

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

**Hearing on “U.S. Military Posture and National Security Challenges in Europe”**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

**House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-AL) opening remarks**

As Prepared For Delivery:

Today, we continue our posture hearings with EUCOM.

We meet at a critical moment.

Russia’s brutal invasion of Ukraine continues.

The U.S. military is actively degrading Iran’s military capabilities and preventing the regime from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

And the Department remains laser-focused on defending the homeland and deterring China.

Managing these threats simultaneously will require a stronger NATO.

Fortunately, thanks to the leadership of President Trump, our Allies are beginning to step up.

And their commitment to spend 5 percent of GDP on defense by 2035 shows they are serious about assuming greater responsibility for their own defense.

But Europe’s rearmament will take time.

Fixing manpower shortages and restoring readiness will take time.

Building out the transatlantic defense industrial base will take time.

And developing or purchasing capabilities that today only the United States can provide will take time.

Yet, despite this reality, some within the Department are advocating for a premature and unwise reduction of U.S. forces in Europe and from NATO defense plans.

More troubling still, those same voices have not provided a credible roadmap for how such a transition would occur.

Nor have they defined what “critical but more limited” U.S. support actually means.

That is not a strategy for a stronger, more credible NATO.

It is a risk we should not take.

That is why last year’s NDAA mandates consultation with Congress before making any significant reduction in U.S. forces in Europe.

Because the overwhelming bipartisan and bicameral assessment is that a premature drawdown would create a dangerous deterrence gap and invite further Russian aggression.

In particular, as Europe rearms, the two rotational U.S. armored brigades in Poland remain a cornerstone of NATO’s conventional defense.

President Trump has been clear about the importance of maintaining that presence, even suggesting the United States could further bolster our posture there.

He’s right that those brigades must remain in place.

And I believe it is past time that we seriously consider permanently stationing them in Poland as well.

Moreover, those in the Department advocating for a premature reduction of U.S. forces in Europe are also ignoring that our posture there is about much more than defending Europe.

It helps defend the homeland forward.

And it gives the President more options to project combat power into other theaters, including CENTCOM, AFRICOM, and the Arctic.

Operations like MIDNIGHT HAMMER, and now EPIC FURY, make that clear.

Both are enabled by our presence in Europe and by the access, basing, and overflight permissions provided by our allies.

Just look at Romania.

Romania is allowing the United States to use two of its bases to support operations in the Middle East.

Think about that.

Even after we withdrew a U.S. brigade last year, Romania continues to open its facilities to American forces.

And they are not just providing access.

Romania has invested well over \$2 billion to improve those bases and runways for American use.

This is exactly the kind of ally we should be deepening our engagement with, not prematurely stepping away from.

We also should not prematurely step away from Ukraine.

It is in the U.S. interest that a strong, well-armed, and independent Ukraine emerges from this war.

In fact, its innovative and battle-hardened forces are already degrading the threat Russia's military poses to Europe's conventional defense.

Kyiv is also demonstrating that this partnership is not a one-way street.

Ukrainian counter-drone teams and technology are now helping protect U.S. forces and partners in the Middle East from Iranian attacks.

Russia, meanwhile, is doing the exact opposite.

It is helping Iran refine its drone tactics and reportedly providing targeting intelligence to strike American troops.

It's clear Putin is not our friend.

He is an adversary.

The temporary easing of Russian energy sanctions must indeed be temporary, as Secretary Bessent has pledged.

And if Putin continues to refuse to negotiate with President Trump in good faith, pressure on the Russian dictator must increase, including through the additional sanctions now being considered in Congress.

History has taught us this lesson again and again.

Vladimir Putin interprets a lack of American resolve as an opportunity.

We should not give him one—neither in Ukraine, nor in NATO.