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ROBERT L. SIMMONS, II, STAFF DIRECTOR

March 26, 2014

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today with urgency and alarm, based on new information in the committee's possession. We are gravely concerned about the aggressive posture of Russian forces along the eastern border of Ukraine, as well as reports that Moscow may be making threatening moves towards allies in the Baltics. We urge your administration, working with our NATO allies, to share available intelligence information with the government of Ukraine that would enable it to take prudent and timely measures to protect the very "sovereignty and territorial integrity" that you have committed to maintain. We also believe it is imperative that the United States take precautionary steps to improve the posture and readiness of U.S. military forces in the region, and pursue additional measures to bolster the security of our eastern and central European allies and partners.

While the details informing our concerns remain classified and will be outlined in an accompanying classified letter sent through appropriate channels, we would point to multiple unclassified reports and comments by senior officials within your administration, highlighting the tens of thousands of Russian troops massed near the eastern border of Ukraine conducting "military exercises," the presence of Russian Spetsnaz special forces in eastern Ukraine fomenting civil unrest and chaos, and the large footprint of Russian naval forces and coastal troops in the Baltics. There is deep apprehension that Moscow may invade eastern and southern Ukraine, pressing west to Transdniestria, and also seek land grabs in the Baltics.

Both the commander of U.S. European Command (EUCOM) and the NATO Secretary General are raising the alarm. Earlier this week in Brussels, EUCOM Commander, General Philip Breedlove, stated, "The [Russian] force that is at the Ukrainian border now to the east is very, very sizeable and very, very ready." He also stated, "There is absolutely sufficient [Russian] force postured on the eastern border of Ukraine to run to Transdniestria if the decision was made to do that and that is very worrisome." NATO Secretary General Rasmussen has also emphasized, "We are very much concerned about the Russian military build-up along the borders of Ukraine."

Mr. President, you have stated that you "are in close communication with the Ukrainian government." We would expect this communication to immediately include any intelligence on Russian troop movements and possible attack scenarios into Ukraine, and to provide such information with

sufficient time to allow the Ukrainian government to take prudent defense measures to protect its people, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

We also believe it is crucial that you direct the Secretary of Defense to increase and enhance the alert posture and readiness of U.S. forces in Europe without delay, including maintaining forward-deployed U.S. quick reaction forces. A failure to take such deterrent actions in the face of continued Russian aggression will certainly risk the very diplomatic and peaceful outcome that we all desire. Inaction by the U.S. and NATO will only further embolden Russian military planners, making further escalation more–not less–likely.

As we have learned in previous crises elsewhere, if U.S. forces are not positioned in advance to respond to foreseeable threats, the options for senior decision makers become severely limited. To that end, we further call on you to convene an emergency session of the North Atlantic Council, to be led by Secretary Hagel and Chairman Dempsey, and to request that our NATO allies also enhance their force readiness in the event that an Article V response is required.

Mr. President, we still have opportunity to deter Russia aggression, but President Putin must see our commitment to Ukraine and to our European allies and partners. He must visibly see our resolve, including our military resolve, and clearly understand the costs.

Sincerely,

Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
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HPM:kb