

May 13, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

As we approach NATO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit this July, NATO members will undoubtedly look back upon NATO's esteemed history, take stock of accomplishments, and discuss how to prepare the alliance for the future. While the alliance is finally making some necessary changes to adapt to growing instability in the world, there are still glaring deficiencies that must be frankly and openly addressed during the summit.

First, we cannot escape the fact that there is a major war on the European continent, yet NATO remains on a peacetime footing. Russian missiles are transiting NATO airspace and landing in NATO territory – violating NATO sovereignty. Despite its inherent right to self-defense, NATO has announced no plans to more robustly defend NATO's airspace or deploy missile defense assets to intercept Russian missiles well before they threaten NATO airspace. With this as just one example, the alliance is doing far too little to prepare for the era-defining strategic challenges that are emerging. Announcing an integrated air defense plan and significantly updating regional defense plans should be a priority.

In addition, we cannot waste the summit celebrating the fact that many allies are finally doing more than the bare minimum for our collective security. We must reckon with the gap between where our capabilities are and where they need to be. Defense industrial capacity across NATO is a shadow of what it was during the Cold War. Russia's war on Ukraine has made clear that our collective industrial capacity is not adequate to meet tomorrow's security challenges.

The United States must push members to increase their defense contributions well above the minimum requirements set forth at the Wales Summit. Allies should also be required to make binding commitments to increase defense industrial capacity. The summit should include hard conversations about what is needed to prepare robust defenses and what each member must sacrifice to fulfill its security commitments. This will require deeper cooperation between finance and defense ministers within the alliance to ensure resources exist to meet the demands.

Second, NATO needs to provide the right kind of support to Ukraine. Congress has called on your administration to deliver a coherent strategy to support victory in Ukraine. Combined with policy changes at NATO, the summit would be the ideal time for you to release this strategy. Further, the summit must help Ukraine build its armed forces and ensure its interoperability with NATO. Ukraine's economic recovery is already underway and its manufacturing capability can do more to sustain its fight, but NATO policies must change to support Ukraine's defense industry.

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NATO should assume a more central role in the crisis management around the war and help Ukraine make its procurement and oversight mechanisms interoperable. Additionally, we cannot fail to address Ukraine's future in NATO. Putin already believes he is at war with NATO; refusing to give Ukraine a path forward would grant Putin the political victory he desires. NATO allies must provide a security guarantee to Ukraine and declare a clear position on Ukraine's NATO integration, keeping in mind commitments already made in Bucharest.

Third, beyond the immediate challenge of Russia's war, NATO must clearly identify our strategic adversaries and policies toward them. While the 2022 Strategic Concept took an important step focusing on China as an emerging threat, NATO must develop a clear policy. China views NATO as antagonistic and China's presence in Europe is growing. The recent arrests of Chinese spies in Germany and the United Kingdom should come as no surprise, but Chinese naval activity around Europe and its construction of bases around Africa are designed to support its longer-term presence in and near NATO waters. The alliance must ensure its planning accounts for an increasingly aggressive China, and it must include contingency plans if the United States needs to respond to a crisis in the Pacific.

Finally, NATO must increase its emphasis on deterrence, particularly nuclear deterrence. NATO has downplayed the essential role of nuclear capability in maintaining stability in Europe. In stark contrast, Russia has expanded the role of nuclear weapons in its national security strategy. Moscow continues to field the world's largest and most diverse nuclear force. This includes a broad array of novel nuclear weapons designed to offset western conventional military advantages and enable coercive activities in both conventional and unconventional domains. Russia does not want, and will not honor, arms control agreements for the foreseeable future. In response, NATO must renew its commitment to the nuclear mission and the central role it plays in deterring Russia. Doing so requires more frequent nuclear exercises – to include leadership-led table top exercises, posture adjustments that complicate Russian planning, and allowing additional allies to provide conventional support to the NATO nuclear mission.

Mr. President, you recently said that NATO today is strong. We agree. However, this description of the current state of affairs must not be used to overlook some of the shortcomings nor ignore a possible change in future circumstances. A sense of security is not a substitute for a constant effort to maintain security. NATO has not been tested like this in over 30 years, which has shown gaps that NATO must fill. We urge you to take these concerns seriously and use the opportunity provided by the Washington Summit to conduct a reality-check and impart serious motivation and direction into our allies.

Sincerely,



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Ranking Member  
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