

42. Russia is in the process of fielding an impressive variety of A2/AD systems in and around the Baltic Sea region, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the Barents Sea. When fully operational, these systems will substantially limit NATO's ability to reinforce Allies by land, air, and sea (NATO STO, 2017). Already by mid-2016, the Russian Federation had introduced air defence, coastal defence, electronic warfare capabilities as well as ballistic missiles in Kaliningrad, in Syria, and later in Crimea (IISS, 2017). Russia's A2/AD exclusion areas were extended with the deployment of the S-400 air defence system to Syria in November 2015 and to Crimea in August 2016; each has a range of up to 250 miles. Advanced Russian air defence is also operated

in cooperation with Belarus and Armenia through the Joint Air Defence System (Weinberger, 2017). According to the Lithuanian Minister of Defence Raimundas Karoblis, Russia has also permanently deployed *Iskander* missiles in Kaliningrad (AFP, 2018).

43. The TFP serves as a means of monitoring the evolution of Russia's A2/AD capabilities in and around the region. This is especially true considering that Romania is home to the Aegis Ashore Ballistic Missile Defense site. The NATO Science and Technology Organization (NATO STO) is currently conducting an analysis on Russian A2/AD capabilities in order to address existing vulnerabilities (NATO STO, 2017).

44. In particular, given their geographical location, the three battlegroups deployed in the Baltic States could be completely cut off behind the Russian A2/AD wall. As noted by the Defence and Security Committee, the only pin that would be able to burst a Russian A2/AD bubble in the Baltic Sea is the Swedish island of Gotland.

45. In September 2017, Sweden held its biggest military exercise since the early 1990s. Aurora-17 involved 19,000 Swedish soldiers and a foreign contingent of seven NATO countries (the United States, Denmark, Estonia, France, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway), plus Finland. The objective of the exercise was the defence of the Swedish island of Gotland from an attack coming from territories roughly corresponding to Kaliningrad and Belarus (Winnerstig, 2017). After the exercise, after decades of absence, Sweden decided to leave a permanent contingent on the island. Commenting on this decision, former US Army Europe Commander General Ben Hodges reaffirmed Sweden's and Gotland's importance for NATO: "You have a strategically very important task here. I do not think there is any island anywhere that is more important" (The Local, 2017).

B. THE ZAPAD 2017 EXERCISE

46. Aurora-17 was held a few days before the start of Russia's large-scale military exercise Zapad 2017. While Russia holds yearly large-scale exercises⁵, there are several factors which made this year's exercise worthy of further consideration, starting from the symbolic value of being its first exercise held in the West – specifically in Belarus and in Russia's Kaliningrad oblast – since 2013, therefore after the intervention in Ukraine and the deteriorated relations with NATO (IISS, 2018).

47. Russia was deliberately vague about the number of troops and equipment actually deployed for the exercise, putting the official number at 12,700 personnel. The number is just short of the 13,000 threshold which would oblige the presence of international observers according to the 2011 Vienna OSCE Document. While Belarus had indeed invited a small number of observers (reportedly, with limited access), Russia left a cloud of mystery over the number of its personnel in Kaliningrad. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) estimates the total number of personnel deployed in both Belarusian and Russian territory was around 50,000-60,000, certainly more than what was declared by Russia, but far less than the 100,000 estimated by American and European sources before the exercise (IISS, 2018).

48. Russian Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu described the exercise as a counterinsurgency operation against extremist groups, which could count on logistics assistance and military hardware coming by air and sea from outside parties. Russia tested, *inter alia*, its ability to put up an A2/AD wall with its air defence capabilities; reportedly, it was successful. In addition to a conventional component, Russia also added asymmetric components to the exercise, testing its ability to repel diversionary-reconnaissance groups, like Russia's own little green men, and counter-electronic warfare. As the exercise continued, counterinsurgency efforts transitioned to a conventional conflict (IISS, 2018; Boulègue, 2017). Some analysts have underscored the significance of this, as Russia tends to rehearse tactics it plans to deploy later in a real scenario. For example, Russia tested the

⁵ Russia's policy is to rotate yearly the regional focus of its exercises; other than Zapad, which literally translates as West, there are also Kavkaz (Caucasus), Tsentr (Center) and Vostok (East).

use of its *Spetsnaz* (Special Forces) during the 2013 exercise; these were a crucial element to the annexation of Crimea (Mizokami, 2017).

