

Center for Strategic and International Studies

**To the Warsaw NATO Summit and Beyond: The Value of U.S.
Alliances in the 21st Century**

**Remarks: “Credible Deterrence in Europe and Its Future
Challenges”**

Featuring:

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Former Commander, U.S. European Command;
Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander - Europe (SACEUR)**

Moderator:

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KATHLEEH H. HICKS: Good afternoon, I think, or morning still. If folks could begin taking their seats? Thank you. OK, thank you very much. For the – for the second half of our morning here, we're going to have a two-part session.

First, I am Dr. Kathleen Hicks. I am the co-lead with Heather Conley. I direct the International Security Program, and so we on the defense and security side have partnered with our European Program colleagues here to bring together this report on U.S. forces in Europe, focused on U.S. Army forces in Europe.

And there is no better person to help us think through the challenges, moving from Deputy Secretary Blinken's broad frame about the importance of alliances coming straight into the European theater and thinking about the security implications, than General Phil Breedlove, just recently retired from being supreme allied commander for Europe, previously having served for the Air Component Command – as the Air Component commander for both Europe and for Africa, also previously having served as the vice chief of staff for the Air Force.

What we're going to do here is have General Breedlove come up and give some opening remarks. We do promise to save time for Q&A after that. He and I will sit down and do a little Q&A with you. And then we're going to bring up, or we're going – we're going to let him get off the stage and bring up a few other analysts that I'll introduce at the time to talk more specifically about their recommendations from our study and how to just be thinking about U.S. Army forces in Europe going forward.

So, without further ado, please join me in welcoming General Breedlove. (Applause.)

GENERAL PHILIP M. BREEDLOVE: Well, the most important thing that's going to happen here is not my brief remarks. I'll try to really quickly get to Q&A. The folks who have organized this have asked me to speak to just a couple of quick issues to sort of start the conversation. And so I have just a few thoughts that I will put out there, but will rapidly get to your questions.

I'd like to echo the secretary's remarks about standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Turkey, our great ally, and the fact that they have been under a horrible attack. And we hope to come to quick resolution on the things that are causing that kind of problem in Turkey.

So, first, the thought of Wales to Warsaw: Where are we? Good news is that the work that was assigned to the NATO alliance at Wales is largely done, and some of that work has actually been exercised and tested. Some of the creation of entities; the assigning of a mission, the Multinational Corps Northeast; standing up of VJTF; that has been tested. Standing up the NATO Force Integration Units, or as we like to call them NFIUs; beginning the work to stand up Multinational Division Southeast to think more about the problems in the south; much of that work is completely done. But what we need now – and we'll talk a little bit more about it in a minute – is continued commitment to meeting the requirements of that work, to making sure that the forces that we have agreed to, to increase their readiness and capability, remain fully supplied and ready for their mission. So it's important also that these force contributions that are required

to meet these obligations remain constant, steady, and I think even public and vocal: the fact that we are committed to the decisions of Wales and that we will see them through, as they are just really beginning to their full intent as given to us by our leadership.

And then I think also one of the most important things that has happened between Wales as we move towards Warsaw is that we as an alliance have come to grips with the issues of our NATO nations in the south, and how do we address that; and force structure, what does it mean. And we've actually put several operations into effect, including the operation in the Aegean Sea. And so it's important that NATO continues to remember that we have issues to the north and east, and to the south, and that they are both incredibly important to our alliance in their own way.

A few words on shifting from reassurance to deterrence. Much like the secretary, I won't put words in the mouth of our leaders as they come together in the summit, but many expect that this will be one of the major conversations and could be one of the directions coming out of the summit. And that is, what does it look like to shift from reassurance to deterrence? What does it take? I have often said – when people said we're on the road to Warsaw, I have often said we're on the road through Warsaw. Warsaw will just be the next step in the adaptation of this alliance. There will need to be more beyond it. Deterrence is not THE next step; it is a step on the journey, and deterrence will be enhanced as that journey goes along. It could be one of the biggest deliverables at Warsaw.

And I think there will be an interesting conversation about what does deterrence mean in the south. How do you deter the kind of issues that our alliance faces in the south?

A short note on the requirements for credible deterrence, since we're on that subject, and how that would work in sort of our current world situation. I'd like to make two keys. Everyone wants to talk about force structure, and clearly this conversation today and this report is about force structure. But I'd like to talk about two things that are sort of related, but I think they're as important and they're key upfront.

