



400 HURLEY AVENUE, ROCKVILLE, MD 20850-3121
alainfo@alausa.org • TEL: (301) 340-1914 • FAX: (301) 340-8732

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In response to the recent NATO Summit in Brussels, President Trump's meeting in Helsinki with Vladimir Putin and various statements made in the press afterwards, the American Latvian Association seeks to reiterate our organization's strong support for NATO and the transatlantic relationship between the United States and its European allies. In its 70th year, NATO continues to protect the American interests of peace and stability in Europe—especially in the Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—and continues to grow in consequence and value. As the most successful Alliance in history, NATO's enduring strength demonstrates the United States' unceasing leadership role in the world.

NATO continues to evolve and fulfill its mission. We welcome the new initiatives announced in Brussels including the "Four Thirties" readiness plan that calls for 30 mechanized battalions, 30 air squadrons and 30 combat vessels, ready to use within 30 days or less, for defending NATO members. NATO is also creating two new command structures—one in Norfolk, VA, to counter maritime threats, and one in Ulm, Germany, enabling more efficient logistics for transporting troops and military equipment throughout Europe. In addition, it will develop a new Cyber Operations Center, an operational compliment to NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense (CCD) Center of Excellence (COE) in Tallinn, Estonia.

ALA also thanks the leadership in Congress for fulfilling its role in U.S. foreign policy and reacting quickly to international developments. For example, we appreciate the recent bi-partisan, unanimous Senate resolution rejecting the idea that certain individuals including a former U.S. ambassador to Russia should be subject to a contrived Russian investigation of Putin critics. We encourage continued congressional oversight, including support for the European Deterrence Initiative, and legislation to counter Russian disinformation campaigns and Moscow's continuing aggression in Crimea, Ukraine, Georgia and elsewhere.

The Baltic countries are celebrating their centennials of democratic self-determination this year. It is important that the U.S. position is made clear to Putin and his regime that Moscow's attempts to re-establish its hegemony and authoritarian influence over the Baltics will not be tolerated. As Vice President Pence said last summer,

America stands with the nations and people of the Baltic States – and we always will. We stand with our NATO allies in our commitment to your security. And under President Trump, the United States of America stands in defense of the timeless values that unite America and Europe together in the West – freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

This abiding statement is as powerful today as it ever was, and we trust the U.S. Government - including the administration, government agencies and Congress – will continue to uphold our timeless American values.

Sincerely,

Pēteris Blumbergs
President

Dzintars Dzilna
Director of Public Affairs