49. Moscow was also deliberately ambiguous about whether any Russian troops or equipment stayed behind after the exercise. The Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Viktor Muzhenko made public his suspicion that Russia had withdrawn only a small part of the troops deployed in Belarus (Williams and Polityuk, 2017).

50. While some observers feared Russia could have used Zapad to test NATO's resolve by using it to mask an offensive manoeuvre, the exercise ended without incident (Luik and Praks, 2017). Such concerns were, however, reflected in the run-up and in the immediate aftermath of the exercise, as three different countries ran simultaneous exercises: Sweden had the already mentioned exercise in Gotland; Poland organized the Dragon-17 exercise, with as many as 17,000 troops coming from nine NATO countries as well as from Ukraine and Georgia (Lasconjarias and Dycka, 2017). Meanwhile, the president of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, announced a reinforced military presence at the Ukraine-Belarus border (UNIAN, 2017).

51. The main takeaways from Zapad are twofold. First, despite NATO reassurances after 2016, Russia successfully instilled fear throughout the region, playing the ambiguity card in the run up to the exercise. Second, Russia showed its capacity to conduct not only asymmetrical or hybrid operations, but also conventional warfare operations. The successful show of A2/AD capabilities warns NATO that the costs of reaching an area behind a similar wall would be extremely high (Boulègue, 2017).

VII. NATO'S KEY REMAINING HURDLES: MILITARY MOBILITY AND DEFENCE INVESTMENTS

Military Mobility

52. During the Cold War, ensuring the mobility of troops and equipment was a priority and was constantly reviewed during frequent exercises. Cold War infrastructure included readiness for support, command and control, as well as for destruction, denial, and diversion. It also incorporated multi-layered communication lines, hardened storage for ammunition and fuel, and a central and northern European pipeline to bring fuel to forward operating bases. While some of this infrastructure still exists today, it is only able to reach to the frontier of NATO's Cold War borders (Jacobson, 2018). As NATO moved its borders further east attention to infrastructure and connectivity with the new members did not follow (Nováky, 2017). Today, NATO faces two main military mobility problems; the first concerns infrastructure itself, the other legal regulations.

53. Today, the Alliance has significant infrastructural deficiencies. First, it lacks the necessary infrastructure to transport modern military equipment at speed over long distances due to critical shortages in rolling stock to load and unload along the rail lines of communication. In addition, there is insufficient material for military bridging. Infrastructure in certain states is not physically able to sustain the weight of state-of-the-art military vehicles and is in urgent need of modernization. In the Baltics, for example, the rail gauge shifts at the Polish border (Jacobson, 2018).

54. The Alliance also faces significant bureaucratic delays at member state borders to clear the transfer of equipment and forces. General Ben Hodges was particularly outspoken about his unhappiness with the current bureaucratic ordeal concerning the movement of troops at border crossings. He noted the irony of having a very high readiness force and then not being able to move it fast enough because of bureaucracy (Schultz, 2017). During the February Joint Committee Meetings, NATO PA members learned that cumbersome bureaucratic regulations are in place even in the so-called Suwalki gap, the thin strip of land which constitutes the border between Poland and Lithuania. It was estimated that, even working 24 hours a day and not taking unforeseen problems

into account, it could take weeks to move a considerable number of vehicles across the border (Schultz, 2017).

55. Establishing a more coherent and straightforward legal framework – often informally referred to as a “Military Schengen Zone” – should go hand in hand with infrastructure modernization. At this point in time, the abovementioned troop and equipment border transfer requests can even be unexpectedly denied (EEAS, November 2017). While the issue has been badly neglected, there are consistent joint efforts that should be able to deliver significant results in a relatively short period of time.