First of all, NATO already has a force structure. The question we have to ask ourselves is, what is the readiness of the existing force structure? I think one of the greatest keys to deterrence, what would really deter those who would seek to bring pressure on our alliance, is that our entire alliance, the force structure that we already have, becomes more ready and more responsive. And some of you probably are asking, what's the difference between the two? I do see a difference. We set forces to be ready on a certain time scale. We say a force is ready at 30 days, ready at 45 days, ready at four days. But what we also should do it look at how we make it ready and then also decrease (sic) the responsiveness, because a ready and responsive force is a great deterrent. So, first and foremost, I like to talk about this force that we have, and how we make that force more ready and responsive.

And second, one of the greatest privileges I had in my military career was sitting at the last summit in Wales and watching the 28 leaders of our nations come to the decisions that they came to. And I was particularly pleased that one of the first and most demonstrative decisions they took was that there was a strong commitment to alliance, to alliance Article 5

responsibilities, and to the unity of the alliance. And I think that that's the second thing that we need to talk about right now. Not only raising the responsiveness and readiness of the entire force, but it is important, especially in the face of some of the political things that have happened in the last week or two, that we come to Warsaw and through Warsaw with a continued, strong commitment to the unity of the alliance and to our absolute commitment to our Article 5 requirements.

So now, a little bit more to the things that we want to talk about, and I'll leave the specifics to the questions and answers. But you have heard my talk when I was uniform and post-uniform about our forward forces. I do not believe them to be adequate. What is the constitution of how we address that inadequacy? Is it more permanently stationed forces? Is it forces that might move further east in the alliance space? Is it pre-positioned forces that we could rapidly fall in on? And this is the – this is the real art and science of what has to be done across the next few months and years. How do we as an alliance look at a force structure that deters, that we can afford and sustain? And how can we make it responsive to the speed of the challenge that we need?

And I used a personal pronoun there that is important: “we.” The United States, I think, has to lead, but it cannot just be the United States involved in this. Our most important allies need to be along our side.

I believe, as we look at the force structure that we need to deter and to meet the challenge in Europe, we need to give a special emphasis to the enablers and to the firepower. We have, as I mentioned before, a large NATO force. And much of that force is that ground infantry, mechanized infantry, and to a limited degree armored force. But what we don't have great depth in in NATO are those exquisite enablers that brings precision and speed to our firepower. And so I think we should give an important, close look at those.

I also believe – and NATO has actually taken some firm steps in this – in this endeavor – that we need to better train, exercise and develop rapid political decision-making. The ability to get in front of a threat is incredibly important, and it's hard enough in a military sense. We need to not also be slowed down in a political sense. And we've seen just recently, you know, some pretty good exercises at the NAC and ambassadorial level to understand this.

And then, finally, another piece of that deterrence is I believe that we need to continue to refine the plans that prepare us. Just planning in detail is a strong message. But for military men and women, planning is essential. It's what we do to be prepared. And so I think that our plans need to move to the next level.

Finally, I was asked to tie in A2AD – anti-access/area denial – and talk just a tiny bit about what are the capabilities that I would see to be needed by the U.S. and the U.S.-NATO team. I think, first and foremost, a strategy and a – (audio break) – decision is needed – i.e. do we create our own anti-access/area denial capability? That is a big decision. It is decidedly an offensive-feeling thing. I would subscribe that the capability that is sitting in Kaliningrad or the capability that is sitting in Crimea is decidedly offensive. It imposes costs on those in the area. And so first, in the realm of A2AD, I think we need to take a look at this from a policy sense as a

nation and as an alliance to say, is this what each – (audio break) – making our moves. Should we be imposing cost and inconvenience and trouble to planners by having that capability?

Now, as to how we address anti-access/area denial, I would subscribe that we have the tools, but we do not have nearly enough of them. And the speed that we would need to eliminate these A2AD bubbles to be able to deploy our forces is going to be controlled by the depth of the bench of how we can attack those A2AD forces. And so I think that, in general, we have the tools we need, but we don't have enough of them.

And the next point I would make, which I think is germane to the discussion primarily of land forces, is that right now we are almost completely dependent on air forces and aviation assets in order to attack the A2AD problem. I submit – my opinion – that we need more long-range, survivable, precision-strike capability from the ground. We need dense capabilities like the dense A2AD networks that we face. Should we be considering a long-range strike complex, which you have been – you've heard several senior leaders in DOD talking about?

