

Excerpt from Hearings of US EUCOM Commander, General Curtis Scaparrotti, Armed Service Committee, US Senate, 8 March 2018

*Senator Jeanne Shaheen (New Hampshire)*

So, if you look at the potential of misuse in the future in the other parts of Europe, where do you see... where are you most concerned about future Russian interference?

*General Scaparrotti*

They are involved just every aspect of Europe in one way or another. The area that I am concerned about today is the Balkans, actually. It's an area where the international community's work, and the United States in particular, where we have been able to keep stability there. We began to work on democratic governance and to reinforce that, but Russia is at work in the Balkans. I think that we've got to take an eye on the area. It's an area where, in terms of diplomacy, we have to put some focus on, in my opinion. And we have to continue our security reform and our capability building that we as international community have engaged; and in the Balkans, it's an area that we could have some problems in the future.

*Senator Shaheen*

You mentioned the diplomatic efforts... And how important is that we have these robust diplomatic and economic efforts in the Balkans?

*General Scaparrotti*

I think it's essential. They view that diplomatic effort and presence, frankly, the people see that as one way to determine that the West is serious about their desire to be the part of the West. So, that involvement, I think, is fundamental.

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*Senator Tom Cotton (Arkansas)*

Thank you Chairman, thank you General Scaparrotti. I would like to thank you for joining us once again, I would like to continue the conversation about the Balkans that you started with Senator Shaheen. And if we tend to focus on the Baltics, since they are NATO countries exclusively, but I think that their NATO status probably makes them a bit more stable in terms of the direct threat Russia poses... and in the Balkans there are numerous countries that don't belong to NATO... could you be more specific and say a little bit more on which country in the Balkans are the matter of concern to you in terms of Russian meddling and interference?

*General Scaparrotti*

Oh, I think Serbia. In particular... There is, there is a connection...

*Senator Cotton*

Serbia proper? Or Republika Srpska?

*General Scaparrotti*

Serbia, well, I will tell you that it's Serbia as a nation, but and a Serb population as well, within, within the Balkans. There is obviously a historical connection there, and affiliation... but there is also, because of that, a better opportunity for Russian influence. And they take advantage of that, in terms of disinformation, influence upon those populations, spoiling effect in some cases, perhaps with Serbia in respect to Kosovo or within the tripartite government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And that's my concern. I have seen an increase in that, I believe, in a year and a half since I've been on this job.