56. First, in November 2017, NATO agreed to update its command structure. One of the key innovations is the establishment of a Command for Logistics, Reinforcement and Military Mobility, which Germany offered to host. It should serve as the Alliance’s central hub for the transfer of equipment and personnel into the Alliance’s eastern territory. Furthermore, modernizing infrastructure to improve military readiness is identified as one of the objectives of the EDI, which dedicates USD 337.8 million of the 2018 budget to it, and over USD 800 million in 2019. A second new command will do the same for the Atlantic space, allowing for the smooth transition of personnel and equipment in the event of a major contingency in Europe.

57. Second, better institutional cooperation between NATO and the EU is essential.

NATO-EU Cooperation Needed To Solve The Problem

58. In December 2017, addressing existing barriers to military mobility at the legal and infrastructure levels was identified as an area of cooperation between the EU and NATO (Council of the EU, 2017). Within the EU, military mobility is likely to become the first flagship initiative of the EU-led Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), as EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini vows to have an action plan for military mobility ready by March 2018 (European Council, 2017; EU Commission, November 2017).

59. The European Union identified improving the resilience of transport infrastructure as a key element in countering hybrid threats; as such, it is a fundamental part of the EU-NATO cooperation framework (EU Commission, July 2017). Cooperation with the EU is necessary in order to map out existing legislation concerning the movement of troops. Indeed, military equipment is currently excluded by the customs union; as such, military mobility is still regulated by a complex mix of NATO, EU, and national regulations, which leads to uncertainties and significant delays (Fiott, 2017).

A Weakness Exposed – NATO’s Northeastern Flank

60. As noted above, in January 2017, RAND Corporation political scientists told the Defence and Security Committee that NATO’s capabilities, posture, and capacity to defeat a Russian attack on the Baltic States with its conventional land and air forces were too weak to return the region to the *status quo* without serious conflict escalation. While the EFP, VJTF, and US EDI have certainly changed the balance of forces calculations, these remain insufficient when considering Russia’s advantages that persist, particularly in the Baltic area.

Russian Local Advantages Remain Significant

61. NATO’s focus on out-of-area stability operations after the Cold War, particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, diverted attention from heavy combined arms capabilities, artillery, and missile defence (RAND, 2018). This trend, coupled with the cuts to defence spending and investment, has hollowed out the conventional capabilities of most European forces, which compromises the ability

to reinforce or sustain deployed forces⁶. A recent study of the abilities of the British, French, and German armies to generate and sustain armored brigades in the Baltics found that each would likely be able to deploy and sustain a heavy brigade, though at different rates and at great sacrifice (Shurkin, 2017). The study found that, of Europe's three largest armies, only France could deploy one battalion within a week and a brigade within a month, a faster rate than the other two. Recent reporting on the operability of many major German military systems likely makes Germany's contributions even less likely (Buck, 2018).

62. By contrast, Russia has spent the last decade honing the specific capabilities NATO's European and Canadian forces are now lacking. Russia has strengthened and improved its combined-armed forces, making them more mobile and lethal. In addition, Russia is exercising these capabilities at an accelerated rate, and is even testing them in real combat operations in Ukraine and Syria. All of these improvements have indeed made Russia a near-peer competitor, as outlined in the recent US NSS.

63. In the Baltic region, Russia maintains a significant advantage in integrated air and missile defences, long-range artillery, and heavy armor (IISS, 2015; RAND, 2018). Finally, Russia's internal lines of communication, both road and rail, would allow Moscow to launch and sustain operations in the region rapidly.

64. As such, despite recent efforts to change the balance of conventional forces in the Baltics in the Allies' favor, Russia would still dominate any conflict in the short- to medium-term until the Alliance would be able to bring, likely across the Atlantic, overwhelming resources to bear upon the conflict.