And then, finally, I would say that one of the things that challenged me a lot as SACEUR, we came out of 13 years of incredible work as an alliance in Afghanistan really refining – (audio break) – kill chain as it relates to counterinsurgency warfare. But what we have lost over that time is the ability to do it at scale – to support a large conventional effort. Do we have the targeteers that we need? Do we have the precision capability to precisely locate targets and transmit them quickly to the cockpit, or to the ship of the shooter, or to the long-range strike complex on the ground? We have some work to do in order to fully enable an at-scale conventional precision capability. We do it extremely well in a more limited, smaller counterinsurgency way.

And so I think there is work to do in facing this A2AD challenge, in resolving NATO intelligence issues, and building the capacity to do what we know we can do exquisitely in a smaller way.

So I seriously shortened my notes to get to your questions, and I'm ready to do that now.

MS. HICKS: Yep, great. (Applause.)

Well, thank you very much, and I will – I will limit myself as well in the Q&A, although there is a very rich discussion to be had here, but just to make sure that folks have a chance to interact.

Let me ask a really broad question. You know, you having been SACEUR and obviously, as Tony Blinken pointed out, 39-plus years in the Air Force, coming up through a military structure and command of military forces, you're looking at a challenge set posed by Russia that crosses over, right, from A2AD at the high end, you know, conventional military challenges – of course, we didn't even discuss the nuclear challenges posed by Russia – into cyber, economic, political warfare, unconventional warfare if you will, proxy forces, where military instruments traditionally have not had, you know, a strong purpose. How should the alliance and its partners and the U.S. be thinking about a holistic approach? What should we be

most concerned about and thinking about with regard to the Russia challenge set?

GEN. BREEDLOVE: So I think – first of all, thanks for the question, because it’s a very good one. And we have wrestled with this now for about, well, almost two years, the phenomena of the little green men in Crimea and what they were an expression of in this new war – type of warfare. And the word was coined, “hybrid warfare.” Although I was there when that was being coined, I’m not totally happy with that word because, in effect, really, this form of warfare is old tools being used differently. But what we see in the difference in the way they’re being used or expressed is that they are a – this new type of warfare – and I think Mr. Gerasimov calls it “conflict by indirect means,” those are the words that my counterpart used – but the difference here is the breadth of the way this particular kind of conflict is carried on.

I will use a very simple model that we were taught in war college. Simple things for simple minds: DIME, diplomatic, informational, military and economic. DIME. And so this new form of warfare covers all of those instruments. In fact, in some nations, we see huge diplomatic, huge informational, huge economic in the form of energy warfare, and a very quiet military.

It was a little different, of course, in Ukraine. We had broad pressure diplomatically to discredit Kiev, an intense information campaign to attack the credibility of the institutions in Ukraine. And then of course a strong military effort, first in Crimea, second in the Donbas. And then finally, continually, economic pressure in the form of speedy recall of loans, energy pricing, et cetera. So in Ukraine you saw all of those elements. So I’ve built a big watch to say that.

We have come to understand that we have to be able to deal with this. And some of our nations are better prepared than others. And the point that we also have to understand, while this is more of a military discussion, that the tools used to address this larger scale of warfare are more in the MOI sometimes – the ministry of interiors, the policing forces, the judiciary, the legislative – than in the defense. And so we have to learn, in those nations where we haven’t had a long history of dealing with this kind of warfare, how to be able to meet this broad attack, where we used to think more along the lines of the military. How do we join with our MOI or interior ministry type troops to be able to better bring both intelligence complexes together, and not to be competing or possibly not sharing important information?

And how do we create the capability to take a nation that feels it’s under attack and be able to bring the aid of the alliance to that nation should it be warranted? We talked about a very simple framework: recognize, characterize, attribute. Recognize that you’re under attack. Characterize it as not something normal. The last thing we would want to do is for NATO to get involved in an internal political legitimate movement in a nation. So recognize that there is an issue. Characterize it as not normal and not legitimate. And then, finally, attribute it to an aggressor. Because in the characterization and attributing, we have a parallel in the Article 4 and Article 5 process in order to be able to bring the instruments of the alliance to be able to be used.

