

## **Baltic Sea Regional Security: A Field Hearing of the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Gdansk, July 2, 2019**

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Response by the United States and NATO to Russian annexation of Crimea have been well balanced and tailored to meet the needs of Allies and Partners. European Reassurance Initiative – now known as European Deterrence Initiative – together with the NATO's measures to enhance its defense and deterrence, including the deployment of troops to Baltic States and Poland, have been very positive. They all have increased security and stability of the Baltic Sea region. The US commitment to European security promotes multinational cooperation amongst Europeans as well.

Finland is not a member of NATO, and there are no US or NATO troops in Finland. Yet, we share the same security environment with the Alliance and benefit from the security and stability your presence has created. In addition, bigger footprint by the US and NATO have created more training and exercise opportunities for the Finnish Defense Forces.

Defense cooperation has enhanced the lethality of our capabilities and our interoperability with the most important countries in the regional security architecture. The Finnish defense has never before been as capable and as interoperable as it is today. We believe that strong Finnish defense contributes also to regional security and benefits our Partners.

After the Cold War ended, many European countries transformed their armed forces and focused attention to crisis management and counterinsurgency operations. With 1300 kilometres of land border with Russia, Finland never did that change. The defense of our own territory has always been the main task of Finnish Defense Forces and the main driver for capability development, and we have kept investing into it. These investments will continue also in the future. Replacement of Air Force's F/A-18 Hornet fleet and procurement of new corvette-sized ships for Navy will increase our defence spending above 2 % of the GDP in early 2020s.

In addition to defense material procurement, we have also invested a lot of time and effort to modernize our legislation. In fact, during the last four years our Parliament passed largest defence-related package of legislation since the Second World War. The new legislation improves our readiness and surveillance of territorial integrity; allows us to provide and receive international military assistance during crises; and helps us to deal with foreign ownership of land areas and real estate. Perhaps the most important legislative issue was the new law on intelligence, which required amending the Constitution.

Today however, no one can rely on national action alone. For us, cooperation with our partners is a necessity. Defence cooperation is the most effective way to build capabilities and ensure interoperability. Acquisition of modern capabilities will also enhance deepening and widening of defense cooperation. This has been our observation ever since we bought the F/A-18 Hornets from the US. This brings me to my third point: the security architecture of the Baltic Sea region.

In the current security environment, it is important that we can deepen our cooperation further if needed. In the case of Finland, this cooperation is not based on treaty obligations, but on strong common interests. Finnish defense benefits our Partners, and actions by the US and NATO benefit Finland.

In the past years, Finland has been significantly deepening the defense cooperation with NATO and with those countries that have a role in the security architecture of the Baltic Sea region. Participation in NATO-led operations as well as training and exercising together are key elements for us.

Peacetime cooperation lays the foundation for what we can do in times of crisis. That is why also information sharing, consultation and deconflicting is necessary.

I believe this is in line with the US National Defense Strategy as well: network of alliances and partnerships supports your goal to create a favourable regional balance of power in Europe.

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Arms control, tackling hybrid threats and Finnish EU Presidency are also issues that are relevant issues in the context of this Commission hearing.

Finland believes that there is a need to preserve and further advance the general arms control and disarmament processes. We call for further progress on all aspects of disarmament in order to enhance global security. Multisectoral and concrete cooperation in combating these challenges in arms control and non-proliferation is needed. Transparency, confidence and security building measures, and risk reduction are key elements to this end. Of course, also the United States–Russia dialogue on arms control is of key importance to global, European and Finland’s security.

The post-INF situation presents a challenge to all of Europe, NATO allies and partners alike, and unity in dealing with the situation is essential. Information sharing is crucial in ensuring that our message remains united. In terms on responses, we support dual track approach: reinforcing defence and deterrence in Europe, while at the same time remaining committed to effective international arms control and open to constructive dialogue with Russia.

When it comes to building resilience against hybrid threats, we rely on the Finnish model of Comprehensive Security, which we have been developing since the Second World War. A key role is played by the Security Committee, which assists the Government and different sectoral Ministries on issues dealing with comprehensive security. We are confident with our national model, which is one reason why Finland made the initiative to establish the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki. We hope the Centre will help all its Members, together with EU and NATO, build understanding and resilience against hybrid threats.

Yesterday Finland took over the rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU. In this role, we will do our best to take forward the EU defense agenda in support of High Representative Mogherini. This is a time of transition in the EU, as the old guard is leaving and new leadership is arriving. In the field of defense, the new initiatives are mostly in place, and the focus is now on implementation.

However, it is also time to look ahead. Only a truly capable Europe can be an effective and reliable partner. That is why Finland wants to focus our work for example on digitalization and artificial intelligence in the field of defence. We will also highlight the need to improve European capacities to detect and understand hybrid activities. In addition, we will do our best to promote EU-NATO cooperation, as well as EU-US dialogue and cooperation.

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To conclude with, I would like to underline that the transatlantic relationship will continue to define European security in the future as well. The commitment of the United States to NATO and its military presence in Europe continue to be essential to Baltic Sea regional security. Cooperating with the United States, both bilaterally and within the framework of NATO, is important for Finland’s national defence.