VIII. INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

65. Certainly, conventional forces are only part of NATO's defence and deterrence posture. NATO's nuclear forces are also a core component of the Alliance's overall capabilities. The purpose of any deterrence posture, however, is to convince an opponent that any potential benefit to be gained from a military action would be wiped out by the overwhelming costs of such an action – thereby making the action unthinkable.

66. The conventional imbalance that remains in NATO's eastern territories provides an unnecessary hypothetical temptation. If Russia were to test Alliance resolve, quick escalation would be disastrous.

67. Much can and should be done to bolster the balance of conventional forces in the region to erase any such temptation, no matter how slight or improbable it may be.

68. NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence and Tailored Forward Presence revolve around three central messages. The first is signaling Alliance solidarity in the face of Russian regional aggression and threats. The transatlantic security imperative of the new defence and deterrence efforts in the region is underscored by Canada and the United States leading the multinational battlegroups in Latvia and Poland. The second is the resolve to deter further aggression by demonstrating more robust capabilities in the region. The third is NATO's resolve to counter a limited incursion in the area.

⁶ This topic is examined in detail in the DSCTC draft report *Burden sharing: refocusing the debate* [065 DSCTC 18 E].

69. *These messages can be strengthened in the following ways; Considerations for NATO Parliamentarians:*

First, the deployment of additional ground forces and equipment to the east remains an imperative. By doing so, the mobilization dilemma identified above would be mitigated: the increased numbers of troops and weapons stocks would greatly reduce deployment times.

70. **Second**, all Allies can support the NATO-EU initiatives to strengthen infrastructure and reduce legal and bureaucratic hurdles to military equipment and personnel transfers to the east. NATO parliamentarians can act domestically in their own parliaments to move such legislation and funding initiatives forward. Such investments would clearly have an impact ranging far wider than just the transfer of military materiel – better roads, bridges, communication infrastructure, ports and airports, etc. can all have far-ranging economic impacts and demonstrate the political will to share Allied burdens.

71. The burden-sharing debate often overlooks the positive security and defence impacts such investments can have; not to mention the political will to demonstrate unity of purpose by regional Allies to ‘do their part’. As Lieutenant General Carsten Jacobson told the delegation at the February 2018 Joint Committee Meetings: “When vital equipment cannot cross borders without intense bureaucracy and lengthy procedures – and we have seen delays not just for days, but for weeks in recent exercises – we simply cannot show Alliance capabilities across Alliance territory. This subject needs to be addressed urgently; it is a political task.”

72. **Third**, European Allies should have faster deployment times than those outlined above. They should also have the resources necessary to sustain these deployments. All Allies should be able to contribute in a substantive way. Targeted investments to address force deficiencies are an imperative.

73. Regional Allies need to invest in modern low-tier air defence systems, capable intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems, sensors and radars to give Allies a more complete air picture, as well as defence capabilities that are more difficult to trace, such as man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS). In the absence of larger air defence systems, investing in capabilities like Stinger missiles would be a clear means to change Russian calculations about their ability to dominate the air and ground if there is a contingency, even in the short-term.

74. **Fourth**, Allies must invest in the means to overwhelm and degrade Russia’s A2/AD systems. This means investing in 5th generation fighters like the F-35, jamming systems, as well as longer-range precision missile systems to target and destroy any Russian attempt to degrade the Allies’ ability to operate inside Allied territory.

75. **Finally**, as mentioned in the 2017 Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation (DSCTC) report on burden sharing, the North Atlantic Council determined that the Alliance requires a new, modern, dynamic and mobile deterrence posture. The necessary means to implement this new posture must follow. This translates to increased Allied defence spending in the right kind of equipment and force structure to ensure NATO can respond to today’s evolving security challenges and threats to international stability. Ultimately, however, NATO’s ability to do so will be addressed only when the political will is present for a whole-of-Alliance solution to deliver the necessary capabilities in terms of personnel and resources.

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