So we have – “we,” that’s the wrong personal pronoun – they; I’m now out of that business. But when I was in that business, we started a process of working with the nations on these broad requirements of how you marry MOI/MOD to meet this challenge. And it’s quite –

it's quite supporting, because in some nations it's almost all MOD with a small MOI piece. In some nations, it's more balanced. And in some nations – and I can name three of them; I won't – where it's almost entirely MOD and a little bit MOI. So each nation does it a little differently, and we need to meet them where they are and help them to develop the tools. So we're getting after that, and that is an important part of meeting this broader spectrum.

MS. HICKS: Yeah. Great.

OK, I am going to open it up. And when the mic comes to you, please give your name and affiliation. We have one over here. One question each, please. (Laughs.)

Q: Zach Biggs with Jane's.

I wanted to ask you specifically about cyber. At the defense ministerial earlier this month, cyber was declared an operational domain for NATO. There was also discussion about how Article 5 could be invoked specifically with a cyberattack. What does NATO need to do to be prepared for cyber now that it is an operational domain for the alliance? And thinking back to, for instance, the Estonia attack and what happened there, what do you think would happen this time if a similar attack occurred to a NATO member?

GEN. BREEDLOVE: So NATO has already started the process of being better prepared to meet cyberattacks. As you know, we are 28 nations, and all 28 nations come to this problem in different places and different capabilities. And so, for a long time, we were reticent to sort of share. But what we soon learned in NATO is that there are 28 doors into our alliance, and if there's one weak door then the alliance will be under attack and could be compromised. And so some of the things that happened that were very important is we realized this is something that we have to do collectively as well.

Nations have their own Article 3 – if you remember Article 3 – their own requirement of their own defense, but then we have to look more collectively at defending against cyber. And so understanding where the weaknesses are and making a decision to better share among nations what we know has been an important part of starting. And now we are developing the bench and the rules, the hygiene and all the things that we do as an alliance.

And I would, by the way, commend to you the Cyber Center of Excellence. They are doing some really good work.

MS. HICKS: In Estonia?

GEN. BREEDLOVE: In Estonia. Outstanding work there. And the range that they have put together in order to fight and practice is really quite demonstrative.

And then I would just say the last piece, which is – it was after I left that these pronouncements were made, but I was watching them be formed. An important part of this is getting to that policy piece that we talked about in a few of my remarks. What are going to be the policies of how we go forward? There is a lot of angst about offensive cyber, but active

defense requires some offensive actions. And so there are policy decisions that need to be taken. And I'll be watching them, just like you will, as the alliance goes forward on that.

MS. HICKS: Great. OK, I had one right back here at the camera.

Q: Thank you so much. My name is Ivo Puljic. I'm from Al Jazeera Balkans, bureau chief here, Washington, D.C.

MS. HICKS: Can you pull the mic closer?

Q: Yeah.

You mentioned a few times and we heard a word, "Russia." What is your opinion about Russian role in Southeast of Europe? Serbia is pretty much in love with Russia right now. Russia has big impact in part of Bosnia. And just from those countries, Croatia is only member of NATO. And what do you think about Montenegro, and what Montenegro can bring to NATO with future membership? Thank you so much.

MS. HICKS: OK, so that's technically two questions, so you get to pick one.

GEN. BREEDLOVE: Yeah, there were actually two or three questions in there.

MS. HICKS: Yeah, yeah. You get to pick one.

GEN. BREEDLOVE: I think I didn't ever mention Russia in my remarks. I kept talking about possible adversaries. Russia of course had been brought up in the – in the –

MS. HICKS: I brought up Russia. (Laughs.)

GEN. BREEDLOVE: – rest of your remarks. And of course, Russia has been a great concern.

You have heard me in recent speeches talk about Russia not – you know, pulling back that hand of cooperation and changing the paradigm under which we have been operating. And the fact that they have used force to change internationally recognized borders is a great issue for our alliance, the EU, the entire world to deal with.

But what I think we do need to do – and I said this recently as well – is we need to continue to take the actions that we have taken at Wales. We need to implement the actions that the – the directions that will be given at Warsaw. We need to continue to make our alliance militarily credible – more ready, more responsive – and deal from a position of a strong, united, defensive alliance with a Russia that I believe in the future we need to have some kind of relationship with.

