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Investing 5% in Defense and Commitment to the U.S. Partnership

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Congressman Sessions and Congressman Aderholt, thank you for inviting me to speak today on the security and resilience of NATO and its members.

This is a critical issue to discuss. While the alliance under Secretary General Mark Rutte's superb leadership has agreed to some important targets — 3.5 percent of core defense spending and 1.5 percent of defense-related spending — there is much uncertainty in what benefits these investments can and will produce.

We all know the core driver: Europe is facing its most dangerous security environment since World War II. Russia's illegal and unconstrained war against Ukraine has demonstrated Moscow's willingness to use massive force, absorb losses, and sustain a long-term confrontation with the West. At the same time, the willingness of China, Iran, and North Korea to actively join the fight against Ukraine's democracy is a reminder of how much more aligned our adversaries have become.

Russia has, without question, learned its lessons from its experience in Ukraine and is employing new tactics as it conducts maximum pressure campaigns on Eastern (and even Western) Europe using cognitive warfare. Russia uses cyberattacks, cyber operational preparation of the battlefield (for later attacks), sabotage, drone penetrations and attacks, information operations, and weaponized migration to undermine democratic institutions in Europe and the United States.

Democracies are inherently vulnerable to this — we love our freedom of speech and our networked systems — and Russia heavily exploits both. We want to embrace immigrants fleeing injustice and would like the government to stay out of elections. Russia exploits all of these.

Defense investment is therefore not a policy choice but rather a condition for sovereignty and survival.

Clearly, the traditional 2 percent NATO benchmark has proven inadequate. The scale, duration, and intensity of modern conflict require higher readiness, deeper stockpiles, more resilient infrastructure, and greater industrial depth.

I won't go into detail on the 3.5 percent for core defense — I hope others will — but rather, I want to speak to the 1.5 percent that must be spent on security and resilience. This must include spending to bolster cyber defense, military mobility, critical infrastructure protection, supply chain resilience, energy security, innovation, and civil preparedness. Not all 1.5 percent efforts will be created

equally or wisely — if we do not build some good business rules early, we will regret the answer later.

I am concerned that this spending requirement can too easily be written off by pointing to ongoing economic infrastructure projects. These projects may be national priorities, but economic infrastructure does not equal societal resilience and military continuity. These projects may allow nations to “check the box” on their commitment without actually improving security and resilience.

To avoid this problem, it is imperative that NATO’s planners at SHAPE drive some of this spending. I suspect if I asked NATO’s political arm to tell me the 32 most important critical infrastructure projects, they would give me one per country — from Portugal to Poland. But if I asked the SHAPE planners, they would go into the annexes of their newly developed plans — especially the logistics and transport annexes — and identify 32 infrastructure initiatives that support military mobility. They would likely highlight, for example, the systems that get U.S. and UK forces onto the continent and U.S., UK, and French armies into the fight. These projects might include three projects in the United Kingdom and Belgium, five in the Netherlands and Germany, six in Poland, and a few in each of the Baltics, Romania, Bulgaria, and Luxembourg.

The bottom line is we need to ensure that the 1.5 percent is **informed** by the NATO planners’ work. If necessary critical infrastructure investments become too burdensome on a country, then NATO and the European Union should figure out how to incentivize this work with grants, loans, or other support.

The commitment of NATO members to spend 1.5 percent on resilience of the most important critical infrastructure aligns European investment with U.S. defense planning and recognizes that contemporary warfare is inherently hybrid.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.