

Policy Review Memo of the Deputy National Security Advisor

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This memorandum reviews the President's strategy on addressing the current situation in Latvia, as ethnic tensions increase, terrorist attacks occur, and a Russian intervention is a likely scenario. The paper follows the National Security Council (NSC) meeting on the crisis and outlines the reviewed position of the Deputy National Security Advisor.

Principal Objectives of the Deputy National Security Advisor

1. The Deputy National Security Advisor, hereon Deputy NSA, has three main objectives concerning the current state of affairs in Latvia. First, it seeks to ensure the safety of American citizens living in the country. Second, there is a need to assist Latvia in preserving its territorial integrity and internal stability. Third, it seeks to avoid a confrontation between NATO and Russia.

Primary Policies of the Deputy National Security Advisor

2. A diplomatic dialogue should be initiated between Latvia and Russia bringing both to the negotiating table. This measure should be carried, if possible, through existing frameworks as the NATO-Russia Council, making it more efficient and reducing its deployment time, costs and personnel required. The US should advise Latvia to seek to use this channel because of the American presence in NATO, which facilitates the US involvement in such efforts. This option is likely to create two outcomes. First, it assures Latvia the US commitment to the situation, sending a strong political message. Similarly, the same message shall be received by Russia, which might withhold any direct offensive action.
3. As the situation evolves, the diplomatic initiative has the potential to be adapted and, if necessary, it is possible to upgrade this measure to a more complex level, bringing third countries into the negotiations, as a way to put pressure on Russia. In this case, Finland is the most likely to produce positive developments, as it is a strong regional player, with a favourable relationship towards NATO and also shares the interest of maintaining the stability in the Baltics.
4. Military assistance should be provided to Latvia. However, this measure needs to be limited, as the risk of escalation exists, and misperceptions must be avoided. Nonetheless, NATO military personnel already stationed in Latvia and the Baltics, in general, are not prepared to deal with the increased instability, and more troops are needed to ensure border control, cooperate with the law enforcement agencies and reassure the population, not only Latvian population, but also the American citizens living in the country.
5. The reinforcement of the military contingent of NATO forces in Latvia also sends a political message to the countries involved, as well as the other Baltic countries. On the one hand, it reassures the Latvian authorities that NATO is aware of the situation and will prevent the events that occurred in Ukraine from happening again. Simultaneously, the same message is sent to the other Baltic countries. On the other hand, the Russian leadership is certain to draw the appropriate conclusions from this action and refrain from any open action to defy territorial integrity.
6. The U.S. could use its intelligence resources to assist the Latvian intelligence services in monitoring Russian men entering and operating undercover in Latvia. This option ensures

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a high level of security for Latvia, while at the same time avoids the possible escalation of violence that military personnel could cause, as the use of intelligence officers may reduce the number of military personnel on-site. At the same time, intelligence officers could monitor several types of intelligence, in order to better assess the number of military forces stationed in Russian territory close to the border, as well as assess the real extent of Russian involvement in the ongoing protests and prevent any hybrid or cyber-attack.

7. Diplomatic dialogue is relatively easy to put forward, as long as it makes use of the existing structures, have relatively reduced costs and is believed to be the best approach to the long-term suspicion towards Russian intentions.

Further Recommendation

8. The Deputy NSA recommends an approach that includes all the options mentioned above, using Diplomatic tools as the first and central concern over the long-term, considering dialogue the only option to ensure the security and stability of the eastern flank of the Atlantic Alliance and the Baltics over the long term. Nonetheless, this tool is better used in conjunction with military forces and intelligence resources as these are the mechanisms best suited to face the current situation, from a short-term perspective.
9. Diplomatic tools could also be used to address several issues that are not central to the undergoing crisis, nonetheless, if addressed, have the potential to create a more peaceful environment and prevent such crisis from happening again in the near future. These issues include a responsible talk between the two countries, and eventually with other regional countries, regarding ethnic minorities and cultural issues.
10. Military action could stabilise the situation and achieve results over the short-term. One caveat should be made, concerning any military action: only a small number of troops should be sent, in order to prevent any unintended escalation of tension. Using the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) would allow for this goal to be met, considering that this is a relatively small task force. Furthermore, no more soldiers would be needed because this task force would join the troops already deployed in the country, but it would also tackle the urgent character of the situation, as it can be deployed within 48 hours. Another factor that justifies the use of military personnel is that considering the forces already present in the territory, having only a small number of new forces deployed will not result in high costs. Using NATO's joint task force is also beneficial in this respect because the Allies divide the costs.
11. As stated earlier, military forces should be supported by intelligence officers. The use of intelligence would be reflected not only in stronger support of the military personnel and the command and control structure, but it would also facilitate the acquisition of information about the Russian presence inside the country, and close to the Latvian border.
12. On the other hand, intelligence resources could also be used to penetrate existing Russian communities in Latvia, where the pro-Kremlin narrative is the only narrative. They would serve as a vehicle to spread propaganda against Moscow and, thus, minimise internal stability, one of the roots of the current crisis.
13. The use of the NATO-accredited Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence present in the country could be a useful framework for the accommodation of any extra intelligence personnel sent to Latvia, reducing the resources needed.
14. Finally, the use of intelligence is also believed to be of the utmost importance due to the level of cyber-attacks that have Latvia and the Baltic states as their target. Regardless of whether those attacks are coming from Moscow or not, strengthening the cyber power of the country would benefit the Latvian society, and the American citizens living there, and also guarantee a certain level of defence against hybrid attacks.

Conclusion

15. The Deputy NSA supports the President's policy options outlined in the NSC and commits itself to work with the relevant entities in order to comply with those policy options. Furthermore, the Deputy NSA will continue to closely monitor the situation as it evolves, so it can inform the President, if necessary.