How do you describe that relationship? Is it partnership? Is it – is it mutual respect? What is it that would allow Russia and Europe to cooperate in economic spheres and other

things, which I think would prosper all? But that has to be done, again, from a position of a strong, united, defensive alliance. And it has to be done on a basis of good behavior of all of the partners in the agreement.

Montenegro says the door is open, and it also is a very strategic place. Can you imagine an A2AD bubble in Montenegro?

MS. HICKS: Great. OK, a couple more. We have one right here.

Q: Thank you. Maia Kay, Voice of America Georgian Service.

In the wake of Brexit, Admiral Stavridis wrote in Foreign Policy that it might not be the challenge, quite the contrary, for the NATO. What EU – what is loss for EU might be the gain for the NATO, meaning that Great Britain will have more military resources to put in place for the alliance. Do you think this is the case? And how do you perceive how NATO should be addressing this challenge, if it is a challenge? Thank you.

GEN. BREEDLOVE: So I would – I would never venture to grade Jim Stavridis's paper, so I'll sort of dodge that part of it.

I think – I've been asked this question several times, what is your concerns with Brexit. And I always do the same thing. I'm not going to make any geopolitical statement. I'm probably not qualified to do that. What I think I am qualified to do is remark on how it might affect NATO.

And frankly, I don't see a huge impact to NATO. The U.K. is an incredibly important, vibrant, active part, a full-spectrum partner in NATO, and I don't see that changing. And, if anything, this I think will engender a conversation along the lines of what I talked about in my opening remarks, and that is I believe one of the most important things that happened in Wales was that upfront, early, vocal, strong commitment to unity and Article 5. And I think that this will engender, again, a conversation about how important for NATO is our unity, our commitment, and Article 5.

MS. HICKS: Great. OK, the last question here, and then we'll switch over to the panel.

Q: General, Commodore ten Haaf, the Dutch defense attaché. Thanks, first of all, for your words.

My question is as follows. You stressed the need for recognition. You stressed the need for speedily decision-making. In order to do so, you need good indicators, good warnings. In order to have a more integrated approach – I mean, I don't worry about speedily intel processing within NATO. But with other organizations – for example, EU – we clearly could have an issue there. Could you share some thoughts on this part of the subject?

GEN. BREEDLOVE: So I will disappoint those who have heard me talk about this before because my opinion has not changed from the last four years. And that is that, while we

have good intelligence organizations in NATO, we have a lot of work to do on intelligence in NATO. We have come through a period where we were making a partner of Russia, and we literally took our eyes off of the operational and tactical part of the Russian forces. We kept our eyes strategically on those very important things that posed existential threats to our nations. But, by and large, most of our nations' – and I say "nations" because it's more than just mine – intelligence apparatus over the past 10 to 15 years have shifted to those problems emanating from ungoverned spaces, unresponsive governments in the Middle East and in the area around Syria and Iraq. And so, by and large, we have lost a focus that Captain Phil Breedlove saw when he first went to serve in NATO in the early 1980s. We had a laser focus back then, on not only the strategic but the operational and the tactical.

And so I'm building a watch. I'm sorry, but it's important. It is important that we refocus enough. We'll never go back to where we were because our nations face incredible challenges from the south. But it is important that we refocus enough of our intelligence, both technical and non-technical, on the issue. And it's important that we better fuse it.

I have been a bit critical of NATO in that we sort of are episodic in the way we share intelligence. When we're under threat, we share intelligence very well. When we don't feel under threat, we don't. And those peaks and valleys don't allow us to understand the norm. It is from understanding the norm that we can build indications and warnings. You are exactly right. We need a series of indications and warnings that allow us to get with credibility to the political decision-makers and say this is not normal and it could mean this; we need to take early action to preclude, rather than late action to deal with the consequences.

And so, just to – I talked an awful lot. Just to rehash, I think we need to refocus. It will never be what it used to be. We need to understand better the operational level, and to some degree the tactical level, of our opponent. We need to be able to better share that broadly, and share it consistently, so that we can understand a norm from which we can develop good indications and warnings that allow us, again, with credibility to go to our political decision-makers and say, we need to do something.

And that is a lot of work. I do believe we are headed in that direction. But this will take sustained effort over time.

MS. HICKS: Well, I want to thank you, General Breedlove, for sharing your thoughts this morning and taking a little time to take questions. We're going to have you exit the stage and we're going to invite up our panel of experts. (Applause.)

(END)