

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth and Secretary Rubio,

We write to you with deep concern regarding the recent announcement by the Trump administration that it intends to terminate longstanding U.S. security assistance programs in Europe, including the Baltic Security Initiative (BSI) and assistance under 10 U.S.C. § 333 (Section 333).<sup>i</sup> This decision makes America less safe, hurts American companies, and is a critical betrayal of commitments to our allies.

At this summer's North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit, President Trump publicly reaffirmed America's support for NATO, including its frontline members on the Eastern Flank, underscoring that "... we're here to help them."<sup>ii</sup> This message came as NATO's 32 member nations agreed to more than double their defense spending targets, affirming an alliance-wide recognition of the increasingly grave threat of Russian aggression.<sup>iii</sup>

The decision to end BSI and other Eastern Flank security initiatives directly contradicts the President's message, sending an alarming signal not only to our Baltic and NATO allies but also to global adversaries. By withdrawing this critical assistance, America would broadcast to Russia and China that it is unwilling to stand by its allies, including those it is legally required to defend under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty should an invasion occur. This decision would invite adversaries to test the limits of U.S. commitments and erode critical NATO deterrence posture across the Eastern Flank.

The decision to suspend BSI and phase out Section 333 funding for Europe is also a clear contradiction of congressional directives. BSI plays a critical role in bolstering defenses on NATO's Eastern Flank, including maritime awareness, ammunition stocks, anti-tank systems, and special operations readiness in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Section 333 provides military training and equipment and intelligence support to enhance the security of partner states. These programs are not mere symbolic gestures; they constitute a vital deterrent against Russian aggression.

Moreover, Congress has been unambiguous in its intent to help protect our Baltic allies. The Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2022 (P.L. 117-103) authorized \$180 million for enhanced capabilities of Baltic militaries.<sup>iv</sup> The Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (P.L. 117-328) provided an additional \$225 million in security assistance.<sup>v</sup> These provisions reflect a clear congressional mandate to sustain and expand U.S. security cooperation in the Baltic region.

The decision to end BSI and other programs with no consultation of Congress is only the latest of a string of attempts to both circumvent Congress and directly contradict the President's priorities for Europe, including Secretary Hegseth's outrageous attempt to pause critical weapons shipments to our beleaguered Ukrainian partners without informing President Trump.<sup>vi</sup>


To that end, we urge both departments to immediately:

- Restore and maintain full funding and execution of the Baltic Security Initiative and Section 333 as authorized under the law;
- Provide to Congress a clear legal and strategic justification for any proposed modifications to U.S. security assistance commitments in Europe; and
- Provide to Congress any and all available evidence that the President himself is aware of decisions to reduce commitments to our NATO partners and views them as consistent with his agenda and existing law.


The security of the U.S. and its allies rests on meeting the strategic and legal commitments we make as an alliance. Weakening these foundations only emboldens adversaries in what is the most dangerous strategic environment in recent history. We urge you to immediately reverse course.

Sincerely,

  
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Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator

  
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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

  
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Michael F. Bennet  
United States Senator

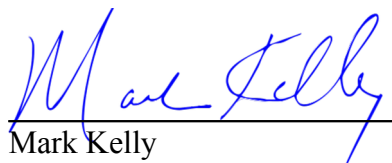
  
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Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Andy Kim  
United States Senator



Mark Kelly  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Jacky Rosen  
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks  
United States Senator



Tim Kaine  
United States Senator

<sup>i</sup> Noah Robertson, Trump Administration to End European Security Programs Focused on Russia, *The Washington Post* (Sept. 4, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/09/04/trump-europe-security-russia-ukraine/>

<sup>ii</sup> David Baker, Trump Embraces NATO Security Alliance After Years of Attacks, *The Washington Post* (June 25, 2025), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/25/trump-nato-iran-ukraine/?utm\\_](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/06/25/trump-nato-iran-ukraine/?utm_)

<sup>iii</sup> *Id.*

<sup>iv</sup> H.R. 2471, “*Funding for the People: Division-by-Division Summary of Appropriations Provisions*”, at 7, House Committee on Appropriations (Democrats) (2021), [https://case.house.gov/uploadedfiles/appropriations\\_division-by-division\\_summary.pdf](https://case.house.gov/uploadedfiles/appropriations_division-by-division_summary.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> *Summary of Appropriations Provisions*, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, at 11, <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-appropriations.house.gov/files/FY23%20Summary%20of%20Appropriations%20Provisions.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> Natasha Bertrand & Zachary Cohen, Hegseth Did Not Inform White House Before He Authorized Pause on Weapon Shipments to Ukraine, *CNN* (July 8, 2025), <https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/08/politics/hegseth-did-not-inform-white-house-ukraine-weapons-pause>