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House Intelligence Committee
Open Hearing on Threats Posed to the U.S. by Nation-State Conflicts
Chairman Rogers Opening Statement
November 13, 2014
(as prepared)

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today and thank you to Ranking Member Ruppertsberger for convening this important hearing with me.

Recently, this committee held an open hearing on the threats from non state actors such as al Qa'ida, ISIL, and other terrorist groups. Today we will examine the risk of nation-state conflict. We cannot take our eye off the strategic threats to the United States of America or the potential for being drawn into a nation-state conflict.

Though plenty of attention has gone into Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea, less attention has been paid to their rapid military modernization. Even less attention was paid when Russian bombers buzzed the West coast of the United States or their ships had ports of call in Cuba and Venezuela. Putin is pushing out Russian power in the Arctic, the Middle East, in Europe, and in the Western Hemisphere in ways that we have not seen for a very long time.

A due amount of attention has gone to Iran's nuclear program and its stated desire to wipe Israel off the map, but less attention has gone to their proxy wars in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain and now Iraq again. Less attention has been paid to its undermining of American financial institutions with cyber attacks, or its destructive cyber attack against Saudi Aramco that destroyed 30,000 computers.

Too much attention perhaps has gone to Kim Jong Un and his antics with Dennis Rodman and not enough to the fact that North Korea threatened the west coast of the United States with its missiles and a nuclear attack. That is the definition of provocation. And the international community didn't say much when North Korea launched a cyber attack against South Korea that showed a higher level of cyber sophistication than most experts predicted the North possessed.

In part due to this Committee's bipartisan work, much has been written about China's rampant theft of American and European intellectual property through cyberspace. But not nearly enough attention has been given to China's military modernization that challenges American strength, its aggressive actions against its neighbors in the South China and East Seas and its decision to contest space. Space is critical for the American economy and our military. It had

always been a benign, uncontested environment. That is no longer the case as the Chinese have developed anti-satellite technology.

Academics have written about the end of state warfare. They will tell you that World War II was the culmination of hundreds of years of state on state wars and that mutually assured destruction prevented any renewal of warfare between major powers. Now, the argument goes, economics has so intertwined the world that it now does not make sense for countries to go to war with each other anymore.

When you look at the behavior in recent years of each of the nations we are highlighting today, I believe that these assumptions are inaccurate. I do not believe that a military conflict between any of these nations and the U.S. is inevitable. At the end of the day, however, these nations should not doubt American resolve to defend its key national interests.

U.S. leadership is being tested and regional powers are watching to see how we meet the challenge. Our decisions now will have implications for American and international security for decades to come. We must rise to this challenge, even when it is difficult. Our national and economic security both depend on it.

I now turn it over to Ranking Member Ruppertsberger for any opening statement that he would like to make.

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