

Policy review memo of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI)

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This is a response to the request of the President for policy recommendations following the National Security Council (NSC) meeting regarding the ongoing security crisis in Latvia. This memo presents the position of the Director of National Intelligence, as stated to the National Security Council.

1. Principal Objectives of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence

- 1.1. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the United States Intelligence Community have two principal objectives in regards to this issue. The first is to ensure that the President and the allies of the United States have the most complete awareness possibility of this scenario unfolds. This necessitates an improvement of the understanding of the Russian role in the ongoing unrest in Latvia. The second is to use Intelligence Community's (IC) tools and assets to discourage Russia from attempting to replicate the strategy it pursued in Ukraine.¹
- 1.2. With these principal objectives in mind, the policy recommendations made in this memo will pursue the following overarching themes. First, US intelligence capabilities in-country must be strengthened in order to improve the awareness of the President, his advisors, and American allies relevant to the crisis. Second, intelligence sharing activities between the US, Latvia, and other NATO allies must be streamlined in order to ensure that a unified understanding of the situation is had and to facilitate other nations' intelligence services contributions to such an understanding. Finally, this Office feels it is vital to act rapidly to counter Russian attempts to disseminate propaganda and conduct cyberwarfare intended to further destabilize Latvian society and encourage unrest against disaffected Russian-speaking populations in the east.

2. Primary Recommendations of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence

- 2.1. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence recommends that the President pursue a multi-pronged approach to deploying intelligence capabilities in Latvia. This approach would centre around the establishment of an intelligence field office in Riga for the purpose of improved intelligence gathering and sharing capabilities. This Office also suggests that the IC partner with other US Departments such as the Dept. of State in order to engage in counter-propaganda measures. Finally, this Office suggests that the President explore the possibility of covert operations in eastern Latvia if the previous measures are insufficiently effective.
- 2.2. Establishing a field office in Riga would fulfil several purposes. First, it would allow the deployment of representatives from multiple branches of the IC, including the CIA, DIA, NSA, NEO, and BIR, who could use their respective capabilities to inform a more accurate and updated understanding of Russian activities inside Latvia and on the border. Such a field office would additionally facilitate

¹ David Mardiste, Gederts Gelzis, "Baltics eye flashpoints with Russia, guard against 'green men'," *Reuters*, 3 June 2015 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-baltics-russia/baltics-eye-flashpoints-with-russia-guard-against-green-men-idUSKBN0OJ1G020150603>

up-to-the-minute intelligence sharing between the US and its Latvian partners, who continue to be the primary actors in responding to this Russian aggression. Finally, this field office could be used to feed information into NATO's Joint Intelligence and Security Division, thereby relaying all relevant and developing intelligence to the US' NATO allies.²

- 2.3. The Office of the DNI also suggests that the President act to improve Latvian defences against Russian propaganda. In order to counter Russian propaganda intended to incite further discontent and unrest amongst Latvia's Russian-speaking population, the CIA, and the State Department should fund and train local Latvian journalists, particularly of Russian-speaking background, so as to encourage the accurate and fact-based depiction of Russia's attempts to destabilize Latvian society.³
- 2.4. Finally, this Office suggests that the President order representatives from the IC (CIA, NSA, DHS, and DIA) and other organizations such as the DoD's Defense Cyber Strategy to assist Latvian security and intelligence agencies to improve their defence against cyber-attacks. This will serve to protect critical cyber infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and electoral systems, in keeping with the Cyber Security Strategy of Latvia.⁴ Such efforts are particularly important due to past precedent of Russia engaging in cyber warfare against Latvia.⁵

3. Secondary Recommendations of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence

- 3.1. While the IC has the capabilities to conduct covert operations, and the President has ordered the CIA to infiltrate Rodina, the pro-Russia political party, this Office recommends caution in such a regard. Covert operations are risky, and the potential for a US intelligence agent to be compromised and captured by Russian or Russian-sympathetic forces would cause a diplomatic crisis. This crisis would be worsened if such an agent was transported across the border into Russia, where the US has far less capacity to recover him or her. A preferable alternative would be for US intelligence agents to work in eastern Latvia with Latvian intelligence agency allies in order to develop and cultivate intelligence assets within the organization who could feed information to the field office in Riga.
- 3.2. While the Office of the DNI feels that much of the Presidential Order is well informed, it argues that a firm military response is necessary. The majority of actions recommended by this memo thus far are reactive and intended to better inform the President, his advisors, and their allies. Similarly,

² No author, "Adapting NATO intelligence in support of "One NATO," *NATO Review* 8 September 2017 <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2017/also-in-2017/adapting-nato-intelligence-in-support-of-one-nato-security-military-terrorism/EN/index.htm>

³ Daniel Calingaert, "How the US can respond to Russia's propaganda," *The Hill* 29 July 2015 <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/international/249426-how-the-us-can-respond-to-russias-propaganda>

⁴ No author, "Latvian National Cyber Security Strategy," *European Union Agency for Network and Information Security*, 01 June 2014 <https://www.enisa.europa.eu/topics/national-cyber-security-strategies/ncss-map/strategies/latvian-national-cyber-security-strategy>

⁵ Gederts Gelzis, Robin Emmott, "Russia may have tested cyber warfare on Latvia, Western officials say," *Reuters* 5 October 2017 <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-russia-nato/russia-may-have-tested-cyber-warfare-on-latvia-western-officials-say-idUKKBN1CA142>

the diplomatic and economic measures pursued by the President are a reaction to pre-existing Russian action and not a proactive response which effectively dissuades further aggression. This Office believes the President must act more decisively on the intelligence that has been provided to him that indicates that Russian special operatives have entered Latvia and established a headquarters in the east and that Russian military troops are massing on the Latvian border.

- 3.3. As has been demonstrated since the outset of the crisis in Ukraine, Russia holds little regard for diplomatic condemnation, as well as international norms and laws. It has supplied weapons to Russian-speaking separatists, openly supported them with unidentified military troops, and annexed the sovereign territory of a neighbouring nation under the guise of protecting Russian linguistic rights. If the US does not take concrete steps to enforce the Latvian eastern border and stabilize the country, Latvia could slide into unrest
- 3.4. The President should request that NATO mobilize its 1,100 Canadian, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Albanian, Slovenian and Albanian forces from Ādaži to Latvia's eastern border in order to reinforce it against further border incursions or potential invasion. Both Canadian and Italian forces are currently deployed with lightly armoured military vehicles, which would be ideal for conducting border patrols without posing a serious threat to Russia's own territory. Deploying foreign NATO forces also doubles down on the possibility of Article 5 being triggered, as Latvia and/or the country whose forces come under fire by invading forces could trigger Article 5 - this greatly increases the disincentives for invasion.
- 3.5. The President should additionally consider requesting that the NATO Rapid Response Force be deployed to secure Latvia's critical infrastructure, as opposed to US Special Forces. By channelling such measures through NATO, the US affirms the widespread support of the organization for Latvian security while protecting against claims that this response is driven solely by US aggression.
- 3.6. Finally, the President should reconsider raising the DEFCON level to DEFCON 3. This has only been done three times in history - once when US service personnel were attacked on base in South Korea, once during the 1973 Yom Kippur war, and once after 9/11. This situation does not merit such an increase in DEFCON level and doing so indicates a degree of alarmism in US security circles which are counterproductive to finding a peaceful resolution.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. It is the belief of the Office of the DNI that accurate and up-to-date intelligence should underpin the President's continued efforts to contribute to the stabilization of Latvia. This can be facilitated by the establishment of a field office in Riga, intelligence sharing with the NATO Joint Intelligence and Security Division, and the cooperation of the US IC with vital allies such as Latvia and other NATO partners.
- 4.2. The Office of the DNI also believes that the President must respond to Russia by proactively defending and dissuading further aggressive action. On the part of the IC, this should be

comprised of efforts to counter Russian propaganda dissemination and cyber warfare attacks on Latvian digital and physical infrastructure.

- 4.3. Finally, the Office of the DNI believes that the President must respond to the intelligence he has been provided by the IC, in a way which demonstrates greater resolve in the face of Russian aggression. Latvia is a NATO ally, and ongoing attempts by Russia to destabilize its domestic affairs while massing troops on the border should be addressed via a firm but a restrained military component.

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